

Economic Corridors in Asia: Paradigm of Integration?

A Reflection for Latin America

Soraya Caro Vargas / Editor

Universidad
Externado
de Colombia

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FOREWORD

Global geopolitics has shifted dramatically over the last thirty years. After the vanishing expectations of a unipolar international system led by the United States, China has gained an increasingly dominant role in areas as innovative as quantum computing, robotics and artificial intelligence.

In the 'non-digital' dimension, the eastern superpower has made gigantic investments in its *Belt and Road Initiative*, which include the development of a massive network of highways, industrial centers, harbors, pipelines and bridges, among many other works of infrastructure. These investments allow for the connection of more than 60 countries worldwide, guaranteeing China's energetic security, easier conditions for trading goods and services and, perhaps more importantly, a significant influence in the political and economic events of the world.

States with political regimes as diverse as those of Russia and India are part of this growing network; in various cases, in exchange for the benefits associated with being part of it, major concessions were made. By way of illustration, Sri Lanka and Pakistan, among others, given their lack of capacity to pay for some of the works, have agreed to forfeit control of specific areas of their territories.

The new game that arises under these circumstances calls for creativity in devising new models of cooperation between states, companies, citizens and the like. That is, traditional forms of association between rich and poor countries, for

instance, must be thought of in a different format: the profits derived from the relationship must be clearly evident to all the actors. Similarly, historical advantages associated with geographical conditions that were explained by so-called 'spheres of influence', must be revisited, as new forms of connectivity – both physical and digital – are shifting at a speed not seen before.

South-south cooperation, as well as the exchange of knowledge and experience between actors who have not traditionally been leaders in their fields, is expected to play an increasingly critical role in the years to come. As in the case of concessions in sovereignty, the nature and breadth of the nation state could also be in question, insofar as deeper interests of key actors – those in power, the private sector, as well as marginalized communities – could determine modes of association that were not thought possible a few years ago.

There is a wide variety of opportunities for countries all around the world, and Latin America is not the exception to this; the success of China and India in bringing millions of people out of poverty and destitution is an experience that is appealing to many policy makers in different latitudes, despite the many other remaining challenges. These countries have recently grown at formidable rates, and it has resulted in better living conditions for large sectors of their societies. Compared to the challenges faced in the West by policies that could not prevent the collapse of the economic systems of some countries, and convulsed political systems, the policies adopted in that part of the world seem substantially more resilient.

Nevertheless, all this comes with a catch (caveat?). The emphasis on "the East model", and particularly that of China, is not on liberty or on the protection of rights, but on having 'the right government'. This makes some in the West uncomfortable when addressing the inevitability of a new paradigm in the international global order but, at the

same time, makes the discussions about the opportunities and implications of it more urgent.

'Asian Economic Corridors: Paradigms of Integration? A Reflection for Latin America' is a comprehensive study aimed at addressing some of the most challenging questions of this new reality: What is the reach of the new silk road for the global south in terms of capital flows? What is its impact on regional integration strategies in the global south? Which lessons for Latin America can be learnt from the experience of other regions' relationships with China? What opportunities in terms of development of infrastructure does this new reality have in store for Latin American countries? What are some of the costs?

The emphasis of the book on the corridors, not only illustrates the fast developments in infrastructure and connectivity initiatives coming out of Asia, but also the implications they have for topics as diverse as foreign policy, integration programs, public discourse and the adoption and contagion of new production strategies, among others.

By bringing together an important number of scholars from both, multiple disciplines and different regions, this book offers a thorough analysis of the challenges and opportunities posed by the changing global order resulting from the efforts led by China.

This is also a timely book. The deteriorating leadership in the West demands opening the public arena for discussions that cover a wide range of topics, from new models of growth and development to the opportunities and risks associated with them. These are precisely some of the discussions the authors of this book bring to the table, and the ones that will be at the frontline of political economy discussions in the near future.

JULIÁN ARÉVALO
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INTRODUCTION

SORAYA CARO VARGAS

1. THE HISTORY OF A MULTICULTURAL ACADEMIC ENDEAVOUR

For a decade now, the Rectorate of the Externado University of Colombia and the School of Finance, Government and International Relations (FIGRI), have given a fillip to the promotion and strengthening of ties between their students and teachers and the countries of Asia and Africa. Some expressions of this commitment are: the creation of the Centre of Contemporary Studies on India and South Asia (Cesicam) in 2013, groups of scholars engaged in the systematic study of countries like China and Japan and the recent establishment of the Centre of Turkish and Caucasian Studies, with the support of internationally recognized partners such as business experts, academics and diplomatic missions.

In order to forge links with networks of specialists, during 2017 and 2018, CESICAM approached universities and think tanks in Eurasia, such as the Technical University of the Middle East METU in Ankara, the Islamabad Institute of Strategic Studies, (ISSI) in Pakistan or Jindal Global University in India, which have all been active participants in the connectivity debates and on the implications of the *China Belt and Road Initiative (BRI)*. CESICAM scholars also attended international conferences which engaged with trends in connectographic studies like the one organized by the *Leuven*

Center for Global Studies in August 2018, *The Belt and Road Initiative and Global Governance* (BRIGG).

Since there was a paucity of comprehensive academic analyses on the evolution of the BRI project in Colombia, researchers from the Centre of Specialized Studies (CIPE) and CESICAM, located in Ankara, Bogota and Johannesburg, decided to design an interdisciplinary research project in March 2018, in which scholars from different areas would present their findings on the state of the art of BRI in their lands, as well on the existence of other transregional routes and modes of integration, in such a way that, those visions became a reference point to Latin American governments, that were already invited by President Xi Jinping to be part of the BRI. Researchers from Turkey, Kazakhstan, Pakistan, India, Paraguay, Argentina, Colombia, Brazil and Mexico participated in the initiative. This publication is an academic journey through a multicultural and multidisciplinary corridor; an experience of collaborative work and thematic construction by a non-formal group of researchers from different latitudes, who share their concern about the profound changes that the accelerated physical and technological connectivity in the world will signify for the study and exercise of international relations in the near future, and in the definition of the foreign policy of States.

2. THE SEARCH FOR SECURITY VS. GROWING UNCERTAINTY

Global production, information flows, the supply of basic resources, national security, the provision of services across borders, education, after sale services, the movement of people, telecommunications and freight transport are all linked to the networks of functional connectivity which provide the necessary physical and digital infrastructure for competitive connections between suppliers and consumers. Connectivity is a *sine qua non* in the dynamics of integration, internationalization and development. With this in mind,

the present volume tries to find answers to two questions: What are the effects of these new routes on the national sovereignty and economic and social development of the people whose lives they crisscross and for the consolidation of a new regionalism and multipolar world? How will the economic corridors between Asia, Europe and Africa become reference points for Latin America in the immediate future?

The authors give us their vision on the different stages of the corridors in Asia and Africa. They offer recommendations on how to advance discussions on the socio-economic reach of the routes and they explain the delicate situations which must be handled for their existence or, they analyse the impact of the so called “connectography” (Khanna, 2014) in the design of national development policies in regional groups and global governance. The results fill a vacuum. Of course, Latin America has been a late arrival to the study of the implications for global connectivity and these new routes. The contributions of the researchers have become a relevant tool of analysis which fulfills a historical need and aims to provide scholarly inputs for governments, businessmen, communities and decision makers.

2.1. Methodology and Techniques

The implicit message to the researchers in our call for proposals was that their contributions dwell on the possible economic and social effects of the routes and economic corridors in their regions giving inputs and references to Latin American scholars. From the perspective of their specializations, they used deductive and analytic methods during their process of production of knowledge. (Muñoz, 1998, pp. 192-193). They used primarily sources to analyse events such as the construction of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, (strategically the most important segment for China of the BRI initiative for the outlet it gives to the

Arabian Sea without touching Indian soil¹) or Narendra Modi's, *Sagarmala* Project (which aims to unite the four cardinal points of India²) and the study and compilation of secondary sources (reports, analysis statistics, government declarations, research articles etc.), devoted themselves to the task of describing historical movements, economic and social impacts, the important actors involved, their foreign policy interests and strategies, in order to later critically show the way in which the new kinds of connectivity and the failure or success of infrastructure megaprojects affect vectors such as South-South Cooperation, finance and debt mechanisms, internal growth, national security, the deepening of connectivity gaps or flow of information etc. Finally, the scholars gave recommendations or useful tips to the establishment in Latin America.

3. THEORETICAL MARKERS

The economic corridors in Asia and Africa are realities that at times, seem to advance faster in comparison to rearguard or conservative theories. The BRI initiative has exponentially accelerated investment in megaprojects and their implementation, even though the objectives of these corridors change according to the needs of the proponent and the beneficiaries. Since the issues raised above are closely related

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- 1 In Chapter 5, Ahmed Saffe lays special emphasis on the China – Pakistan corridor “China-Pakistan Economic Corridor: A Critical Discourse Analysis: Mapping Public Discourse in Pakistan: The Case Study of Institute of Strategic Studies”. And so do Ume Farwa and Guzanfar Ali Garewal in Chapter 6 “Resurgence of South-South Cooperation and China’s Belt and Road Initiative in Asia and Latin America”. In Chapter 1, “*La nueva Ruta de la Seda: Contexto histórico y aspectos geopolíticos de la estrategia global de China*”, describing the geopolitical implications of the BRI initiative, with reference to this mega- project.
 - 2 In Chapter 2, Pankaj Jha there is also a special reference to this subject even though the focus is on India and its State policy regarding economic corridors as public development policy with positive external implications for the regions. In a very Indian manner he avoids comparisons with China.

to economic and social development through functional connectivity, the scholars clearly or implicitly use theories related to spatial development. The *Development Axes Theory* (DA) is a term coined by Pen Pottier (1963), and later used as an alternative theory of growth by writers such as Hilhorst (1972) Paelinck Nijkamp (1975), (1978), Richardson (1978), (2011) Heru Purboyo, Eko Budi Santoso and Dewi Sawitri (2012). In their essay, "The Development of Local Nodes along Transportation Corridors: A Review of Development Axes Theory", they have tried to analyse whether the flow of goods and people along the axes is a determining factor for the increase of transport infrastructure which will connect the centres. The researchers of this book refer to them in their theoretical framework.³

The terms Development Corridors or Economic Corridors, referred to in this publication have as their premise the territorial approaches outlined in the Spatial Development Initiatives (SDI), which have gained currency as development strategies in medium and emergent economies. The States design programs and investment frameworks in order to develop territories or unify regions and countries through routes with infrastructure as Healey (2004), mentions in his article "The Treatment of Space and Place in the New Strategic Spatial Planning in Europe". Other spatial approaches have been developed by Whebell (1969), who discusses the importance of corridors in the metropolitan framework for the urbanization and population of spaces without elaborating on sub-urban areas. Brahmawong (2010) calls our attention to the negative effects of corridors such as the poor use of natural resources, the exclusion of certain communities or the effects on the quality of life of the inhabitants. He also

3 Pankaj Jha Chapter 2, and the scholars Delgado and Guzmán, in Chapter 4, draw up complete theoretical frameworks on the scope and definition of the terms 'development' and 'economic' corridors.

lays emphasis on the importance of human capital on the routes, investment flows and entrepreneurial capacities. For the analysis of corridors from the so called financial geography,⁴ authors used the work of Rosa Luxemburg, the theoretical perspective of Hilferding (1914) and (1973), and Dimsky's financial instability hypothesis (2017) to explain the internationalization of Chinese Banks and corporations during the last 20 years. As Alicia Girón states in her chapter, "It is necessary to rethink the categories of capital concentration and centralization and the importance of an economic bloc in order to understand why certain countries and not others grow in an equitable manner in the framework of the internationalization of capital".

Those who approach the network of corridors in Africa from the perspective of regional development and integration take recourse to Kleynhans (2001), Elshahawany (2017) who have described the corridors of development as spaces for cooperative projects which would facilitate the development of infrastructure and connectivity in the continent. The *Guide to Economic Corridors* (2015) by Albie Hope and John Cox was commissioned by the Department of International Development, in which he argues for the existence of different kinds of corridors and the need to take their physical and functional dimensions into account, as they are complex structures that do not necessarily evolve in the same way.

On the other hand, the regional development banks and the international consultancies have been prolific in studies and manuals on the construction of corridors. Their publications elaborate on the geographical reach, specializations and the objectives of sectorial development, or on mechanisms of governance. They seek to highlight the

4 Alicia Girón in Chapter 3 "Chinese Capital Flows to Africa in a Context of the Silk Road".

social and environmental factors, effective implementation and the institutions that should be involved. Hans-Peter Brunner (2013) published a working paper with the Asian Development Bank, in which he divided the indicators for corridor analysis into three groups, according to their characteristics: structural characteristics that are mainly connected with commercial interests, those related to geographic cohesion and networks, and others related to corridor access. Finally, the challenges of economic corridors in Asia are elaborated. There are also bench marks for the analysis of these connectivity channels carried out by the specialized centres of research, like those of the *Independent Science and Partnership Council (ISPC)* and the *European Center for Development Policy Management* in 2015 for the study of space initiatives of development and growth of agricultural corridors: “Agricultural Growth Corridors and Agricultural Transformation in Africa: Research Needs for Impact, Implementation and Institutions”. One of the objectives of the initiative was to analyse the implications that would have on agriculture research investments highly focused in private and/or public sectors especially in the African continent. In his chapter, Ahmad Saffee, uses the critical discourse analysis method and takes recourse to the work of Fairclough, who through the analysis of a written text, discourse and through discourse as practice, tries to show the connection of language with power and the making of ideas in society. With digital support, the author analyses the texts on economic corridors, the China –Pakistan one in particular, under the aegis of the Institute of Strategic Studies of Islamabad (ISSI).

Other authors describe and make exploratory studies on the impact of BRI in their countries and regions. In these chapters the writers bolster their analyses with help from other studies by expert colleagues, through the written press, which gives news on the evolution of projects and its implications, through government briefs and reports and

in their own observation of the dynamics of their environment. The publication edited by Marlene Laruelle (2018) for the Central Asia Program in George Washington University: *China's Belt and Road Initiative and Its Impact in Central Asia*, is an important document which will benefit those who study the different vectors of the package that China offers to its neighbours in Central and South East Asia and for those who analyse the focus of Latin America on the infrastructure gaps that affect the region. For this reason, in the analysis over the convenience or otherwise of the Chinese offer of widening the initiative of the margins and the route in the American continent, the reports of regional groups, development banks, country reports are used as sources without any adherence to a theory but instead to qualitative and exploratory analysis methods.

4. BIBLIOGRAPHIC ANTECEDENTS IN THE REGION AND THE RELEVANCE OF THIS INITIATIVE

In Latin America, the closeness to Asia and its emerging economies carries relative weight and depends on the historic relations of each particular country with the region. In general, the interest of the academy is focused on China, followed by Japan, South East Asia and India. There is not much literature available on the China BRI initiative, nor on the Chinese investment in the region. A rigorous analysis on the main infrastructure works in which China has played a role or tried to do it, was published by Enrique Dussel Peters, Margaret Myers and Shoujun Cui (2018), *Building Development for a new era: China's infrastructure projects in Latin America and the Caribbean*. In the book, they gathered acknowledged experts on China from the entire continent such as Leonardo Stanley, Monica de Hart, Diana Castro and Paulina Garzón. The publication details the impact and influence of Chinese financing in Latin America, the realization or otherwise of infrastructure works, as well as

the particular characteristics of the commercial relations between economies which depend on this Asian country rather than on others which are prudent or timid in their approach to Asia.

“China’s discourse on the new model of relations between the big powers and its relations with the US under Bush and Obama”, is an article published by Manuel de Jesús Rocha Pino (2018) in the *Revista Mexicana de Ciencias Políticas y Sociales* of the National Autonomous University of Mexico. The author analyses China’s proposal to the United States in 2012 for defining a new model of relations between the big powers. In the Mexican journal *Foro Internacional*, Eduardo Tzili-Apango, Eduardo Palacios-Cabrera y Bernardo Mabire (2018) in their article “The Reactive Multilateralism in Central Asia before China and Russia”, explain how extraterritorial agents in Central Asia have given way to a reactive multilateralism which benefits China and Russia, who are trying to secure their energy resources and the necessary land connections with Europe.

On the other side of the continent, Dietmar Dirmoser published “The Great March of China towards the West” (“*La Gran Marcha China hacia el Oeste*”) in the Argentine journal *Nueva Sociedad Democracia y Política en América Latina* (2017), in which he refers to the simplicity with which China proposes such a transformational initiative. Also from Argentina, Marcos Cordeiro Pires and Luis Antonio Paulino (2017), in their article “Reflections on the Hegemony and International Politics of China: the Belt and Route Initiative” (“*Reflexiones sobre la hegemonía y la política internacional de China: la iniciativa ‘Cinturón y Ruta’*”) in the *Revista de Relaciones Internacionales*, wrote about the strategy of peaceful development. They analysed the evolution of Chinese foreign policy from the beginning of the reform period and concluded that China seeks to create the means in order to reaffirm its pacifist and inclusivist intentions through an integrationist project like BRI. In Colombia Mariano Turzi published “Latin American

Silk Road: China and The Nicaragua Canal” in the *Revista de Relaciones Internacionales, Estrategia y Seguridad*, (2017), in which he wrote on the current impact of a possible canal financed by China in Nicaragua. Also in Colombia, Dusan Prajand Juan Carlos Restrepo (2017), wrote a piece titled “The Geopolitics of Chinese reform” in the international relations journal, *Estrategia y Seguridad*, referring to the presence of super powers in the South China sea, the institutionalisation of the BRI initiative, but also pointed to the growing economic interdependence which will ensue in case China manages to get the levels of connectivity that it wants with the West. The book *El camino al siglo del Pacífico. Las otras rutas de la seda del siglo XXI* (The Road to the Pacific Century. The Other Silk Routes of the XXIst Century) by Eduardo Tzili-Apango, published by the Autonomous Metropolitan University of Mexico, is handy as far as understanding the origin of the new routes which help in explaining what the author calls, “The Century of the Pacific” i.e. the presence of China, Japan, the United States and Russia in the region. Other sources are multilateral reports from some banks and risk rating firms as well as special editions of journals and widely circulated newspapers.

“Relevance”, according to the *Dictionary of the Royal Academy of the Spanish Language*, is the quality of being convenient, appropriate or amenable to something. Analysing from different geographic and epistemological perspectives the offer that China extends to Latin America in 2018 in order to integrate us naturally to BRI according to its discourse, is a need that besides being relevant is appropriate. It is the right moment to ponder the emotional reactions of our leaders to this tempting offer, a consequence of the tedium and precaution of an international economic system and leaders who for decades have been indifferent to the social and economic consequences of their actions, and also on the tremendous gap our continent suffers in terms of infrastructure.

The novelty of this publication is due to the origin of the authors who are located at different segments of the Eurasian route and participants and actors in Latin America involved in recent and current debates on the relevance, efficacy and appropriateness of the megaprojects and their effects. From this approach to the problem, one can also infer the following: the corridors and their influence on the population and the land, the corridors and their relation with the foreign policy of nations, the corridors and their impact on regional stability and national security, BRI and the new dynamics of South-South Cooperation, BRI and the definition of active policies, in short an integral analysis of the phenomenon, the think tanks, critical discourse and its responsibility in the implementation of the initiative.

The research has a unifying thread: the local, *in situ*, interpretation of BRI and its relation to the concept of economic corridors. The aim is to serve as a proposed reference point for academia and decision makers in Latin America who have to fully discern the new *functional geography*, of a new physical reality, which will overcome national borders and traditional diplomacy through special connecting zones, nodes of competitive production and cities which, in some cases, work independent of domestic legislation, resulting in what Keller Easterling (2013),⁵ calls extra diplomacy in his global conferences, and others like Khanna (2014) term as mega globalization. The authors present special cases. The Turkish people and their famous construction firms do not feel the same way about the BRI initiative as do the Indians, the emulous of China in the region or the central Asian people who need roads in order to reach Europe. The subjects discussed at the Association of South East Asian

5 Conference by Professor Yale Keller Easterling (2014) in Holland. She has authored *Extrastatecraft: Infrastructure Space and Political Arts*, which examines the networks of global infrastructure as a means to do politics.

Nations (ASEAN) on the implications of BRI are not the same as those discussed inside the African Economic Community. Latin America should seek its own integral answers to how it can connect to BRI or to other forms of global connectivity, with what objectives and megaprojects and in which places. Which are the places and regulatory frameworks and financial institutions for the realization of our interests, needs and territorial development?

5. GLOBALIZING PRECURSORS AND THE RESURGENCE OF THE ECONOMIC CORRIDOR AS A TERM AND CONSEQUENCE OF BRI

The last stage of globalization and its moorings to the end of the Cold War has been a general, systematic and irrepressible trend. The main trigger was the elimination of trade barriers, so as to reduce transaction costs within and across borders. The transformation of the means of production, interdependence and the internationalization of the production chains has led to heretofore unseen improvements in the collective welfare of the Asian giants, for example, the prices of goods and services became much more accessible, the consumption patterns changed, inflationary trends were controlled, knowledge flows became rapid and efficient while innovation widened the welfare spectrum (John, 2019).

The trade and financial dynamics were tied to the institutions created in the framework of the international economic system dominated by the powers of that time –the United States and the rich countries of Europe- who were expanding their markets. This multilateralism might have brought a certain stability, but the system tended to defend the interests of developed countries and systematically undervalued the concerns of other members over the yawning gap between the rich and poor and the concentration of the economic power in a few players. In the 1980's, the West observed how China transformed economically and

was determined to become the greatest provider of goods and services on a global scale. The Western powers decided to strategically promote the progressive linkages of this country to the system especially through the World Trade Organization. China wanted this platform for its products to get access to markets, while the United States needed to interact in order to control the intentions of its new rival. China and the United States deepened their commercial, diplomatic and cultural ties, the Americans and Europeans began to relocate their businesses such as engineering and advanced manufacture and innovation hubs to China, the hypothesis being that the internal development of China would lead to a new relationship between their establishment and global partners. China wanted to copy, in order to write its own script and the West waved the banner of free trade, without calculating the *boomerang* effect of this stale capitalist formula. The positive result was the distributive convergence, thanks to which hundreds of millions of Chinese and Indians would soon rise above the poverty line and this transfer of wealth has made Asia the great player of our times. The multipolar balance improved.

China became a giant, it took advantage of the agreements signed and through its full or partial entry in regional groups it had access to the markets, to vanguard knowledge and benefited from huge foreign investment thus educated its human capital. Diversification and manufacturing technology were given prime importance and there was strong investment in its commercial and urban infrastructure. China never fully accepted the requisites of Western institutions, even as it underlined the legitimacy of the “Chinese Model”. It even berated the international economic system on its unipolarity and inefficiency and proposed new instruments of inter and transregional cooperation to developing countries, based on the principles of the welfare of all, non-interference in internal matters, respect for sovereignty and large scale flexible cooperation.

The idea of joining China with Europe to soft finance infrastructure megaprojects which would fill the physical connectivity and digital gaps was the result of a series of internal development policies which prioritized the development of productive forces, the strengthening of the Chinese frontier with the West, the development of far flung regions, social stability and the control of religious extremism, besides ensuring vistas for the expansion of Chinese financial and business corporations.⁶ *One Belt One Road* (OBOR), or the Border and Road Initiative (BRI), makes public and formalizes China's advance over the Eurasian landscape, its geostrategic relocation in the South China Sea and Indian Ocean. The reclamation of the *Silk Route*, apart from giving a new narrative to Asia as a continent that is slowly recovering its central position, awakens a hope of more equitable financing alternatives in countries that have serious connectivity gaps. Many Asian and African economies have their own version of this history and remember the induced indebtedness which characterized earlier hegemonies.

BRI forces us to examine the category of development or economic corridors amply described in this book by the researchers Jerónimo Delgado and Pankaj K Jha, in Chapters 2 and 4. Corridors are spatial development strategies that coordinate competitive connectivity efforts in different fields. They bring the strategic points of production, logistics and supply closer to urban centres where there is a secure demand. Megaprojects result in corridors with diverse objectives: transport corridors, storage and logistical corridors, corridors for energy security and maritime and communication corridors amongst others. They link

6 This is referred to by writers who analyse BRI in Central Asian lands especially, Azhar Serikkaliyeva, Chapter 11, Gökhan Tekir Chapter 12 and Diana Andrea Gómez in Chapter 13. Each one writes from the perspective of the implications of BRI for the country which they study: Kazakhstan, Turkey and China.

the special economic zones (ZEE) that have proliferated in the world as scenarios of relocation of production with new urban centres, intelligent cities, maritime infrastructure networks, railways and aerospace nets, while new financial flows are privileged. Plurilateralism, territorial development, normative flexibility and hyperglobalisation will take on the world (Khanna, 2017, p. 62).

Five centuries of Western domination have given way to a new power sharing and in this context, the trade war rumbling between the US and China has hit the most important bastion of modern globalization, free trade, threatened by a protectionist backlash led by the big economic powers, a kind of nationalist reawakening, the shielding of borders, but above all a scenario where Latin America has to play the strategic game. In such a scenario which writers analyse from different geographical areas and socio-political perspectives, unconditional affiliations to the West or to China do not hold good anymore. Ideological passion is uncalled for, but so is inactivity. Both extremes take refuge in a weak multilateral scenario, the calls for the implementation of a new world architecture sound like shots in the dark, while *big data* technologies, artificial intelligence, and connectivity instruments become consolidated like the new weapons and lead to new alignments where principles give way to calculations on a chessboard of temporary coalitions. The higher organs of multilateralism, whose most prestigious trade institutions have come under the scanner are impotent, just like a watery regionalism hindered by the difficulty of obtaining consensus which would allow for a better redistribution of wealth. How is Latin America preparing itself for the new world map? It is a question which we should begin to answer from this moment on and actively face the future, not postpone it for the last and become like spectators who cannot see the stage and have to improvise their own meanings.

6. ON THE AUTHORS AND THEIR VISION OF CORRIDORS AND BRI

Alexander Arciniegas, research professor of the Faculty of Social Sciences of the University of Santander in Colombia, opens this selection of chapters with an historical overview of the political and economic ascent of Communist China to enable the non-specialist reader to contextualize the phenomenon, and understand its geopolitical dimension. Arciniegas describes the China BRI Initiative, in order to evidence this country's desire to lead the transformation of the international order and influence the balance of power in its natural arena of Central Asia and South Asia where India has been the natural hegemon.

Pankaj K Jha, associate professor of strategic defense at Jindal Global University in New Delhi, has a chapter on "India's Economic Corridors and Sub-Regional Connectivity Challenges and Prospects". Here he deals with the evolution of economic corridors in India as a State decision and a national connectivity strategy and the inclusion of the majority in the last decade. Why must the largest democracy in the world focus its efforts on overcoming the functional infrastructure deficit? This question forms the crux of his analysis. After dwelling on the different theoretical perspectives, he calls attention to the industrial development and social inclusion aspirations of the only country in the region which can serve as a counterweight to Chinese aspirations. Jha presents an India in the throes of a complete physical and productive transformation heretofore unknown in the West. He analyses the challenges that have been met through the main megaprojects in the country, road networks such as the Golden Triangle and those that link the four cardinal points of the Indian subcontinent and join the traditional economic centres with those that are new. He presents the Sagarmala project that has advanced with the development of maritime coasts and the modernization of

port infrastructure and writes about the construction of rail corridors exclusively to transport cargo adding to riverine connectivity. These stakes in infrastructure, despite the difficulties in terms of implementation and development of adjacent areas, pay dividends in the national and subregional ambits. The connectivity inside the land mass territory of India connects its neighbours to the Indian Ocean and also favors the SAARC group of countries, even as it strengthens India's position in the deepening of initiatives like the India-Mekong economic corridor, the Indo-Pacific initiative, and those that join Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal and China (BBIN) and (BCIN).

In the chapter "Chinese Capital Flows to Africa in a Context of the Silk Road", Alicia Girón, researcher at the Autonomous University of Mexico, concentrates on Africa and through the *capital accumulation* theory explains the behaviour of Chinese Banks and the expansion of companies in this region. She presents the effects of the growing indebtedness of the beneficiary African states and the risks that other economies can also prevent if they decide to be part of the BRI initiative. The arguments refer to China's ability during the 2008 crisis to configure propitious scenarios for the exit of financial corporations from their territory and their metamorphosis into global companies at a time when the international economy was being transformed and a "capitalist model that administered money" today perceived as a parallel financial system was being strongly leveraged but not regulated. By reworking Rosa Luxemburg's thesis, Alicia Girón looks for the signs of what could be a new cycle of neocolonial domination. The growing Chinese presence in Africa after the fall of the Wall and its entry in the WTO is consolidated with BRI. China, a market economy controlled by the State manages to introduce structural transformations in the geography, political economy and the interests of beneficiary countries in its financial and cooperation projects. Most of the African

debt is private and repayment is also ensured through the barter system, a mechanism which acts a counter guarantee based on the supply of raw materials, a costly and subordinated mechanism, dangerous for vulnerable nations.

Jerónimo Delgado also devotes a chapter to Africa in this book. In the joint paper written with Juliana Andrea Guzmán Cárdenas, “Development Corridors in Africa: Foreign Policy and Regional Integration Strategies in the Global South”, the authors put forward various objectives: 1) understanding the meaning of the category *development corridors*. 2) Analysing the role of these new routes in the African Union through examples that illustrate and give information about connecting megaprojects effective for a few years now to connect African peoples with the ports as well as with the centre and south of the continent. 3) Laying down the challenges that these initiatives encounter in the region especially those related to security and indebtedness. The authors seek to demonstrate how the corridors in Africa have been used by China, India, Japan as a strategy of foreign policy and as a diplomatic tool that serves their interests, even as the people of the African Union employ them as an instrument of continental integration of connectivity and development. Throughout the analysis they use literature which privileges the African continent and this gives the publication an important added value and the reader thus benefits from little known sources of information and analysis.

Ahmad Saffee uses the discourse method of analysis in order to make a narrative around organisms which greatly influenced public opinion, such as think tanks and communication networks around the China-Pakistan (CPEC) economic corridor, the BRI project with the greatest scope in the Eurasia region. For this, he analyses the role of ISSI (Strategic Studies Institute in Islamabad), a highly influential nonprofit institution created in 1973, instrumental in the making of opinion in the country and in the region

on sensitive subjects such as regional security, terrorism, conflict resolution, migrations and functional connectivity. The geoeconomic and geostrategic impact of (CPEC) have strong repercussions on Pakistan and its neighbours and for this reason, the Centre has become a storehouse of information for its academic activity, dissemination, debate and research about thought and opinion building on economic corridors and the leadership of China in its implementation from 2013 till 2018. The results of the quantitative and qualitative analysis are an important reference point for Latin America, a late entrant in the debate, in order that it also know first-hand the way in which Chinese intelligence approaches the regions it deems strategic, the construction of an overarching discourse, the prioritization of Chinese and local interests, the prevailing concerns about public opinion and the various projects to overcome the socio-economic impact of BRI in their country. “China-Pakistan Economic Corridor: A Critical Discourse Analysis: Mapping Public Discourse in Pakistan: The Case Study of Institute of Strategic Studies”, is a valuable effort by the researcher in constructing benchmarks and deciphering the trends in the new integrationist narratives.

In their chapter “Resurgence of South-South Cooperation and China’s Belt and Road Initiative in Asia and Latin America”, Ume Farwa Guzanfar and Ali Garewal construct a narrative based on Chinese and Pakistani institutional reports, discourses of regional leaders, opinion articles and on discussions during academic seminars, in which the participants are those who decide on the formation of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) and promote the think tanks to which the authors are affiliated, a fact that allows them to measure the tenor of the debate in Pakistan. The article analyses the flagship project of the BRI initiative, the China-Pakistan economic corridor and its impact on the much longed for resurgence of a real South-South cooperation, which according to the authors should function within

its own conceptual framework, in a spirit of sustainable cooperation in order to achieve national commitment and interinstitutional cooperation of the countries involved and the assurances of a wide and diverse financing at the global, regional and subregional levels.

In his chapter, “Latin America Infrastructure Gap and the Arrival of Chinese Infrastructure Firms: Special Reference to the Argentina Case”, Leonardo E. Stanley, an economist and research associate of the Centre for the Study of State and Society (CEDES), makes a detailed analysis on the manner in which China approached Latin America as part of its politics of internationalisation (*go out*) of public and private enterprises in a political scenario which allowed it to leverage the consequences of the extended corruption in the continent, the political and financial instability that affected certain countries in the region as well as the institutional vacuum caused by government indifference, international banks and the private sector in the midst of the evident backwardness of infrastructure and functional connectivity. The researcher takes recourse to relevant primary sources (reports of multilateral agencies, governments, discourses of political leaders, statistics, and experts’ analysis in order to explain the vectors and incentives that enter the reckoning of the government and Chinese companies to make Latin America a strategic partner), to explain the nature of Chinese companies and their particular forms of financing and the way in which they adapt to the business environment of the region.

Paraguayan researcher Gustavo Cardozo, in his chapter “*El Mercosur en la búsqueda de Asia Pacífico*”, (Mercosur in the Search for the Asia Pacific), Paraguayan researcher Gustavo Cardozo uses a regional South American approach. He views the China BRI project in the framework of a clearer connection between the Pacific Alliance (PA) and the Common Market of the South (Mercosur) as they are apt zones for the development of biooceanic corridors and for their relevance and potential in port and logistical

matters necessary for strategic sectors such as mining. There are hardly any studies on the Chinese phenomenon and its presence in South America from a regional perspective, and so Cardoso uses studies and primary source information for this analysis produced by these two regional authorities as well as analysis done by multilateral bodies.

Kelly Arévalo, a Colombian researcher affiliated to the Centre of Studies on Contemporary India of the Externado University of Colombia (CESICAM), writes on the *“Del fortalecimiento de las fronteras a la conectividad: lecciones para el Sur de Asia y América del Sur”* (Strengthening of the Borders to Connectivity: Lessons for South Asia and South America), a comparative analysis in which she privileges the discipline of geography, which leads us to interpret the territory and functional geography as that which explains the new dynamics of interdependence, economic development, regional integration and the exercise of power. From the geographical space of South Asia, she highlights the limitations in connectivity and the consequences on trade and regional cohesion, the development possibilities that can open up corridors identified by regional groups such as SAARC more than a decade ago and India’s responsibility in overcoming these obstacles. For South America, Arevalo presents a similar situation: a precarious physical connectivity, unfinished projects, a weakening of regional structures which result in a slow internationalization, a marginalization of global supply chains and a slow rhythm movement in social cohesion.

Pío García, researcher and professor at the Externado University of Colombia takes a regional, multipolar and critical approach to the phenomenon of the economic corridors in South East Asia. Through an analysis of recent geopolitical history, he explains how the connectivity strategy of the region is also influenced by players different from China, especially India and Japan, nations which have different infrastructure solutions and which besides facilitating the

interconnectivity in the region, also introduce a balance of power. In his article *“El sudeste asiático en las nuevas rutas transcontinentales: Asean”* (South East Asia in the New Transcontinental Routes: ASEAN), García searches for answers to the impact that the two flagship projects of different scope and philosophies, BRI and the Asia-Africa Growth Corridor –AAGC, will have on the capacity of building consensus and in the centrality of decisions within ASEAN. Before giving us an informative analysis on the evolution of the grouping and its influence in the rise of other trans Asian initiatives, such as the Trans Pacific Association TPP and its updated version CPATPP, he refers to the forms of insertion of the South East Asian countries in the different mechanisms of cooperation. They are shown as not just searching for benefits in the field of physical connectivity, but also in the productive, social and environmental dynamics. According to García, although Latin America plays a strategic role as a provider of raw materials to China and emergent Asia, its States have lost the capacity to act in a unified manner in regional fora, its groups no longer have the ability to negotiate and are institutionally weak.

With a regional vision, but this time from Central Asia, Azhar Serikkaliyeva, in his chapter *“The Role of the Central Asian Region in China’s New Silk Road Economic Belt Project, the Case of Kazakhstan”*, analyses how China strategically constructs segmented dynamics in foreign policy, apparent in the diplomatic orientation called *“Two Fronts and a Circle”* that divides relations with great and emergent powers, as opposed to those that should be constructed in the framework of a peripheral diplomacy. BRI aims to build bridges with developing countries, above all those at the borders and which are strategic for its connectivity objectives. Other regional bodies like the Eurasian Economic Union (EEU) created to counter Chinese influence finally engaged with the BRI initiative believing it to be the best option for regional development. The strategic subjects relating to

China and its neighbours, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, which together with India and Pakistan are part of the Shanghai Cooperation Council (SCO), all engaged at some point of time with the definition of borders and once this was achieved, they have been ensuring strategies that guarantee national security, the supply of natural resources, especially through energy and gas corridors in the region, counter terrorism and the development of trade infrastructure so as to make of Central Asia a logistical bridge that joins China with Europe. The author mainly uses official sources of regional institutions, reports by international bodies as well as studies by Eurasian authors who specialize in the subject.

Gökhan Tekir is a Turkish researcher at the Middle East Technical University METU, from Smyrna, one of the most liberal regions of the Anatolian peninsula. His vision on the strategic albeit sensitive role of Turkey in the successful implementation of the China initiative (BRI) is presented through a geopolitical analysis with the title "Turkey and the Belt and Road Initiative". The author focuses on how his country's relation with China affects political stability, and he takes as his reference point one segment of the six transport routes proposed by China for crossing Central Asia. This is the one that avoids the Russian pass on the stretch that joins Baku in Azerbaijan with Tbilisi in Georgia and Kars in the east of Turkey (BTK). The author shows how Turkey's decision to join BRI is compatible with the infrastructure and connectivity plans which the Turkish government has been putting into effect for more than a decade now. Turkey is the last port of call in Asia in order to reach Europe, and the megaprojects of rail and road transport on land and sea have to go through Istanbul. Modern infrastructure works are being built in the peninsula of Asia Minor and in the Bosphorus. In contrast to other countries within BRI, the Turkish private sector has an important participation in the construction, management and administration of

projects as well as in the national banking system. Tekir's analysis in chapter 12 studies the political risks inside the Turkish nation. Although Turkey's close cultural and economic ties with the Turk people of Central Asia (who have the same Altaic linguistic roots), guarantees the acceptance of the Chinese presence throughout the region, the plight of the Chinese Muslims is a matter of grave concern to the Turkish side. The government's closeness to China after the coup attempt against it in 2016, is the subject of intense debates inside political parties and also affects the relations of the government and business community.

In contrast to Azhar Serikkaliyeva's regional focus in chapter 11 on BRI and Central Asia, Diana Andrea Gómez, researcher at the Institute of Political Studies and International Relations (IEPRI) National University of Colombia in her piece "Belt & Road Initiative (BRI) the Cities and their Geopolitical Significance", refers to the initiative as essentially a foreign policy strategy which will benefit the backward regions of East China. The national objectives of development, internationalization and security are reflected in the foreign policy of the country that geostrategically elevate border relations to the same status as the relations with the United States. Diplomacy of the periphery, active development policies, Go West, energy diplomacy are some of the policies that have received a boost through BRI. The cities in this new geography play a fundamental role in the development of connection axes, consumers of goods such as energy resource products all of which favors regional stability.

CONCLUSION

China's ascent is undeniable, even if not sudden and immediate. A unipolar landscape will not be sustainable, although the fall of the United States is just an ideological discourse with little substance. But if there is no balance of

power among regions and multipolarity is just cosmetic, we will go from one hegemon to another or face another worrisome scenario. The BRI initiative is part of the Chinese endeavour to internationalise its companies and financial corporations, it is also an efficacious narrative built on the relationship with developing countries. Colombia and Latin America should responsibly define their strategy, because they are being urged to clarify their positions which will impact the new world geography. Academics have to be present in this debate and businessmen should also come out of their comfort zones and become facilitators in matters of integration and connectivity. Those who design development policies should assume their responsibilities as part of one State and not as bureaucrats of a government on duty.

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1. LA NUEVA RUTA DE LA SEDA: CONTEXTO HISTÓRICO Y ASPECTOS GEOPOLÍTICOS DE LA ESTRATEGIA GLOBAL DE CHINA

ALEXÁNDER ARCINIEGAS CARREÑO

RESUMEN

Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) es una estrategia del presidente chino Xi Jinping lanzada en 2013 que, desde una fundamentación geopolítica, enfatiza la importancia de Eurasia para consolidar un sistema chicéntrico¹. A través de ella, el gigante asiático busca alcanzar sus prioridades nacionales (crecimiento económico, estabilidad de su régimen político, entre otros) y enfrentar sus desafíos geopolíticos. De este modo, logra influir en la nueva configuración del poder internacional. Lo anterior, tiene impacto sobre América Latina.

Palabras clave: Obor, China, India, Eurasia

ABSTRACT

Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) is a strategy of the Chinese president Xi Jinping launched in 2013 that, from a geopolitical foundation, emphasizes the importance of Eurasia

1 Esta es la traducción al español del término sistema sinocéntrico formulado por Pautasso y Ungaretti (2017).

to consolidate a Chinese-Centric system. Through BRI, the Asian giant seeks to achieve its national priorities (economic growth, stability of its political regime, among others) and face its geopolitical challenges. In this way, it manages to influence the new international power's configuration, which has an impact on Latin America.

Key words: OBOR, China, India, Eurasia.

INTRODUCCIÓN

La ascensión económica y política de China es uno de los fenómenos más inquietantes de la política internacional del siglo XXI. Este proceso que tiene como protagonista a un pueblo multifacético, multirregional y multiétnico (Chun, 2013), articulado a través de una identidad plural y dinámica, tiene como punto de arranque las reformas modernizadoras promovidas por Deng Xiaoping a finales de los años setenta y que, desde entonces, se encaminan a concretar los objetivos chinos de largo plazo: la primacía del desarrollo para apalancar el crecimiento económico y la estabilidad de su sistema socialista (Ploberger, 2017).

De allí que resulte crucial estudiar la manera cómo Beijing viene mostrando una mayor asertividad a nivel internacional, en virtud de una autoestima que se basa tanto en su milenario pasado imperial como en el crecimiento de sus actuales capacidades materiales, lo que tiene efectos en el sistema internacional.

Este protagonismo desde 2013 se concreta en *One Belt One Road* (Obor), hoy *Belt and Road Initiative* (BRI), iniciativa bandera del presidente Xi Jinping que combina un componente terrestre que transita e integra Eurasia; al que se suma una ruta marítima que nace en los puertos chinos y alcanza el Mediterráneo pasando por el océano Índico y la costa africana.

Sin embargo, el presente capítulo busca evidenciar que Obor no es simplemente una etiqueta para un plan colosal de inversiones económicas, sino que hace parte de la estrategia

china para hacer valer sus intereses políticos y económicos en escala regional y global; dicho de otro modo, se trata de una iniciativa de conectividad y cooperación dirigida a potenciar su influencia en Eurasia a través del control de recursos energéticos estratégicos, impactando así mismo la dinámica política mundial. De allí que sea importante subrayar que la Ruta de la Seda se acompaña de un esfuerzo robusto de China para modernizar y fortalecer sus fuerzas armadas, principalmente su poder marítimo, como lo evidencia el avance de su industria naval que, además de su importancia internacional, ya fabrica sus propios portaviones, o la reciente instalación de la base de Yibuti en el cuerno de África como parte del denominado “Collar de Perlas” (ver figura 4).

De esta manera este primer capítulo busca, a partir de las perspectivas realistas y de la escuela inglesa de relaciones internacionales, describir Obor como parte de una nueva estrategia geopolítica del gigante asiático que, con foco en Asia Central y el Sudeste Asiático, evidencia sus ambiciones de asumir un rol más activo y transformador del orden internacional.

Para los fines de este capítulo, se usa el concepto de poder en el sentido weberiano; es decir, en la capacidad de maximizar la propia voluntad independiente de la voluntad de terceros, es decir, la capacidad de un actor para alcanzar sus objetivos influenciando a otros, lo que conduce a decisiones por parte de estos que no habían sido posibles sin el ejercicio de esta influencia o “dominación” (López, s.f.; Weber, 2014). Coincidiendo con lo anterior, cuando se habla de “esfera de influencia” se alude a una relación de fuerzas en que los Estados que componen una región conceden “deferencias” a los intereses de la “potencia dominante” a la hora de definir sus propias políticas (López, s.f.).

Este capítulo de alcance exploratorio se ha construido a partir de una metodología cualitativa e interpretativa; se fundamentó en una revisión de documentos oficiales, fuentes bibliográficas y periodísticas. Para tal fin se estructura en

cuatro partes: en primer lugar se presentan los cambios en la inserción internacional china desde 1949; posteriormente, se detallan los aspectos logísticos, normativos e institucionales de Obor; a continuación se presenta la geopolítica que rodea esta iniciativa con foco en la importancia de Eurasia y su *Heartland*; por último, se describe el contexto de seguridad que ha impedido una participación de la India en el proyecto en los términos deseados por Beijing. Concluyendo así con unas breves consideraciones generales en las que se resalta que la proyección internacional china también alcanza a Colombia, y al conjunto de Latinoamérica, lo que plantea desafíos en términos de política exterior.

1. LOS CAMBIOS EN LA INSERCIÓN INTERNACIONAL CHINA Y LA EMERGENCIA DE OBOR

En las dos décadas que siguieron a la instauración de la República Popular China, y en virtud del aislamiento internacional a que esta fue sometida, la diplomacia china, conducida por Chu En Lai, hizo de la reinsertión del país en el sistema de la Organización de las Naciones Unidas (ONU) su prioridad (Visentini, 2012). A comienzos de los sesenta la ONU era una “compleja área política” por cuenta de una menor influencia estadounidense, acompañada de cambios en la política internacional como: la *détente*; la autonomía francesa y china; la recuperación de Japón y Europa occidental; el “nacionalismo latinoamericano”; la descolonización africana y asiática que impulsó la creación de los No Alineados (Visentini, 2012).

El desgaste del maoísmo y los conflictos fronterizos con la Unión de Repúblicas Socialistas Soviéticas² (URSS) en 1969

2 Durante la guerra fría, los conflictos fronterizos entre China y la Unión Soviética desencadenaron enfrentamientos militares en que cientos de miles de soldados se encontraron en las remotas tierras siberianas. En 1969 había 53 divisiones del ejército soviético en la orilla rusa de los ríos Amur y Ussuri.

y, más adelante, la mayor influencia soviética en Asia Pacífico, condujeron a que a partir de 1971 ideas reformistas se abrieran espacio; China se acercó a los Estados Unidos en la llamada “Diplomacia del Ping Pong”, y con ello obtuvo un asiento en el Consejo de Seguridad y el reconocimiento de su régimen por parte de los principales países capitalistas con los que normalizó sus relaciones diplomáticas (Visentini, 2012).

La “alianza táctica” con Washington se fundamentó en la Teoría de los tres mundos de Deng Xiaoping, que enfatizaba la crítica al “social-imperialismo” de la URSS, trajo también ventajas económicas y tecnológicas a China (Visentini, 2012).

Una nueva fase de la política externa china empezó en 1978 con la normalización de las relaciones con Tokio y Washington, para impulsar una estrategia de desarrollo de largo plazo basada en la modernización industrial, agrícola, militar y científico-tecnológica. Ese año tuvo lugar el XI Comité Central del Partido Comunista chino que definió las directrices de la política de Reforma y Apertura para enfrentar la crisis política y económica y el aislamiento internacional, dando prioridad a la reconstrucción nacional (Pautasso & Ungaretti, 2016). Este esfuerzo modernizador exigió mayor interacción con el mercado internacional y una apertura selectiva del país para captar capital y tecnología del extranjero en las Zonas Económicas Especiales (ZEE), al tiempo que supo aprovechar sus “ventajas comparativas”: razonable base industrial, un sistema de producción energética y de transporte, algunos nichos tecnológicos, estabilidad sociopolítica y una mano de obra barata (Visentini, 2012).

En esta coyuntura, China intensificó su actuación en la ONU aprovechando la recuperación de su “legitimidad

A esto Mao respondió desplegando un millón de soldados en su frontera y construyendo refugios antiaéreos en las principales ciudades chinas. Ver KAPLAN (2013).

internacional". Con el problema de Taiwán ocupando un lugar destacado y en medio de la inestabilidad internacional creada por la intervención vietnamita en Camboya con apoyo soviético, China se alió a los Estados Unidos y a Europa occidental recibiendo créditos y obteniendo de vuelta Hong Kong y Macao en 1997 y 1999 respectivamente; enclaves capitalistas incorporadas bajo el principio "un país dos sistemas" (Visentini, 2012). La desconfianza frente a las ambiciones de la URSS en Asia Pacífico y las disputas fronterizas con Moscú llevaron a China a aproximarse a los países de la Asociación de Naciones del Sureste Asiático (Asean) (Singapur, Filipinas, Indonesia, Malasia, Tailandia y Brunei), debilitando diplomáticamente a Taiwán y asociándose a la dinámica económica regional (Visentini, 2012).

El fin de la guerra fría y la implosión de la Unión Soviética modificaron el cuadro estratégico en que China había materializado su inserción internacional como instrumento para contener al comunismo soviético. La forma subordinada en que la antigua URSS fue incorporada al sistema mundial generó una convergencia de fuerzas políticas en Estados Unidos (EUA), Taiwán y dentro de China para intentar hacer lo propio con la República Popular China, aprovechando las tensiones sociales derivadas del crecimiento económico del país y la división dentro de su élite política (Visentini, 2012).

En este contexto surge el "movimiento por la democracia" liderado por Zhao Ziyang, en el que participaron estudiantes, jóvenes empresarios y los "ultrarreformistas" del Partido Comunista Chino (PCC) que desembocó en las masivas movilizaciones de Tianamen en 1989 que, aunque contaron con el apoyo de intereses extranjeros y de la prensa internacional en sus demandas de una "democracia liberal", fueron reprimidos por los "neoautoritarios", encabezados por Deng Xiaoping, quienes apelaron al ejército (Visentini, 2012).

Así mismo, durante la guerra del golfo, China adoptó una postura diplomática basada en los principios de

autodeterminación y regionalmente buscó restablecer relaciones con Vietnam, Corea del Sur, mejorar sus relaciones con India e intensificar la cooperación con Rusia en materia económica y estratégica. Al tiempo que EUA y Europa adoptaban un tono crítico con su estrategia de desarrollo económico, su régimen político y los derechos de minorías étnicas, concretamente del Tíbet; imponiéndole embargos comerciales, financieros y tecnológico-militares. En esa coyuntura y una vez neutralizada la oposición interna, el gobierno chino mantuvo las reformas económicas, el “sistema político socialista” bajo la premisa de este no es incompatible con una “economía de mercado” (Visentini, 2012). La idea de Deng Xiaoping de un socialismo con características propias triunfó en el XIV Congreso del PCC de 1992, al tiempo que la economía creció a tasas superiores al 10% (Visentini, 2012).

A finales de los noventa, ante la reunificación de China y Hong Kong, y en medio de la profunda crisis económica y financiera que afectó a Japón, Indonesia, Corea del Sur y Tailandia, los Estados Unidos promovieron “alianzas anti-china” en Asia; revivieron la cuestión de Taiwán y fortalecieron el independentismo en el Tíbet; instalaron un sistema antimisiles en Asia oriental, involucrando a Taiwán, Japón y Corea del Sur (Visentini, 2012).

En la primera década del siglo XXI, China con Hu Jintao continuó la pretensión de los gobiernos anteriores de construir un orden internacional “multipolar” y fortalecer a la ONU. Buscando conquistar el nivel de “grande potencia” priorizó los lazos con América Latina, África y medio Oriente en la búsqueda de recursos energéticos y materias primas indispensables para sostener su crecimiento económico. De allí que aumentara su influencia económica en Latinoamérica, sustituyendo a Estados Unidos como principal socio comercial de países como Brasil (Agencia Brasil, 2017; Visentini, 2012). Las relaciones con Taiwán si bien tuvieron una dinámica más positiva, continuaron atravesadas por la desconfianza en materia de seguridad pues, mientras

China amenazó a la isla con misiles balísticos de corto alcance; Washington, en virtud de la *Taiwan Relations Act*, se convirtió en su principal aliado y proveedor de armamento (Visentini, 2012).

En la esfera regional China ha procurado afianzar sus relaciones con los países vecinos y consolidar su influencia en Asia, lo que despierta el recelo de Japón e India; tensiones que a su vez remiten a las disputas territoriales por las islas Senkaku-Diaoyu y los arrecifes de Okinotori, y por las regiones en disputa en Kashimira y Arunachal Pradesh, respectivamente (Kaplan, 2013; Visentini, 2012). A lo anterior se suma la propia disputa por petróleo y gas para sostener su crecimiento económico y sus objetivos de política externa (Cepik, 2009). De allí que, tanto China como India, hayan modernizado sus fuerzas armadas; mientras la disputa regional se torna más compleja por la presencia de Estados Unidos en Asia, que se ha valido de Japón e India para contener a China (Visentini, 2012).

Mientras tanto, la estrategia de China ha consistido en “ganar tiempo”, fortaleciendo su economía, tecnología y fuerzas armadas para sostener su desarrollo económico y, en el largo plazo, transformar el sistema internacional (Visentini, 2012). Con la llegada de la “Quinta Generación” de dirigentes que tienen como directriz mantener el régimen modernizándolo. Con Xi Jinping, presidente desde 2013, el país ha continuado el proceso de modernización militar con el objeto de aumentar su potencial disuasivo y mantener la estabilidad regional, esto ha conllevado modificaciones doctrinarias, reemplazando el concepto de “guerra popular” y “defensa del territorio” por el de “guerra local”, con la utilización intensiva de alta tecnología. Así mismo, redujo un tercio los efectivos del Ejército. Transformaciones que apuntan a solventar sus principales problemas de seguridad: los separatismos en el Tíbet y en Xinjiang; la proyección y fortalecimiento de su marina en el mar del sur, garantizando su “seguridad energética”, considerando

que el 80% del petróleo que importa pasa por el estrecho de Malaca (Visentini, 2012). Por su parte, Kaplan (2013) sostiene que el fortalecimiento del poder naval chino apunta a recuperar el Pacífico y el Índico como parte de su geografía. No resulta casual entonces que China tenga el segundo mayor gasto bélico del mundo con US\$228.000 millones en 2017 (Stockholm International Peace Research Institute [Sipri], 2018).

En 2013, Xi Jinping, al participar en el XVI encuentro de Asean-China, en un discurso sobre cooperación en infraestructura y seguridad regional en el Parlamento de Indonesia, anunció su principal iniciativa de política exterior: Obor (Pautasso & Ungaretti, 2016). Esta propone desarrollar dos corredores: Uno terrestre o franja económica que articula a China, Mongolia y Rusia; China-Asia Central; China, Paquistán; China, Myanmar-Bangladesh-India y Asean y China, Corea del Sur y Japón. Y una ruta marítima que va desde la costa china hasta el mar Mediterráneo pasando por el océano Indico y el golfo Pérsico (Concatti, 2017).

Este proyecto de integración transcontinental, planeado hasta 2049 y que ya alcanza regiones como América Latina (Escobar, 2018) y Oceanía; aglutina actualmente el 66% de la población mundial; 75% de las reservas de energía e inversiones del orden de 1.3 trillones de dólares (Concatti, 2017, p. 178).

Sin embargo, los ambiciosos planes chinos en el ámbito de Obor encuentran desafíos importantes: conflictos por recursos naturales, problemas ambientales, activismos de organizaciones no gubernamentales (ONG) ambientales extranjeras y sabotaje de grupos extremistas; desestabilización y crisis económicas; inseguridad jurídica e inversiones con retorno de largo plazo (Concatti, 2017; Yiwei, 2016). Esto para no mencionar la dificultad que tiene Beijing para conciliar los intereses muchas veces de los contratantes, de más de seis decenas de países en sus principales focos geográficos Asia central y el sudeste asiático (Ploberger, 2017).

2. LOS CAMINOS DE LA RUTA DE LA SEDA: FRANJA TERRESTRE Y RUTA MARÍTIMA; NATURALEZA, PRINCIPIOS, EJES DE ACTUACIÓN E INSTITUCIONALIDAD

La nueva Ruta de la Seda es una iniciativa que apunta a la integración de Eurasia posicionando a China como “pivó” y que se extiende hasta África, Europa y Medio Oriente (Pautasso, & Ungaretti, 2016; Visentini, 2012). Esto, en un contexto en que Moscú pierde su antigua influencia en el Sureste Asiático; Japón pierde su lugar como polo económico en Asia oriental y Washington concentra su poder militar en oriente medio (Pautasso & Ungaretti, 2016).

China tiene a favor su peso económico como responsable del 11% del consumo mundial de petróleo; 54% del consumo de aluminio y 45% del consumo de acero (Scherer (2015), citado por Pautasso & Ungaretti, (2016)); un desarrollo que luego de tres décadas se refleja en sus “capacidades estatales”, ello la impulsan a buscar un equilibrio entre sus prioridades internas: crecimiento económico, estabilidad política e integridad territorial y una mayor influencia internacional (Pautasso & Ungaretti, 2016).

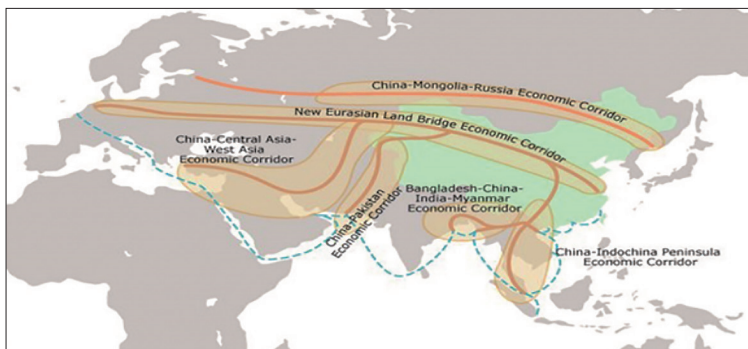
En lo relativo a su papel internacional, aunque el protagonismo chino en las instituciones de gobernanza global viene creciendo desde la apertura económica de finales de los setenta, se ha intensificado en la última década en la medida en que su extraordinario auge económico y la crisis de 2008 abrieron oportunidades para que la noción de “ascenso pacífico”, promulgada en 2003, fuera sustituida por “el sueño chino”, directriz aprobada en el XVIII Congreso del Partido Comunista Chino (PCC) celebrado en 2012 y que se orienta a apuntalar una nueva arquitectura financiera global y la construcción de la nueva Ruta de la Seda (Pautasso & Ungaretti, 2016).

Concretamente, Obor propone: atravesar Asia, Europa y África conectando Asia oriental con Europa. Para tal efecto contempla el denominado Cinturón Económico que

conecta China a Asia central, Rusia y Europa (Báltico); conectando también a China con el golfo Pérsico y el mar Mediterráneo mediante Asia central y Asia oriental; para, por otro lado, conectar a China con el sudeste asiático, Asia meridional y el océano Índico. La ruta marítima, por su parte, integra dos rutas: China a Europa desde el mar del Sur de China y el océano Índico; China, Pacífico sur y mar del Sur de China (CNRD, 2015 citado por Pautasso & Ungaretti, 2016).

De acuerdo con estas cinco rutas, y partiendo de la infraestructura logística, actualmente existente un conjunto de ciudades y puertos importantes. Obor pretende potenciar seis “corredores económicos internacionales”: a) China-Mongolia-Rusia; b) *New Eurasian Land Bridge*; c) China-Asia Central-Asia Occidental; d) Bangladesh-China-India-Myanmar; e) China-Península Indochina; f) China-Paquistán (Pautasso & Ungaretti, 2016). Ver mapa 1.

MAPA 1: CORREDORES ECONÓMICOS INTERNACIONALES



Fuente: Pautasso & Ungaretti (2016)

En última instancia, según Pautasso y Ungaretti (2016), Obor se orienta a crear una red de transportes y a modernizar y crear infraestructura: ferrovías, carreteras, puertos, aeropuertos, gasoductos, oleoductos y líneas de transmisión

y comunicación que, además de mejorar la integración en Eurasia, potenciarán un mercado que aglutina 64 países, 4.400 millones de personas, un PIB de 21 trillones de dólares y 29% de la producción global. Al mismo tiempo, Obor revela la “visión estratégica” de Beijing no solo para conducir la integración de Eurasia sino para responder a los siguientes desafíos: limitar la penetración estadounidense en la región a través del Acuerdo Transpacífico en revisión por la administración Trump; limitar amenazas a su seguridad, evitar el separatismo, contener el fundamentalismo y terrorismo de matriz islamita en el oeste chino; al igual que disputas territoriales como las que enfrenta en el mar del Sur de China; consolidar la internacionalización de su economía mediante obras de infraestructura en el exterior y de la creación de bancos multilaterales de desarrollo; y, por último, crear un mercado para su industria, diversificar sus rutas de importación de recursos energéticos y ampliar su suministro (Pautasso & Ungaretti, 2016).

Para tal fin impulsa “proyectos regionales” de infraestructura. Es el caso del corredor económico entre China y Paquistán (CPEC) en el que sobresale la hidroeléctrica de Karot en el río Jhelum, la explotación carbonífera y la construcción de plantas de energía solar y eólica; la modernización de la ferrovía de Karakoram y la construcción del puerto de Gwadar (Pautasso & Ungaretti, 2016). Este último considerado “cabeza de puente” de la nueva Ruta de la Seda fue inaugurado recientemente en su primera fase.

También está el corredor Bangladesh-China-India y Myanmar para la terminación de una estructura multimodal de 2800 kilómetros entre Kunming en el sur de China y Kolkata en el noreste de India³. Aparece igualmente el

3 El capítulo 2, dedicado a India, y el capítulo 10, que trata sobre el sudeste asiático y Asean, hacen referencia con mayor detalle a este corredor y al Mekong cada uno con una perspectiva distinta.

corredor China-Asia Central-Asia Occidental, en él se destaca un tren de alta velocidad entre Urumqi (Xinjiang) en el noroeste chino y Alemania. Así mismo, está el corredor entre China e Indochina que reduce los costos logísticos de Indonesia, Filipinas, Camboya y Myanmar al potenciar la integración económica de la parte continental del sudeste asiático conectándose luego con los “trechos marítimos” y utilizando la plataforma política de la sub región de Gran Mekong (GMS) mecanismo que complementa la zona de libre comercio China-Asean y está compuesto por Camboya, China, Laos, Myanmar, Tailandia y Vietnam (Pautasso & Ungaretti, 2016; Vov World, 2018).

En la región de Mekong también China ha impulsado la hidroeléctrica de Sambor Dam en Camboya; obra que, de acuerdo con ONG estadounidenses y del gobierno vietnamita, tendría impactos negativos ambientales y sociales (Sputnik, 2018; Vov World, 2018). Al tiempo que la complementación de la red férrea de la región, articulando la *Greater Mekong Subregion* (GMS) y conectando Kunming en China con Singapur. En general, la proyección China para esta región genera cooperación y conflicto con India (Pautasso & Ungaretti, 2016).

Otros proyectos chinos se encaminaron a la creación y modernización de puertos en Sri Lanka, Myanmar y Bangladesh. En el primer caso, sobresale el desarrollo del puerto de Hambantota. En Myanmar se destaca el puerto de Kyaukphyu que conecta con el océano Índico ofreciendo una alternativa para la importación de energía que hoy debe pasar por el estrecho de Malaca; aprovechando la red de oleoductos y gasoductos existentes entre la costa de Myanmar y Nanning en China. A lo anterior se suma la creación de una Zona Económica Especial en la provincia de Rakhine (Pautasso & Ungaretti, 2016). En Bangladesh los proyectos más importantes apuntan al puerto de Chittagong y la construcción de autopistas y vías férreas entre China y Bangladesh (Pautasso & Ungaretti, 2016).

Obor también alcanza la costa oriental de África en donde hay una intensa actuación del empresariado chino. *China Communication Construction Company* (CCCC) trabaja en la expansión del puerto de Lamu en Kenia; el 23,5% del estratégico puerto de Yibuti en el cuerno de África opera bajo control de *China Merchants Holding (International) Company Ltd* (CMCH); también *China Harbour Engineering Company* (CHEC) trabaja en la construcción del nuevo puerto en Bagamoyo (Tanzania) y en el puerto de Maputo (Mozambique); mientras en la operación del terminal de cargas del puerto de Dar es Salaam (Tanzania) actúa *Hutchins Port Holdings Ltd* (HPH) (Pautasso & Ungaretti, 2016; Putten & Mejinders, 2015). Y también en puertos de la costa occidental africana, como: Kribi (Camerún), Libreville (Gabón) y Tema (Togo). Finalmente, la construcción de vías férreas y carreteras conectando occidente-orienté apunta a favorecer el comercio intra-africano y a integrar las economías del continente con la economía mundial y principalmente, con China (LIM, 2015).

De acuerdo con el gobierno chino Obor busca relaciones “win-win” y desarrolla los “Principios de Coexistencia Pacífica”; es decir, en el respeto mutuo por la soberanía e integridad territorial, no agresión mutua, no interferencia en los asuntos internos de otros países, igualdad y beneficio mutuo, que son las bases de su política exterior (Chinese Embassy, 2014). De allí que, como afirma Yiwei (2016) citado por Pautasso y Ungaretti (2016), a diferencia de la globalización tradicional, Obor tendría un carácter más inclusivo que se traduce en los “cinco factores de conectividad”: comunicación política; conectividad de infraestructura; comercio sin obstáculos; circulación monetaria y entendimiento entre personas. Así mismo, es importante advertir que el énfasis de las inversiones chinas prioriza el desarrollo nacional, mientras las políticas neoliberales ponen el foco en el ajuste y acaban profundizando el espiral recesivo y la desigualdad (Bandeira, 2016).

Pese a lo anterior, en países claves dentro de los macroproyectos (González, 2018) hay preocupación por el nivel de endeudamiento con China, lo que constituye un desafío para el *Soft Power* del gigante asiático (Ebbinghausen, 2018).

En Maldivas el gobierno del presidente Ibrahim Solih ha puesto en el centro del debate este asunto contrastando con su antecesor el prochino Abdulla Yameen, acusado de corrupción en los contratos de infraestructura. En el caso de Pakistán, la cercanía de este país con los intereses chinos no ha impedido que surjan cuestionamientos sobre el desbordamiento de los costos financieros de los compromisos con China, a lo que se agrega la violencia del separatista Ejército de Liberación de Baluchistan (BLA) que combate la presencia china en esa provincia del sudoeste del país, rica en recursos energéticos y donde se asienta el puerto de Gwadar (Hassan, 2018). En Sri Lanka, la inconformidad se expresa tanto frente los niveles de endeudamiento como a la tasa de interés, situación que ha dado lugar a evidentes muestras de descontento frente a Obor, como la que tomó las calles de Colombo en 2015 (Macan, 2019). Este sentimiento de animadversión frente a los proyectos chinos en la población también es fuerte en Camboya (Ebbighausen, 2018), pese a que su primer ministro Hun Sen, en el poder desde 1998, es aliado de Beijing. Algo similar ocurre en Djibuoti, Kirguistán, Laos y Tayikistán (González, 2018).

Para apalancar las inversiones de sus 900 proyectos (Concatti, 2017), en 2014 se creó el fondo para la Obor con 40 billones de dólares. Al mismo tiempo, China se consolida internacionalmente como exportador de inversión extranjera directa (IED), solventando el déficit de inversiones en infraestructura desde la crisis de 2008 en los países en desarrollo. En tal sentido, El *Global McKinsey Institute* estimó en 2016 que las necesidades de desarrollo en infraestructura de los países emergentes son del orden de US\$ 3,3 trillones anuales hasta el 2030 (Díaz, 2017).

Instituciones como el *Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank* (AIIB), creado en 2008 con la participación de 4 miembros del G-7, sobre el que Estados Unidos no tiene control directo, cuyo común denominador es atender a la demanda de inversión en infraestructura estimada en unos US\$800.000 millones anuales en Asia y el Pacífico (ADB, 2016); el *China Development Bank* (CDB); *China-African Development Bank* (CADB), *New Development Bank* (NDB) o Banco de los Brics; son las bases de Obor; pero también de una nueva arquitectura financiera con que Beijing cuestiona las instituciones de Bretton Woods y empieza a perfilarse como un *revisionist power* en términos de la gobernanza global (Ploberger, 2017; Vadell & Ramos, 2015). De este modo es evidente el creciente papel de China como “pivó” de los procesos de integración en Asia y sus propósitos de conformar un “sistema regional chinocéntrico” a partir del cual, consolidando su influencia en el este de Asia, podría influenciar la nueva configuración del poder mundial (Pautasso & Ungaretti, 2016). Lo anterior, como ya se anotó, a partir de sus abundantes capacidades en términos de reservas internacionales; industrias básicas concretamente cementeras, siderúrgicas con gran capacidad productiva, y un impresionante *know-how* en ingeniería en general, que vienen al encuentro de las necesidades de cualquier país en desarrollo en aspectos como infraestructura de transporte, comunicaciones y energía, principalmente en Asia central y sudeste y sur de Asia (Pautasso & Ungaretti, 2016).

3. ASIA CENTRAL: RECURSOS E IMPORTANCIA ESTRATÉGICA PARA CHINA

De modo general, la región de Eurasia es importante en términos geopolíticos por sus recursos energéticos y por su importancia logística (López, s.f.). Dentro de este territorio sobresale lo que Mackinder llamó la *Heartland* (Dougherty, 2003), que va desde Europa oriental hasta los confines de

Asia oriental. De norte a sur se extiende desde la línea del Círculo Ártico hasta los desiertos y montañas del sur de Asia (López, s.f.). Así mismo, Eurasia posee importantes cuerpos de agua como el mar Báltico, el mar Negro, el mar Caspio y el golfo Pérsico. Por su parte, el *Heartland* o área pivote es una región interior casi inaccesible por medios navales, excepto por los mares Báltico y Negro; protegida por el norte por nieve y hielo y por el sur por desiertos y montañas (López, s.f.).

Según Mackinder, la potencia que controle el *Heartland* dominará, así mismo, la Isla Mundial que engloba Europa, Asia y África y tendría la mayor capacidad para proyectar poder a nivel global (Dougherty, 2003). De acuerdo con Brzezinski, citado por López (s.f.), los tres frentes claves para dominar Eurasia son el territorio ubicado en el extremo oeste en la división entre Europa oriental y occidental; extremo oriente particularmente, Asia oriental y en tercer lugar el suroeste de Eurasia desde los límites entre India y China hasta Asia central y meridional. Llegando incluso a Irán. De modo que cada uno de estos frentes tiene “Estados pinos” o Estados claves que, en virtud de sus recursos, localización estratégica o influencia política, pero también de sus vulnerabilidades militares o económicas, son atraídos por la influencia de potencias mayores (López, s.f.). De suerte que la articulación de estos Estados en regiones como Asia central o el sudeste asiático impulsan la consolidación de la esfera de influencia china (López, s.f.).

En este sentido, conforme con Mackinder, la dominación de Eurasia a comienzos del siglo xx se hizo posible en virtud de los avances tecnológicos en el transporte terrestre y fundamentalmente del ferrocarril (Dougherty, 2003). Como se anotó, Eurasia posee importantes recursos energéticos (Ver Cuadro 1) y si a esta importancia estratégica se le agrega una red eficiente de infraestructura y la “proyección de influencia” por parte de Beijing, lo que le facilita a su vez el acceso a los recursos energéticos de oriente medio que

ostenta el 48% de las reservas mundiales de petróleo, es posible afirmar que China tiene claro en su estrategia que el acceso de recursos energéticos es un factor de poder y que a esta racionalidad responde Obor (López, s.f.).

TABLA 1: RESERVAS GLOBALES DE PETRÓLEO 2005-2015
EN MILLONES DE BARRILES

Regiones	2005	2007	2009	2011	2013	2015
Eurasia	77.8	98.9	98.9	98.9	118.9	141.1
Europa	17.6	15.8	13.7	12.1	12.0	14.2
Medio oriente	729.3	739.2	746.0	725.9	802.2	803.5
Asia pacífico	36.3	33.4	34.0	40.2	45.4	42.6
Norteamérica	215.9	213.9	209.1	210.8	216.8	238.0
Centroamérica y Suramérica	100.6	102.8	122.7	237.1	325.9	329.2
África	100.8	114.1	117.1	123.6	127.7	129.1
Totales mundiales	1.278.4	1.318	1.341.4	1.475.7	1.648.9	1697.6

Nota: Recuperado de *A Nova Rota da Seda: a fundamentação geopolítica e as consequências estratégicas do projeto chinês*. Copyright por Ricardo López.

Asu vez, Ploberger (2017) afirma que la emergencia de una interdependiente y conectada Eurasia transformaría la política global. De suerte que, Asia central como corazón de Eurasia, es uno de los objetivos cruciales para China (Ploberger, 2017), que como se dijo antes, en virtud de su dinamismo económico busca revivir su pasado de grandeza representado en la figura del almirante Zheng He, desarrollando nuevas ambiciones hacia una mayor proyección global derivadas, en parte, de nuevas “inseguridades” (Kaplan, 2013), pues, por ejemplo, Beijing debe proteger sus inversiones al otro lado del Índico: mercados de petróleo en Sudán, Angola y Nigeria; minas de

hierro en Zambia y Gabón; al igual que cobre y cobalto en la República Democrática del Congo (Kaplan, 2013).

Esta necesidad de satisfacer su “interés nacional” la impulsa a establecer relaciones con sus vecinos y con regiones más distantes como el África subsahariana, en procura de asegurar, por ejemplo, acceso al mar del Sur de China y el océano Índico como conexión con el golfo Pérsico, garantizando el suministro estable de los recursos estratégicos para sostener su crecimiento económico (Kaplan, 2013).

Así las cosas, el “área de influencia” china en Eurasia y África viene creciendo mediante una estrategia pragmática basada en la idea de cooperación y desarrollo, compatible con la globalización que contrasta con la “actitud misionera norteamericana”. De modo que, con tan solo solventar sus necesidades materiales, China ha modificado el “equilibrio de poder” en el hemisferio oriental haciendo que su interés por moldear un “sistema regional chinocéntrico” choque con EUA, India y Rusia (Kaplan, 2013).

Es así como actualmente China, en virtud de sus intereses comerciales y de seguridad, compite en Asia central con Moscú que mediante la Unión Económica Euroasiática intenta mantener bajo su área de influencia a los Estados herederos del imperio Timurida (1370-1607) y de la Unión Soviética, que hoy están en un proceso de construcción de Estado-nación (Ploberger, 2017).

De suerte que, desde antes de Obor, ya Beijing venía aumentando su influencia en esta región con la construcción de un oleoducto que transporta petróleo desde el mar Caspio, pasando por Kazajistán hasta Sinkiang, la provincia más occidental de China; y un gasoducto que lleva gas natural desde la frontera con Turkmenistán y Uzbekistán hasta Sinkiang, atravesando por Uzbekistán y Kazajistán (Kaplan, 2013).

La estabilización de las fronteras continentales de China ha resuelto, en buena medida, una de las tradicionales preocupaciones de seguridad, como cuando sufría la presión del

ejército soviético en Manchuria o las invasiones terrestres que en la antigüedad llevaron a la construcción de la Gran Muralla (Kaplan, 2013); esta mayor estabilidad, le ha permitido direccionar sus recursos hacia la transformación de sus Fuerzas Armadas y al fortalecimiento de sus capacidades navales, concretamente al mar del Sur de China y al océano Índico, como ya se ha podido señalar.

4. OBOR EL DILEMA DE INDIA

Cepik (2009) aborda la cuestión de la distribución de poder en las distintas regiones del planeta partiendo de los complejos regionales de seguridad identificados por Buzan y Waever, en el sur de Asia (subcontinente indio) las capacidades militares de India y Pakistán definen una distribución regional de poder bipolar, aunque se trata de una bipolaridad asimétrica. De allí que, en esta región, las principales dinámicas de seguridad son interregionales, pues desde el fin de la guerra fría, y en virtud de su acelerado crecimiento económico, la mayor preocupación de la India es consolidarse como potencia regional; aspiración que, desde el punto de vista logístico, le exige resolver cuestiones como: el acceso a los mercados del este asiático; controlar el paso por el Índico; acceso al petróleo del medio oriente y la expansión del uso de energía nuclear (Cepik, 2009). De allí que, India busque mantener relaciones comerciales con Rusia en materia de equipos bélicos; negociar acuerdos con los países de Asean; evitar una disputa directa con China; y mantener alianzas con Estados Unidos y Japón orientadas a “contrabalancear” a China y Pakistán (Cepik, 2009; Ploberger, 2017).

Este es el contexto de seguridad en el que deben ser entendidas las críticas de India en relación con Obor argumentando que socava su soberanía e integridad territorial, *The Times of India* (2018) impulsa una conectividad “unilateral” y no es suficientemente transparente en términos de los detalles operacionales (Concatti, 2017, p. 180).

Al mismo tiempo, India es quizás el mayor ejemplo de los desafíos enfrentados por la Obor, a pesar de las oportunidades que el proyecto ofrece para sus socios en términos de infraestructura y desarrollo económico. En especial, tomando en cuenta las propias ambiciones geopolíticas. Por esto la participación de este *reluctant partner* dentro de la Ruta de la Seda tiene varias razones: India ve con recelo que Obor incremente la influencia China en el sur de Asia, "área geográfica", que Nueva Delhi percibe como parte de su "área de influencia" (Ploberger, 2017, p. 299) lo que conduciría a una alteración de la dinámica geoestratégica y del *statu quo* en Asia (Concatti, 2017).

Parte de esta desconfianza apunta al corredor marítimo de Obor, pues sus costas sobre ambos lados del océano Índico, una de las zonas de vital importancia para China y razón por la cual proyecta construir una red de puertos a través de los cuales vincular el noreste, sudeste y sur de Asia con la península arábiga, el golfo Pérsico, África oriental y el Mediterráneo (Concatti, 2017). Siendo conveniente retomar el hecho de que como se advirtió más arriba, el principal interés de Beijing responde a proyectar poder naval para fundamentar la seguridad regional; una de las razones por las que, en el futuro cercano, podría disputar el control del Pacífico con Estados Unidos (BBC News Mundo, 2017).

Un buen ejemplo de esta proyección estratégica china es la base de Yibuti, localizada en el cuerno de África y que tras ser inaugurada en 2017 constituye su primera base militar en el extranjero (Fontdegloria, 2017). Con unos 10.000 efectivos, Yibuti es el mayor complejo militar en toda el África occidental y entre otras capacidades, posee condiciones para operar sistemas no tripulados Wing Loong con alcance en todo el golfo de Adén, el cuerno de África y la península Arábiga. La construcción de esta base respondió a los ataques terroristas en Mali y a la crisis en Libia en 2011; pero principalmente, busca asegurar la estabilidad en la región de Adén debido a los intereses económicos

y energéticos de Beijing en el golfo, es decir: proteger sus inversiones en la región; proyectarse económicamente en África occidental y salvaguardar la libre navegación por el estrecho de Bab el Mandeb. Del mismo modo, Yibuti es parte del denominado “collar de perlas” (Fontdegloria, 2017) con que China extiende su presencia militar a lo largo de las rutas de transporte de petróleo del océano Índico y el mar del sur de China y a la vez complemento de Obor en el propósito de conectar Europa y China por Asia central y África (Sánchez & Palacian, 2018; Zhou, 2014). Ver Mapa 2

MAPA 2: CHINA CONSTRUYE UN COLLAR DE PERLAS EN EL SUBCONTINENTE



Fuentes: Elaboración propia a partir de Sánchez y Palacian (2018).

Otra cuestión problemática para India en relación con Obor alude a la estrecha relación entre Beijing e Islamabad y, en particular, al corredor económico China-Paquistán al que se hizo referencia más arriba y que atraviesa territorios en disputa: Cachemira, Gilgit-Belistan y Balochistan ocupados por Pakistán (Concatti, 2017). Este corredor se localiza en un paso estratégico que tensa las históricamente conflictivas relaciones con Paquistán.

Vale recordar que como señala Cepik (2009) en el plano regional a pesar de la debilidad relativa de Pakistán las guerras indo-pakistaníes de 1947, 1965 y 1971, y las frecuentes disputas “militarizadas” indican la continuidad de esta rivalidad como la principal fuente de tensión en el subcontinente indio. Mientras Pakistán presiona militarmente a su vecino en Cachemira, desarrolla armas nucleares o apoya guerrillas maoístas (Naxalitas) que operan en el nordeste y este de la India. Nueva Delhi hace lo propio, poniendo en alerta sus fuerzas armadas, desarrollando armas termonucleares o apoyando grupos insurgentes separatistas en Sind, Baluchistán y Waziristán (Cepik, 2009). Aunque China argumenta que el corredor con Pakistán permitiría también mejorar su conectividad con India en el oriente, este país ve con inquietud que las inversiones chinas por unos 46.000 millones de dólares para la construcción de infraestructura como el puerto de Gwadar (*France 24*, 2017), podrían darle a Pakistán una posición de superioridad en materia logística al paso que Beijing conseguiría otra ruta para sus exportaciones hacia Europa y África (Concatti, 2017). Gwadar no solo es estratégico para China en términos del comercio internacional de petróleo y gas, pues también le garantizaría una presencia naval permanente entre el occidente del océano Índico y el golfo de Omán (Concatti, 2017), por donde circula el 30% del petróleo (Espinosa, 2010) que se comercializa en el mundo, lo que también es motivo de desconfianza para India, máxime si se considera el peso histórico de su conflicto con China en 1962. A este factor de largo plazo se suma que tras la llegada del nacionalista Narendra Modi al gobierno en 2014 la desconfianza hacia su vecino ha aumentado considerablemente (Concatti, 2017).

Un importante incentivo para India, en relación con Obor, es el acceso a importantes inversiones en infraestructura con los que podría desarrollar económicamente su región noreste, territorio relativamente pobre y donde se sitúa Arunachal Pradesh disputado con China (Lima,

2018), que se beneficiaría mediante el corredor económico Bangladesh-China-India-Myanmar (Ploberger, 2017). En el nordeste indio, China invertiría 22.000 millones de dólares en la construcción de un puerto en Calcuta impulsando la apertura económica de esta región (Concatti, 2017).

En el marco de Obor, China tiene intenciones de explotar en India sectores como infraestructura ferroviaria; construir una red eléctrica ligando Tíbet, Nepal y la India; impulsar el sector inmobiliario, manufacturas y comercio electrónico. Por ello, mientras el gobierno intenta maniobrar entre las presiones y la persuasión de los chinos, su empresariado parece más receptivo a aprovechar las oportunidades que surgen con la Franja y la Ruta en áreas como ingeniería ligera, bienes de consumo, servicios profesionales y energías renovables (Concatti, 2017, p. 184).

Adicionalmente, hay que advertir que las inversiones chinas mejorarían la conectividad entre India y Asean coincidiendo uno de los objetivos estratégicos de Nueva Delhi (Ploberger, 2017). Como quiera que sea, India tiene en el sudeste asiático un “compromiso económico y una presencia” importante de tiempo atrás en áreas como comercio, cultura y conectividad; relación que ha venido aumentando su perfil desde 2012 cuando alcanzó el nivel de Asociación Estratégica (Concatti, 2017, p. 181). Esta relación con Asean tal y como también ocurre con China, continua ganando intensidad a medida que se profundiza el proteccionismo de la administración Trump (Almoguera, 2018). De hecho, para la India tal acercamiento busca ampliar el Acuerdo de Libre Comercio vigente con Asean, incluyendo servicios e inversiones (Ploberger, 2017).

Esta aproximación se tradujo en un cambio en la política exterior india, pues la antigua *Look East policy* cambió para una compleja estrategia que contempla, tanto la dimensión bilateral como multilateral que el gobierno Modi formalizó bajo la “*Act East Policy*”, respondiendo al hecho de que el comercio de la India con el este y sudeste asiático ahora

supera los intercambios con Estados Unidos y Europa (Ploberger, 2017).

A pesar de la importancia de las relaciones con Asean, cuando se observa la postura de India frente a Obor, es importante advertir que su prioridad se dirige a garantizar la estabilidad en el sur de Asia, región en donde China ha tenido una exitosa inserción; mientras su proyección hacia el Este asiático tendría carácter secundario, en el evento que la situación en el sur de Asia se deteriore (Ploberger, 2017). Los recientes incidentes militares en Cachemira y sus consecuencias, junto a su limitado poder económico, son factores condicionantes de su potencial avance indio hacia el este (Ploberger, 2017).

Finalmente, la ambivalencia de India frente a Obor alude, por un lado, a evitar una participación subordinada a los intereses de China, pero al mismo tiempo a que si opta por marginarse, y Obor tiene éxito, comprometería tanto sus ambiciones en relación con Asean e incluso su mismo rol dentro del sur de Asia, su espacio geográfico por excelencia (Ploberger, 2017).

5. ALGUNAS CONSIDERACIONES CONCLUSIVAS SOBRE LA PROYECCIÓN INTERNACIONAL DE CHINA Y SU IMPACTO EN LATINOAMÉRICA Y COLOMBIA

Desde 2013, China muestra una postura más activa en el escenario internacional y una estrategia de largo plazo que parte de la importancia del Estado nacional y que amalgama sus propósitos nacionales a una retórica globalista por parte de sus autoridades, para aprovechar la actual coyuntura en favor de una diplomacia afincada en los principios de coexistencia pacífica, pero remozada por el nuevo pensamiento sintetizado en el “Sueño chino”.

Este capítulo ha pretendido mostrar que el ascenso chino tiene bases que se remontan a las reformas modernizadoras de finales de los años setenta; describe la manera en que

Beijing pretende integrar África, Asia y Europa consolidando su conectividad e infraestructura, y usar en su beneficio la importancia logística y estratégica de Asia central. Propósito que, como se mostró, no está exento de obstáculos tanto económicos como políticos. De esta manera, Obor se constituye hoy en la principal guía de inserción externa de China con claros objetivos de orden doméstico, articulados a su proyección geoeconómica y geopolítica que es lo que genera recelo y conflictos con terceros países, como sucede con la India.

Hoy el gigante asiático tiene la voluntad y las capacidades materiales para concretar su *going abroad*, buscando internacionalizar sus empresas públicas y privadas; crear una demanda externa para sus enormes excedentes industriales, tecnológicos y de capital; fomentar mercados en regiones como Asia central. Cuatro décadas de sólido crecimiento le permiten jugar en varios niveles, desde impulsar Obor con sus corredores terrestres y ruta de navegación conectando el nordeste de su territorio hasta Holanda, pasando por oriente medio y el oriente de África; afianzar su peso político con la integración de Eurasia; crear nuevos mecanismos de financiamiento internacional y regional encabezados por instituciones como AIIB, CDB y el NDB, todo esto acompañado de un fortalecimiento y modernización de su marina para desarrollar un despliegue en el mar de China y el océano Índico a través del dispositivo militar del “collar de perlas”, garantizando seguridad a su comercio y flujo de recursos energéticos desde Hainán hasta el cuerno de África.

Todo lo anterior, se orienta no a substituir súbitamente a Estados Unidos como primera potencia mundial, sino a consolidar su hegemonía en el este de Asia, tarea nada fácil considerando la presencia estadounidense y los intereses de Japón, Corea del Sur, Australia e India.

En este contexto, cobra especial importancia la invitación del presidente chino a los países latinoamericanos para sumarse a Obor; propuesta que no solo se promueve como

mutuamente beneficiosa en términos, por ejemplo, de la interconectividad de infraestructuras, desarrollando líneas de transporte que articularían los litorales chinos con las costas suramericanas. Invitación que ya ha sido aceptada por Panamá, Antigua y Barbuda, Trinidad y Tobago, Guyana y Bolivia, esta última con la expectativa de un corredor bioceánico que pasaría por su territorio (Lissardy, 2018).

En el caso de Colombia y como plantean Cepero y Moreno (2013), las relaciones comerciales han mostrado un reciente dinamismo lo cual se traduce en un intercambio que alcanza los 12,9 miles de millones de dólares (Embajada de Colombia en China, 2019); que, sin embargo, coexiste con una balanza comercial desfavorable y una oferta exportadora limitada al petróleo y el carbón (Clavijo, 2018).

Este dinamismo tiene ejemplos palpables como el caso de “convergencia cultural” de la multinacional Mansarovar Energy (integrada por Sinopec de China y ONGC Videsh de India), la quinta compañía más importante del sector, con proyecciones de triplicar su producción petrolera en el país llegando a 130 mil barriles diarios en 2020 (Pinto, 2016; *Portafolio*, 2015).

Paralelamente, Colombia podría beneficiarse con inversiones chinas actuando como plataforma exportadora del país asiático hacia Estados Unidos con cero arancel y menores costos de transporte en sectores como calzado, productos metalmecánicos, manufacturas plásticas, artículos de cuero, utensilios de cocina, papel, autopartes y muebles (*Portafolio*, 2012).

Así mismo, en el marco de la Alianza Pacífico, y en el plano bilateral, puede buscar desde dinamizar y equilibrar su comercio, hasta acceder a capital y tecnología para desarrollar la pobre infraestructura del Pacífico, lo que incluye desarrollar la logística del transporte multimodal. De esta manera, a través de una política exterior más asertiva y diversificada, Colombia podría posicionar su interés nacional en el marco de la estrategia compleja y parsimoniosa

con que China viene posicionándose en el este asiático y transformando el juego de poder internacional.

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2. INDIA'S ECONOMIC CORRIDORS AND SUB-REGIONAL CONNECTIVITY: CHALLENGES AND PROSPECTS

PANKAJ K JHA

ABSTRACT

India's economic approach, particularly after adopting liberalized economic measures in the early 1990s, was aimed at liberalizing markets and promoting private investment and industrial production. In the last decade (2008-2018) the focus has been on building economic linkages and developing regional and intra-regional economic corridors, so that the benefits of development, trade and investment can reach a greater number of people. This would also promote consumption and employment. Furthermore, the Prime Minister, Narendra Modi had also proposed issues related to integrating manufacturing and production centers across India and also promoting development of small airports, ports and highway networks so that production and manufacturing can be accelerated. The proposals such as Security and Growth for All in the Region (under the acronym SAGAR) and also the integration of ports through Sagarmala (String for Oceans) within the country are aimed at envisaging India as one economic entity under similar development patterns. Among the other integrated highway networks, Golden Quadrilateral (connecting the four corners of the country through a highway network), river linking

plan to promote inland waterways, and also sub regional integration with neighbors through the BCIM¹, India-Thailand, Myanmar Trilateral Highway network, BBIN² transport network. Promoting the Special Economic Zones and Export Processing Zones includes developing Greenfield airports, dry inland ports, storage and warehousing facilities and the projection of a futuristic economic development plan. Additionally, the vision for integrating the Indian production centers as well as integrating regional value chains is meant to promote Indian exports and enhance border trade with the neighboring countries. This paper outlines the initiatives and the challenges that need to be addressed in this context.

Key Words: Economic Corridors, India, South Asia, Sub-regional Connectivity, Infrastructure.

RESUMEN

El enfoque económico de la India, después de adoptar medidas de libertad económica a principios de la década de 1990, tenía como objetivo abrir el mercado, promover la inversión privada y la producción industrial. En la última década (2008-2018), el énfasis se ha puesto en la creación de vínculos económicos y en el desarrollo de corredores económicos regionales e intrarregionales, de modo que los beneficios del desarrollo, el comercio y la inversión puedan llegar a un mayor número de personas. Esto también promovería el consumo y el empleo. Además, el primer ministro Narendra Modi propuso temas relacionados con la integración de los centros de producción en toda la India y también el desarrollo de pequeños aeropuertos, puertos así como de vías para que la producción y la fabricación puedan acelerarse. Las propuestas como seguridad y crecimiento

1 Bangladesh, China, India and Myanmar Forum for Regional Cooperation.

2 Bangladesh, Bhutan, India and Nepal.

para todos en la región (con el acrónimo de Sagar) y la integración de los puertos a través de Sagarmala (cadena para los océanos) dentro del país, tienen como objetivo visualizar a la India como una entidad económica sin ningún patrón de desarrollo diferencial. Entre las otras redes de carreteras integradas, están: el Cuadrilátero Dorado (que conecta las cuatro esquinas del país a través de la red de carreteras), el plan de enlace fluvial para promover las vías fluviales y la integración subregional con los vecinos a través de la red de Carreteras Trilaterales de BCIM³, India-Tailandia, Myanmar, Red de transportes BBIN⁴. La promoción de zonas económicas especiales y zonas de procesamiento de exportaciones incluye el desarrollo de aeropuertos *Greenfield*, puertos secos interiores, instalaciones de almacenamiento, y proyecta un plan de desarrollo económico futurista. Además, la visión para integrar los centros de producción de la India, así como para integrarse en las cadenas de valor regionales, busca promover las exportaciones y mejorar el comercio transfronterizo con los países vecinos. El documento describe las iniciativas y los desafíos que deben abordarse en este contexto.

Palabras clave: corredores económicos, India, Sur de Asia, conectividad subregional, infraestructura.

INTRODUCTION

Economic corridors are a means for promoting investment, optimally utilizing resources and accelerating economic development within the national and sub-regional geography. It can be functional through developing ports, highways, freight corridors and an efficient transportation system. The primary objective of economic corridors is to provide

3 Foro para la Cooperación Regional de Bangladesh, China, India y Myanmar.

4 Bangladesh, Bután, India y Nepal.

facilitating mechanisms for promoting competitiveness and efficiency which includes reduced distribution costs and addressing land procurement complexities. Economic corridors promote industrial development through identifying the underutilized zones and exploiting the potential to meet development challenges within a target region. Therefore, economic corridors are the lifelines of a nation's growth capacity as well as a promotion plan for future exports. For India, which has had a socialist welfare economy since its independence, the last three decades have shown a slow transition to a liberal market economy. Therefore, for the growth of the manufacturing sector, economic corridors are prerequisites to long-term growth.

According to the Economic Survey of India 2017-2018, the services sector accounts for 54.40 per cent of India's total Gross Domestic Product (GDP) while the industrial sector contributes 29.73 per cent followed by the agriculture and allied sector's share of 15.87 per cent (statisticstimes.com, n.d.). Economic corridors create the necessary foundation for the focused growth of manufacturing and production centers through facilitating measures such as tax breaks, cheap land and easy import procedures to set up the industrial zones. Furthermore, they create the necessary economic super structure with ancillary units and a seamless connectivity between centers of economic activity, so that maximum capital and labor efficiency can be achieved.

Therefore, the question arises as to whether India needs to focus at this juncture on economic corridors and the reasons for this. India has been witnessing a better than average growth of 6.5-7.5 per cent for the last five years (2014-2018) (IMF, 2018) and given this momentum, it has become imperative for India to explore its export-led industrialization possibilities and also facilitate Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) from both private and institutional investors. In the past, the common reasons for slow investment in India and also the concentrated FDI in select states, cities or Union

territories such as Mumbai, Delhi, Bangalore, Chennai, Ahmedabad and Hyderabad attracting 75 per cent of total FDI (Department of Industrial Policy and Planning, n.d.) was due to the comparative development pattern and ease of access to the resources and bureaucracy. This is because of a relatively better infrastructure as well as legal and other aspects which have made these regions a more preferred destination. In order to address this lopsided development, making the development of an infrastructure a priority as well as addressing the challenges involved with the environment, acquisition of lands and the time-bound process of development. . There has been due stress within the Indian establishment (Niti Aayog, 2018) to integrate land use and infrastructure connectivity within India and its integration with its immediate neighbors (NITI Aayog, 2015) as a means of benefitting the region and integrating India into sub-regional networks. India has been focusing not only at land-based physical infrastructure development but is giving due consideration to digital connectivity and maritime connectivity and has embarked on such projects with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) countries. Before discussing the role of economic corridors in the Indian context, it is important to evaluate it from a theoretical perspective.

1. THEORETICAL DISCOURSE ABOUT ECONOMIC CORRIDORS

The economic aspects of corridors have been amply covered in the theoretical constructs. Whebell (1969) proposed a corridor-centered economic landscape and stated that it is a useful instrument for urbanization as it creates sustainable methods for populating the space followed by commercial agriculture and thereafter a surge in communication and connectivity, leading to the emergence of metropolitan centers (Whebell, 1969; pages. 1-26). Whebell while applying

his argument primarily through metropolitanism, had failed in terms of the development of sub-urban landscapes and the development of satellite townships which form the bed rock of production, services and investment. Kathy Pain, while arguing for the development of corridors, puts cities, corridors and transport into one economic space with each influencing the other (Pain, 2002). There is another argument to the economic corridor which debates it in the context of Development Axes (DA) theory. DA theory proposed by Hilhorst (1972), defined it as connecting and integrating two or more growth poles or centers across continents, trans-national or sub national levels (Hilhorst, 1972). While furthering the Hilhorst argument, Richardson (1978), discussed that this network would facilitate economic agglomeration, bring about price parity and cut down on freight costs and in turn trigger economies of scale of activities (Richardson, 1978, pp. 133-152). It will put the place/node/city along the axes in higher levels of efficiency and will strengthen each endpoint. Stephanie Petrella (2018) proposes an economic space which includes transport corridors, adjoining production centers, and cities. These three economic spaces provide technology, labor, consumption and innovation which is critical to sustain economic growth (Petrella, 2018). Ron Martin (1999) has argued that economic geography plays a critical role for the development of any region be it international, regional or at the local national level because of mathematical economics of imperfect competition, increasing returns to investment and multiple equilibria, leading to agglomeration of economic activity in select regions (Martin, 1999; pp. 387-391). This paper draws from the Ron Martin concept and argues that the development of corridors at the national level does have its utility at sub regional levels also.

Brahmawong (2010), however, raised caution regarding the role of transport and economic corridors and advocated that economic development as a result of economic corridors

might help in economic growth and raise national income but would also result in the depletion of natural resources, adverse environmental conditions and diminished livelihood (Banomyong, 2010). While the narratives related to economic corridors do endorse the need for agglomeration of resources and the utility of urban spaces so that economic production and consumption can be facilitated, they argue nevertheless that, economic corridors must be complemented by issues such as labor availability, capital investment and entrepreneurial capabilities so that the development can be comprehensive and reach the larger population.

India has embarked, with this objective in mind, on an ambitious project of development and bringing about the effective utilization of resources. Therefore, various initiatives have been undertaken to integrate production centers through highways and ports while also facilitating transportation so that labor can move without impediments. However, the projects are expected to face challenges which will be discussed later in the chapter. This paper uses empirical data and evaluates it for its efficacy and utility. It further assesses it based on the available documents about the prospects and challenges involved. This paper is based on primary documents and not on field interviews.

2. INDIA'S ECONOMIC CORRIDORS AND HIGHWAY NETWORKS

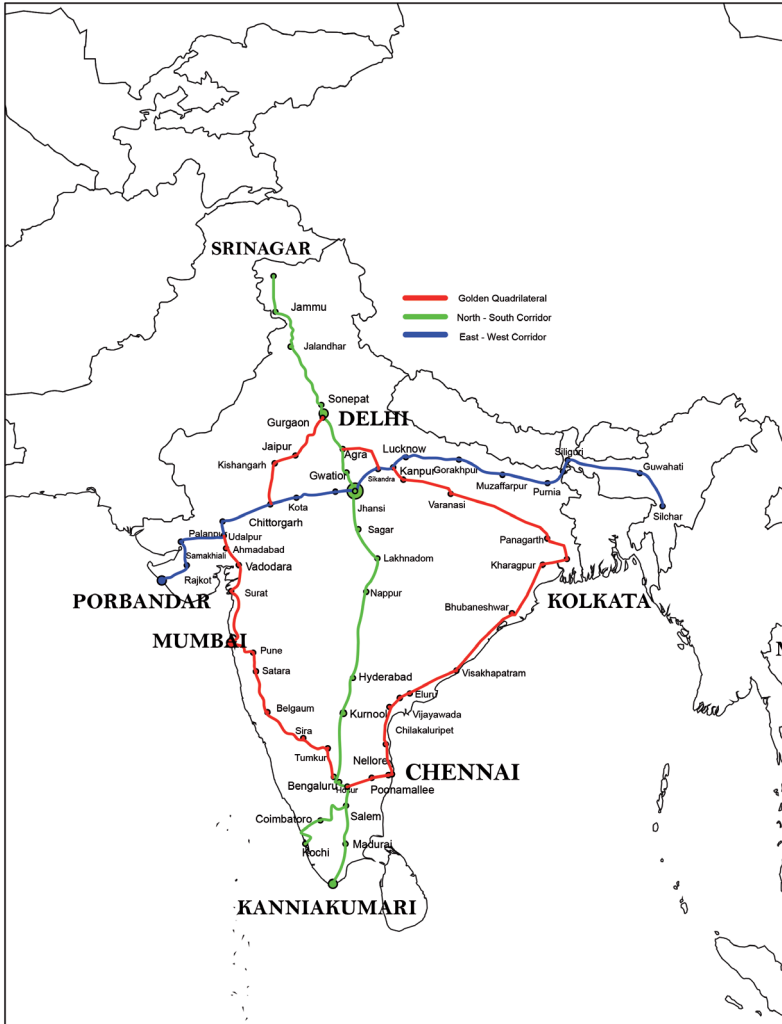
India has vast networks of highways covering the length and breadth of the geography which have helped in developing the industry and also providing employment opportunities. Since the liberalization of the economy in 1990s, it was felt that there was a need to emulate the export-ordinated industrialization through liberalized procedures and improvements on the ease of the business economy. To meet the infrastructure deficit, a number of initiatives were taken by previous governments and subsequently,

India has embarked on the Golden quadrilateral project to promote seamless connectivity across the north, south, east and western regions of India. Given the fact that there have been issues related to the cost efficiency, hidden costs and also challenges with regard to available skilled labor, it was imperative for India to bring the different economic centers including the older ones such as Surat and Kolkata and integrate them with new centers such as Bangalore, Hyderabad and Kochi. This seamless integration through the highway network would create a lifeline and also help in the equitable distribution of resources, manpower and industries.

In order to promote the industrial sector and also work on the integrated inland and highway networks, India has started work on building highway networks, and also developing ports. As part of this project, it has announced the Sagarmala project. However, the earlier Sethusamudrum project was proposed between India and Sri Lanka so that the Indian ports could be engaged for the transit shipment which was destined for East Asia. The project was criticized because of religious aspects as it was believed that construction of such a project would destroy the Setu (bridge) which was built by Lord Rama while attacking Lanka and fighting the war with Ravana who had kidnapped Rama's wife –Sita. The project was shelved because of concerns from both countries regarding the viability and economic sustainability of such a project.

Following the debacle of the Sethusamudrum project, India under the new regime of Modi proposed the Sagarmala project. This project is aimed at building small and medium size ports along India's coastline. The conceptualization was achieved in 2015 and reference was made under the National Perspective Plan (NPP). The objective was to undertake comprehensive development of India's coastline and maritime sector through sustained efforts which included foreign investment, Public-Private partnership as well as

MAP 1: NATIONAL HIGHWAY DEVELOPMENT PROJECT



Source: Created by author based on the Ministry of Surface Transport and Shipping website (n.d).

the participation of the private sector in the development plan. According to rough estimates and the volume of exports, 95 per cent of India's trade (excluding oil imports) is undertaken through sea ports. The economic zones have been created or are in the developmental phases to promote economic activities including services in ports such as Jawaharlal Nehru Port Trust (JNPT), Sikka Port, Mundra Port, and Hazira Port, etc. (Sagarmala Project, n.d.).

These efforts are meant to address structural challenges but there are challenges with regard to labor efficiency, skill and wages. For instance, the operational efficiency of Indian ports lags in terms of the global average as it is four days of turnaround time required for offloading or loading of cargo while the international average is 1-2 days. A few select private sector ports like Gangavaram and Mundra have clocked a turnaround time of 48 hours. Another challenge that the port infrastructure faces in India is with regard to connectivity to the last mile. More than 87 per cent of Indian freight have to face 'idle time' (time between offloading and transit) because of capacity constraints and the lack of connectivity between production and consumption centers. Along the coastline the transport and ferry services are still better, and freight transport have also improved, but its share is only six per cent of the transport. Freight costs can be reduced through 'shifting movement of industrial commodities like cement, coal, iron ore, and steel to coastal and inland waterways' (Sagarmala Project, n.d.).

In order to address these intrinsic bottlenecks and problems in capacity, the Sagarmala program addresses issues such as port modernization and new port development. This involves reducing structural problems, bureaucratic interference, and 'capacity expansion of present ports and the development of new Greenfield ports. Port connectivity proposes enhancing the connectivity of the ports to the hinterland, optimizing cost and reducing time of cargo movement through multi-modal logistics solutions including

domestic waterways (inland water transport and coastal shipping). Port-linked industrialization through promoting port-proximate industrial clusters and coastal economic zones to reduce logistics cost and time of export–import (EXIM) and domestic cargo. Coastal community development is further aimed at promoting sustainable development of coastal communities through skill development & livelihood generation activities, fisheries development, coastal tourism, etc. (Sagarmala Project, n.d.).

Apart from the Sagarmala program, one of the elements of faster connectivity has been the freight corridors. India has been working on a number of freight corridors with economic assistance from Japan. Japanese assistance in terms of soft loans is existent in Ahmedabad-Mumbai High Speed Rail, and \$100 billion Delhi-Mumbai Industrial Corridor (Mohammad, 2018) parts of Western Dedicated Freight Corridor, the Delhi-Mumbai Industrial Corridor with twelve new industrial townships, or the Chennai-Bengaluru Industrial Corridor (CBIC) (Price Waterhouse Coopers -PWC, 2015). ‘In order to accelerate the process Dedicated Freight Corridor Corporation of India (DFCCIL), a special purpose vehicle was established under the administrative control of the Ministry of Railways, to undertake planning & development, mobilization of financial resources and construction, maintenance and operation of the dedicated freight corridors’ (PWC, 2015). The proposal of dedicated freight corridors across the country, marks a strategic turning point in the history of the country’s railway that has essentially run mixed traffic across its network. Once accomplished, the dedicated freight corridors are aimed at improving customer orientation and catering to market requirements. Creation of rail infrastructure on such a scale – unprecedented in independent India – is also expected to drive the establishment of industrial corridors and logistic parks along its alignment (Dedicated Freight Corridor, 2018). ‘The cost for these dedicated freight corridors along

the eastern and western routes, spanning 3,360 route km, has been estimated at \$ 12 billion' (Dedicated Freight Corridor, 2018)⁵.

The Eastern Dedicated Freight Corridor would be of 1,856 km and is proposed to be divided into two sections. The 'first section covers an electrified double-track segment of 1,409 km from Dankuni in West Bengal (state) and Khurja in Uttar Pradesh (state). The second section would be a single line segment of 447 km between Ludhiana – Khurja – Dadri. The corridor would cover six states of Eastern India and three states from North India' (Roy, July 2018). The project would facilitate transportation of coal for steel, finished steel, power plants, food grains, and cement. Along with the freight lines, logistics parks have also been planned. In comparison to the Eastern Dedicated Freight Corridor, it is expected to be a '1,504-km-long route and the Western Freight Corridor traverses the states of Haryana, Rajasthan, Gujarat, Maharashtra, and Uttar Pradesh. It is proposed to converge with the Eastern Corridor close to Dadri. This would facilitate the shipping of food grains, iron and steel, fertilizers, and cement, along with other commodities. Along with it, logistics parks in vicinity of Mumbai have been proposed. Additionally, other parks have been proposed closer to Ahmedabad and Gandhinagar in Gujarat, Jaipur and Delhi-National Capital Region' (Roy, 2018). So far as per the reports '306 kms of Western Dedicated Freight Corridor has been completed and a trial run has been launched' (The Economic Times, 2019).

With overall progress of over '35% achieved so far, these corridors seek to bring a paradigm shift in railway freight operations in the country, thus providing relief to the

5 Besides, in chapter 10, the author mentions the Asia-Africa Growth Corridor (AAGC) as an Indian-Japanese's economic cooperation agreement that seeks to influence Indian Ocean affairs, Asian integration and joint projection towards Africa.

heavily congested Golden Quadrilateral' (Make in India, 2018). Furthermore, Indian Railways under its special purpose vehicle has planned on building four more dedicated freight corridors. 'The DFCCIL has been assigned the task of conducting preliminary engineering and traffic surveys for the proposed projects. Next in line are East – West Corridor (Kolkata – Mumbai) which will be approximately 2,330 route km in length; North – South Corridor (Delhi – Chennai) of approximately 2,343 route km; East Coast Corridor (Kharagpur-Vijaywada) close to 1,100 route km; and the Southern Corridor (Chennai - Goa) of approximately 899 route km' (Razdan, 2016).

It is expected that nearly 35 per cent of work for these dedicated freight corridors be completed by the end of March 2019. However, the major challenge for these freight corridors has been the issues of land acquisition and also building separate infrastructure to address the bottlenecks with environmental issues and bureaucratic inertia. The problem forced the Indian Railways to build freight corridors along the existing lines of passenger traffic and also these freight corridors pass through existing railway stations. This has both advantages and disadvantages. The extension of railway tracks through the railway station in a way slowed the works but on the other hand the freight corridor existence along the passenger train routes helped in undertaking electrical and related works at a relatively faster pace. Beyond the objective of integrating India's economic centers, port development is seen as a prerequisite for developing India's production centers.

3. DEVELOPING PORT INFRASTRUCTURE

Following the vision of the Sagarmala Program to reduce logistics cost and time for the movement of EXIM and domestic cargo, a need was established for the development of port-proximate industrial capacities near the coast. It was felt

that the utility component of these dedicated connectivity corridors can be further enhanced through Coastal Economic Zones (CEZs), and Coastal Economic Units (CEUs). To complement these initiatives Port-Linked Industrial & Maritime Clusters and Smart Industrial Port Cities have been introduced.

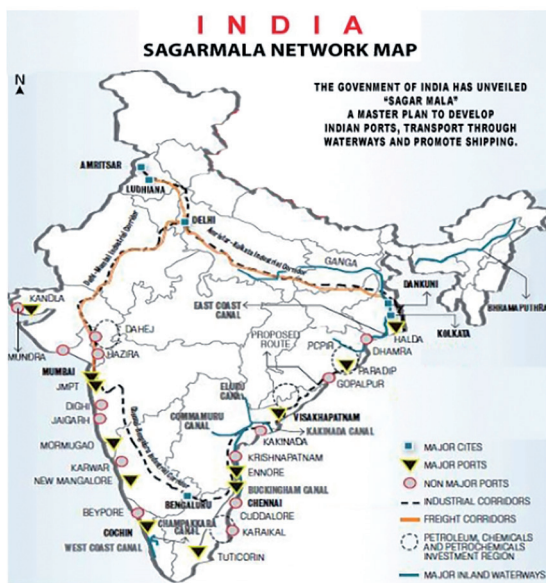
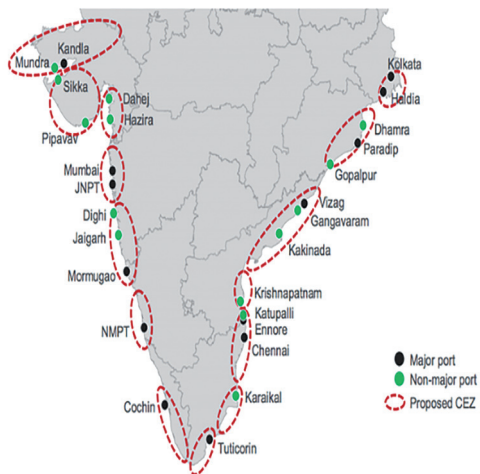
- ‘Coastal Economic Zones (CEZs): CEZs could be spatial economic regions comprising a group of coastal districts or districts with strong ties to the ports in that region. CEZs are also envisaged to tap synergies within the planned industrial corridor projects.

- Coastal Economic Units (CEUs): CEUs will be specific industrial state projects with a demarcated boundary similar to the Delhi–Mumbai Industrial Corridor Project (DMIC) nodes. The CEUs will house the industrial clusters / projects proposed within the CEZ’ (Port-led Industrialization, 2018).

Each CEZ will consist of multiple CEUs and more than one industrial cluster can be housed within a CEU. Within each industrial cluster there can be several manufacturing units. To accelerate the CEU development process, it is planned that CEUs be prioritized in locations where land parcels are available in areas close to a deep draught port and with strong potential for manufacturing (Port-led Industrialization, 2018). ‘For promoting port-led industrialization, 14 Coastal Economic Zones (CEZs) covering all the Ocean-facing States and Union Territories have been identified as part of the National Perspective Plan under the Sagarmala Program. The Perspective Plans for all 14 CEZs to have been prepared in consultation with relevant State Governments and Central Ministries’ (Press Information Bureau, 2018). The industries proposed for development include petrochemicals, cement, furniture, apparel, automotive, refining, steel, food processing, leather processing, power, electronics, shipbuilding and marine processing.

FIGURE 1: THE SAGARMALA PROJECT

Proposed coastal economic zones



Source: (Ministry of Surface Transport and Shipping website, n.d.)

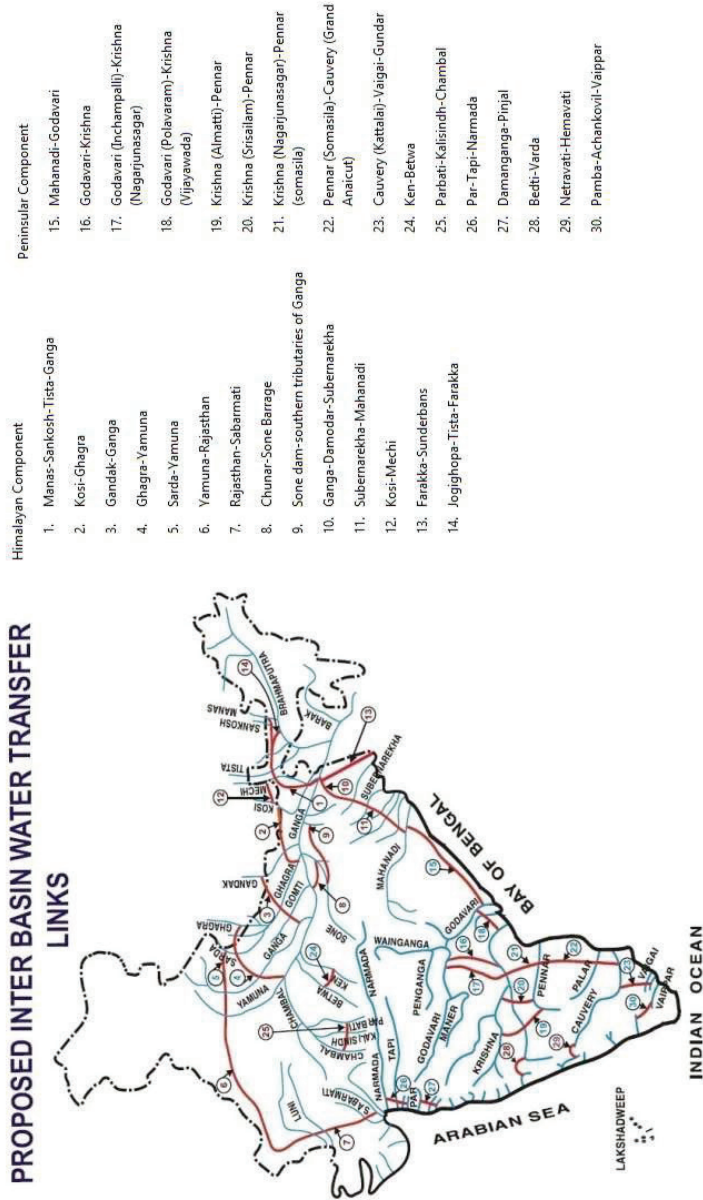
In order to complete the spectrum of connectivity and economic corridors, India has also planned for the inland waterways project given the fact that India has multiple river crises across the entire country. With the exception of a few states, the river water is expected to be used for the inland waterways and cargo shipping.

4. RIVER INTERLINKING PLAN AND PROMOTION OF INLAND WATERWAYS

As was discussed in the earlier section, for better port connections, India has also laid out a plan for interlinking rivers and promoting inland water ways. As part of this initiative 'the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs, chaired by the Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi, had given its approval for the implementation of the Waterways development project which is known as Jal Marg Vikas Project (JMVP) for capacity augmentation of navigation on National Waterway-1 (NW-1) at a cost of Rs 536.918 million rupees with the technical assistance and investment support of the World Bank' (Press Information Bureau, 2018). The multi-modal terminals are being built as part of the central government's 'Jal Marg Vikas Project (JMVP) that aims to develop the stretch of the river Ganga between Varanasi and Haldia for navigation of large vessels weighing up to 1,500-2,000 tonnes. The JMVP entails construction of three multi-modal terminals (Varanasi, Sahibganj and Haldia); two inter-modal terminals; five roll on-roll off terminal pairs; new navigation lock at Farakka; assured depth dredging; integrated vessel repair'(The Economic Times, 2018).

Meanwhile, India has been working on integrating the national economic corridors and also creating a network of industrial cities, smart cities and also select export promotion zones. These initiatives have been complemented with initiatives which are sub-regional in character. The purpose

FIGURE 2: THE HIMALAYAN AND PENINSULAR COMPONENTS OF NRLP PROJECT



Source: (Prabhu, 2014)

is to integrate the Indian economy and also promote services and manufacturing with dedicated planning for certain sectors in select areas. Furthermore, a river linking plan is also expected to address issues related to potable water, irrigation and maintaining the water table across the country, as a means of addressing challenges related to floods and drought. However, the inland waterways project faces challenges in terms of the development of terminals, low water flow in certain dry seasons leading to difficulty in navigation and additional costs in terms of dredging and cleaning the waterways from encroachments along the riverbed.

While these initiatives have in a way created a roadmap for infrastructure development in the country, the major issue is regarding the implementation and time bound development of the adjoining areas. However, with the integration at the national level, the dividends can be reaped through sub-regional connectivity.

5. CONNECTING WITH NEIGHBORHOOD AND SUB-REGIONAL NETWORKS

For India, the experience of developing an integrative production center within South Asia has been met with strategic and security constraints with particular focus on Pakistan⁶. Due to the spurt of terrorism infused through Pakistan and also concerns regarding limited trade possibilities with Pakistan, India started focusing on its eastern periphery and started working with the Southeast Asian countries particularly Thailand and Myanmar. This gave birth to a few economic initiatives which have been embedded under the trilateral highway, Mekong India Economic Corridor (MIEC)

6 Chapter 9 mentions the opportunities for India and Pakistan in the event that the problem of Kashmir was resolved. While chapter 5 and 6 approached the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, as a source to strengthen Pakistan's geopolitical position in the South Asian region.

and now proposals are also being considered with regard to the Indo-Pacific corridor which is a work in process which would integrate different sub regional initiatives under the nomenclature of Indo-Pacific Economic Corridor.

6. TRILATERAL HIGHWAY NETWORKS-MYANMAR-INDIA-THAILAND

The proposed 1,360 km long trilateral highway envisaged in the year 2003 has been slow but the project would connect Myanmar, India and Thailand through the towns of Moreh, India with Mae Sot, Thailand via Myanmar to boost trade and commerce under the coverage of the ASEAN-India Free Trade Area (The Hindu Business Line, 2018). This project has been nearly completed with few road sections and bridges needing to be completed, those different sections of the roads are now being completed with India's financial assistance and support from international financial institutions. The major challenge for this trilateral highway network has been the movement of road building equipment and the problems in the topography and terrain.

'With the financial constraints faced by the other two countries –Myanmar and Thailand, India is undertaking construction of two sections of the Trilateral Highway in Myanmar namely,

1. Construction of 120.74 KM Kalewa-Yagyi road section, and
2. Construction of 69 bridges along with the approach road on the 149.70 KM Tamu-Kyigone-Kalewa (TKK) road section' (insightsonindia.com, 2019).

The construction of these sections has been given on the basis of engineering, procurement and construction modes in May 2018 for the Kalewa-Yagyi section, and November 2017 for the TKK section. It is expected that by 2020 the two sections will be completed and thereby connecting India with the production centers of these two countries. The genesis

of the Mekong India Economic Corridor is based on the larger foundation of this trilateral Highway (insightsonindia.com, 2019). The estimated cost of the projects are 145.929 million Rupees for the Kalewa-Yagyi road project and Rs. 37.158 million for the 69 Bridges on the TKK road project (Rajya Sabha, 2018). The trilateral highway project is also critical for the Mekong India Economic Corridor as it would connect regional value chains existing in Myanmar and Thailand with Indian production centers spread across the country.

7. MEKONG INDIA ECONOMIC CORRIDOR (MIEC)

MIEC germinated out of the concept of Mekong Ganga Economic Cooperation, an initiative which launched in 1997 to connect India through trade and cultural networks with its eastern seaboard. With India's increasing economic clout and the desire to underplay the increasing Chinese dominance in the region, India worked out a start to engage these countries with the objective of sustaining the cultural and historical interaction with a complementary dose of trade and investment. The development of the Kaladaan Multi Modal Transport Project (a project with integration of riverine and highway transport) and the development of a trilateral highway were built on the premise that the two projects would enhance trade and investment between India's northeast region and the countries of mainland Southeast Asia. However, the two projects took more than 15 years to get completed with parts of the two projects still in limbo. Mekong-India connectivity has been envisaged as a constituent of India's obligations under the Asian Highway Network. Additionally, the possibility of the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP) sponsored Trans-Asian Railways might take shape in the near future once the Asian Highway is completed. MIEC would help in connecting

India manufacturing with the ancillary industries in the Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar and Vietnam (CLMV) region as well as those in Thailand. This corridor also fits into the Indo-Pacific corridor envisioned by the US government. Indo-Pacific construct works to the benefit of both India and these select countries as Indo-Pacific corridor connects the two regions - South and Southeast Asia together.

8. INDO-PACIFIC ECONOMIC CORRIDOR (IPEC)

As previously discussed, India, for its part in order to give the necessary momentum to the sub regional economic integration and also promote its integration into the regional value chain, promoted MIEC. This economic corridor is meant to promote industrialization in parts of Southern Asia and also better integrate India into this growing region. Capitalizing on the existing infrastructure networks, the US has been working on the concept of the Indo-Pacific economic corridor which is still in the planning stages. 'The IPEC vision includes physical infrastructure, energy, trade integration, and increased people-to-people ties. This activity will focus solely on economic integration through trade, investment, and private sector engagement. Through a coordinated analysis with other U.S. government departments – such as the Department of State, U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), the Office of the United States Trade Representative (USTR), and the Department of Commerce' (USAID, 2018). 'It aims to support the United States' vision of an Indo-Pacific Economic Corridor that bridges South and Southeast Asia to promote regional stability and economic prosperity. This particular study focuses exclusively on trade integration and considers various ways that the U.S. government can play a more influential role in fostering regional trade integration in South and Southeast Asia' (USAID, 2018). The IPEC would act as a bridge between the two economies as it intends to bring south Asia and Southeast Asia closer.

The transport corridors across the sub-region would help in the easy flow of labor and commodities, even though the structural constraints remain.

9. TRANSPORT CORRIDORS –BBIN AND BCIM INITIATIVE

During his visit to China in May 2015, Prime Minister Modi referred to BCIM as one of the important areas of convergence between India and China and it was also reflected in the Joint Communiqué between the two leaders. Modi has been in favour of opening the BCIM corridor for the benefit of India and the participating countries. However, the sectors and the areas which would be open for cooperation between the four countries would be decided and steered by consensus and dialogue. BCIM is expected to open the trade route, particularly the land route, for India to reach out to its north-eastern neighbors and Myanmar. With full implementation of the BBIN (Bangladesh, Bhutan, India and Nepal) transport corridor where the motor vehicle arrangement is seen as a successful homogenization and standardization of motor vehicles, driver licenses and improvement in transport infrastructure. Both these regions (BBIN and BCIM) are critically important for India to generate economic growth and development as well as reduce freight cost on getting more integrated with China; India has accepted their request to participate in the BCIM economic corridor. China has been looking for easy access to the Indian Ocean for its southern provinces and BCIM acts as the structural edifice for achieving this objective. However, there is a caveat to the whole issue and that is that at some point in time, the BCIM should be combined with Mekong India Economic Corridor Initiative and also India's initiative towards integration with ASEAN.

The BCIM, having a geographical area of 208,000 sq. km (Singh, n.a), has been a unique dialogue forum in many respects. It is one of the very few regional forums in which China and India are more or less equal co-partners, although

some Indian observers see it as another Chinese geopolitical design to penetrate South Asia. India and China are the two 'big economies' of the region, and their cooperation might hold this regional initiative together. While China and India have comparatively better technology, a more efficient labor force and improved physical and commercial infrastructure, Bangladesh and Myanmar have a large unskilled and semi-skilled labor force as well as basic and intermediate technology. BCIM can be further explored subject to China's keen intention of furthering economic partnership with India. However, while the routes with Bangladesh and Myanmar would be strengthened, the route connecting India with China has been relatively underdeveloped or limited in development which means only a two-lane highway which leads to structural constraints in trade volume.

The main reason for creating this economic corridor and supporting this endeavor is because India's 'Act East' Policy needs a transit corridor as well as port cooperation with Bangladesh. Bangladesh has facilitated the necessary transit linkages to help India connect its mainland to the Northeast. Unless the pre-partition transport linkages are re-established and India is able to integrate its road and rail infrastructure with Bangladesh, the Northeast cannot be easily accessed, and if that is not possible, there is no point for India to attempt to connect to Southeast Asia through the Northeastern Region (NER). The reality is that India first needs Bangladesh to help access its Northeast region and thereafter use the region to connect to Southeast Asia. So, it is important for the success of the Act East Policy to push ahead with the BCIM process because that involves both Bangladesh and Myanmar which are important to developing India's overland connectivity to China and Southeast Asia. However, India wants BIMSTEC to be promoted instead of BCIM, . It invariably would merge BBIN, BIMSTEC together.

10. STRUCTURAL CONSTRAINTS AND BOTTLENECKS

The challenges that India has been facing with regard to the national infrastructure projects has been the financing of the project costs and also problems with regard to project execution and meeting the deadlines for the completion of the project. India has an infrastructure deficit and it has tried hard to get investment from Gulf countries for its USD 7.5 trillion worth of projects. However, the response from the Gulf countries has been lukewarm. Apart from the challenge of finance, the local population demands in terms of relocation, land acquisition and compensation issues, and political demands for provincial and regional priority for labor and employment in those projects, have been major causes of concern. Furthermore, the identification of core areas for development in terms of industrial projects and localized economic units supported by ancillary industries is being done with field reports and feasibility studies. Most of these studies are commissioned by the different ministers and also by private institutions such as PricewaterhouseCoopers (PWC) and other such institutions. The issues related to projects have been addressed through Special Purpose vehicles which are more project and outcome based and have been structured in such a way that their primary function is the completion of the project. The only aspect with regard to the infrastructure projects is that there has been very little foreign direct investment. Therefore, the course that the government and other institutions have taken has been to float infrastructure bonds, state and center financing of projects, long-term financing through financial institutions, tax benefits and also tax breaks to the early birds to the project. Once the projects are finished, then these loans need to be repaid and in case these projects become unviable then the escalating interest servicing and maintenance would be an issue.

The purpose of these economic corridors is to promote capital and labor flows in a seamless manner. This can have challenges given the demographic changes as well the concern with the local population about the employment destined for them being taken away by outsiders. As India already has provisions for state residency-based reservation in government jobs and therefore this might trickle down to the private sector also because of political preferences. The major challenge for a high-density population area is the land acquisition and also proper rehabilitation of the people. However, the government has taken utmost care not to disturb the populated areas and has given compensation which was much higher than the prevailing market rate. Likewise, with regard to inland waterway projects, there have been apprehensions that too much cargo movement would disturb the fish habitats and also due to shallowness in the river at certain places it would lead to problems in navigation and also affect the cargo carrying capacity of the boats or barges. Furthermore, the issue of finance has been addressed through public-private funding and also through institutions such as the World Bank. A few countries such as Japan have taken keen interest in developing the freight and transport corridors in India and also at easy interest rates, known as soft loans.

At the sub regional level, the issue emerges about economic dividends of the corridors and whether these would help capital and labor migration through seamless connectivity. This, because within Asia and particularly in Southern Asia the problem has been the issue of Mode-II and Mode IV migration, dealing with unskilled and skilled labor. Additionally, the one challenge which might become an issue in the sub regional construct is how the other economies would view the competition to their own industry. Also, whether the regional value chain would add or subtract the value of the respective products. At the sub-regional level, the infrastructure development can only pay dividends when there

are free trade agreements, easy border custom procedures and simple documentation. India has made blueprints for the economic corridors, but the issue is fund generation and completion within accepted timelines. However, this has been the major challenge for most of the developing world. With growing economies and better procedures, the deadlines for better economic futures might be met.

While India has always faced problems with regard to project implementation and completion, there are challenges related to employment, corruption, labor laws and labor unrest which might lead to delays in projects. These are unforeseen circumstances which exist in any developing country. However, most of the Ministries in India work as per the blueprint and this has provided blueprints but then as those projects which have never started might face political axes as the opposition parties may wish to redraw the projects depending on their political stances.

CONCLUSION

The theoretical arguments in the context of economic corridors have stated that urban centers have created economic spaces for development while on the other hand, there are arguments that production and economic centers have helped in developing nodes of economic activity in most of the developing economies. The case in point has been Indonesia, Greater Mekong Sub region (GMS) and other such projects which have been undertaken with the help of international institutions as well as entrepreneurship. The theoretical arguments in such a context support that an economic ecosystem is created when the viability and utility of these economic corridors have been assessed and carefully planned so that financial hurdles can be overcome through international funding and public-private partnership. In developing countries such as India, demand is created because of high populations and need for employment

sustains the economic corridors. Furthermore, domestic consumption and production also support these economic corridors.

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3. CHINESE CAPITAL FLOWS TO AFRICA IN A CONTEXT OF THE SILK ROAD¹

ALICIA GIRÓN

ABSTRACT

The geography of financial flows during the post-crisis period has gained importance because new actors are promoting alternative paths coming, mainly, from the financial circuits of emerging countries. The Belt Road Initiative (BRI) is an example since it has deepened Chinese banks and companies at a global level in places such as Africa, Latin America, Central Asia, Southeast Asia, and South Asia.

The objective of this paper is to propose the expansion of financial flows within the context of the BRI initiative and its importance in the world's hegemony. From describing the way in which capital expansion from China is taking place, three research questions will be posed: What is the behavior of the financial flows from Chinese banks and companies in Africa? How can the sustained growth of indebtedness of African countries to Chinese banks, since the post-crisis

1 This research responds to the project "Financial Geography and Institutions in the World Economy" (PAPIIT IN301918) project of the General Academic Personnel Direction Affairs of the National Autonomous University of Mexico.

period, be explained? And, finally, what are the challenges for the regions located in the New Silk Road?

Key words: Financial flows, Belt Road Initiative (bri), Foreign Direct Investment, Africa.

RESUMEN

La geografía de los flujos financieros durante el período posterior a la crisis de 2008 ha ganado importancia porque los nuevos actores están promoviendo rutas alternativas provenientes, principalmente, de los circuitos financieros de los países emergentes. La *Belt Road Initiative* (BRI) es un ejemplo porque ha profundizado la presencia de los bancos y las empresas chinas a nivel global: África, América Latina, Asia Central, el sudeste de Asia y el sur de Asia.

El objetivo de este documento es proponer la expansión de los flujos financieros en el contexto de la iniciativa BRI y su importancia en la hegemonía mundial. A partir de la descripción de la forma en que se está produciendo la expansión de capital de China, se plantearán tres preguntas de investigación: ¿Cuál es el comportamiento de los flujos financieros de los bancos y empresas chinas en África? ¿Cómo puede explicarse el crecimiento sostenido del endeudamiento de los países africanos con los bancos chinos desde el período posterior a la crisis? y, finalmente, ¿cuáles son los desafíos para las regiones ubicadas en la Nueva Ruta de la Seda?

Palabras clave: flujos financieros, Belt Road Initiative (bri), inversión extranjera directa, África.

INTRODUCTION

The post-crisis period reoriented financial flows from new actors since they promote new paths for financial circuits coming, mainly, from emerging countries. Wamboye and Alehegn (2017) analyzed the importance of Foreign Direct Investment from Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South

Africa (BRICS) to Africa. Even the investments from countries of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD)² collapsed between 2008-2012 since they went from 34 billion dollars to 15.7 million. At the same time the Official Development Assistance (ODA), which represented almost 50 per cent for low-income countries in Africa, is experiencing a constant decrease of the total financial flows received by this continent. Meanwhile that coming from BRICS increased, from 8 per cent to 12 per cent between 2009-2012 (African Economic Outlook, 2014), their total FDI share in Africa. In reference to emerging countries, the main investor is China since it has participated significantly during the post-crisis period. China's FDI in SSA reflected a 50 per cent annual growth rate between 2004-2013 (Surajit, 2016), during 2016 alone, 64 new investment projects were announced; therefore, investment grew 1,400 per cent when compared to the previous year (African Economic Outlook, 2017).

In this context, the "Silk Road" or Belt Road Initiative (BRI)³ is China's geopolitical and geo-economic strategy to achieve greater penetration of its corporate and large banks, expand their investments, and achieve a geostrategic dominant platform worldwide. This paper will consider the way in which Chinese banks and companies have expanded in

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- 2 Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). "This applies especially to bilateral aid from OECD countries. The share of ODA in total external flows declined from 37% in 2002-06 to 28% in 2012-16. Nevertheless, aid from China and other emerging partners is growing rapidly" (African Economic Outlook, 2017:46).
 - 3 The proposal of development headed by China as the New Silk Road (Silk Road in English), also called A Strip, a Route in its beginning entitled One Belt One Road (OBOR), was declared by President Xi Jinping at the University of Nazarbayev in Kazakhstan in September 2013. Subsequently, in various forums the New Silk Road was discussed by sea and extended to the Arctic. By the end of 2017 the Chinese president's speech used the commitment to an initiative where governments will participate over several years with the name of the Belt Road Initiative (BRI).

the African region and other countries. China, through the process of internationalization of its companies and state banks, viewed from a theoretical framework constitutes a lesson in understanding the financial capital category or “money manager capitalism”.

The main subject of this section will be to explain the expansion of financial flows from China in African regions. One may even study this economic fact from two theoretical perspectives: firstly, by affirming that the development and strengthening of the main Chinese banks and companies respond to the definition of “financial capital”, in the words of Hilferding, whose internationalization process anticipated the Great Crisis but which, during the post-crisis period, was reinforced under the New Silk Road strategy. Secondly, by noticing the participation of the People’s Bank of China (PBOC) as a “lender of last resort” to confront the fall of the economic cycle, which accelerates the exit of Chinese corporate capital from its borders. Therefore, in Dymski’s words: the “financial instability hypothesis” “...provides a useful start for understanding the links between financial processes and financial crisis, which has been overlooked within economic geography” (Dymski, 2017). The development of Chinese corporate capital at a global level emerges by structurally transforming the economic geography and the political, economic, and social interests of the receiving countries.

The following is an attempt to address a theoretical interpretation through the observation of the financial flows expansion of Chinese banks and companies in Africa as well as the strengthening of the Chinese presence within the context of a changing global hegemony during the post-crisis period.

1. THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE⁴

Since the financial crisis of 2008 and the post-crisis period, the channeling of financial flows from financial markets to regions such as Africa and the Central Bank's policies to sponsor economic growth within countries such as China, leads us to focus on one of the core principles that appears in the work of Rosa Luxemburg's called *Capital Accumulation* (1913): capital exports from financial capital, mainly from the concentration and centralization of large English, French, and German corporations, to colonial or newly independent countries to democratic life around the world. It could be said that the great powers of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries outlined not only the conformation of the nation-state but also the economic, political, and social development of the mid-twentieth century.

The reorganization of financial capital interests accompanied by two world wars, allowed for a new form of penetration into the African region within the framework of the Cold War and the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries. During this period, not only the participation of China and the Soviet Union was important, but also that of India whose influence deepens and will initiate a process of capital blurring in what refers to its imperial origin; but once the Berlin Wall fell and the bipolar world evaporated, the

4 The role of finances at an international level in economic development has been central to the debate of economic thought. The development of countries and their insertion within the international circuits, from the deepening of globalization, imply a serious debate both for the economic thought within the economic theory and for the implementation of public policies for the receiving countries in what refers to indirect investments. From the theory of imperialism to the theory of dependence and ECLAC's structuralist perspective, we consider the need to rethink both, the categories of concentration and centralization of capital and the importance of the hegemonic bloc to understand why some countries have achieved equitable growth and others have not achieved it within the framework of the internationalization of capital.

strategy of countries like China in the African region, and the rest of the world, became a priority in their role as main investors. This process grew in force with China's entry into the World Trade Organization (WTO), becoming the global manufacturing center and, consequently, demanding non-renewable resources for its process of capital accumulation and strengthening of financial capital.

It could be said that China, if there is a planned and centralized economy, through various economic and financial reforms is inserted in the production circuits at an international level and is projected as the leading global manufacturing supplier by implementing economic and financial policies. They managed to transform the country by moving from a planned economy to a market economy controlled by banks and State companies. From the post-crisis period, the PBOC became an "employer of last resort" using an expansive monetary policy to generate employment and deepen the export of capital through a process of mergers and mega-mergers of its financial consortiums and companies. Consequently, the second decade of the twenty-first century is characterized by strong investments from the Chinese government through direct investments and, perhaps much more importantly, the purchase of domestic companies by their large corporations.

When Rosa Luxemburg highlights the role of international loans where the creation of a state apparatus leads to capitalist domination and market economy facilitating the "introduction of the merchandise economy, the industrialization of countries and the capitalist revolution of agriculture, as well as the emancipation of the new capitalist states" (Luxemburg, 1897, p.387) it would seem that she was referring to the granting of loans by China to the African countries during the last two decades. Later, Luxemburg points out how "the system of international loans is a classic demonstration of the extent to which the conditions of realization and capitalization of surplus value are split in

time and space" (Luxemburg, 1897, p. 388). The loans are not only to achieve infrastructure development but also to buy imported goods from the imperial country. Therefore, market economy expansion in the receiving countries and a developed nation-state guarantees direct investments and, at the same time, the payment of loans.

The close relationship between China and Africa from the imperial orbit of the late nineteenth century through the Mao Tse-Tung Revolution, the economic reforms of Deng Xiaoping, and the BRI of Xi Jinping are part of the process of capital accumulation at a global level directed a process of capital concentration and centralization which is driven by the main Chinese companies and state banks.

In order to continue with this analysis, it is necessary to summarize what Hilferding (1914) in his work *Financial Capital* defines as "financial capital" in regard to the causality between industrial capital and banking capital and where profits are fundamental for company shareholders. Hilferding mentioned, "...I call financial capital banking, that is, capital in the form of money, which in this way is really transformed into industrial capital" (Hilferding, 1973, p. 254). To this he adds, "...the financial capital develops with the boom of the society for shares and reaches its apogee with the monopolization of the industry" (Hilferding, 1973, p. 254). Finally, and gathering other insights from the Marxist perspective, it is said that a "financial accumulation regime" is lived (Chesnais, 2003), where financial capital undoubtedly dominates the strategies of the capitalist accumulation process and functions as a rentier capital. But beyond that, the strong expansion of Chinese companies and banks worldwide also responds to the transformation of the capitalist economy where the crisis is rooted in what Minsky called "money manager capitalism", that is, the current stage of capitalism dominated by highly leveraged funds seeking maximum returns in an environment that systematically underprices risk. "With little regulation or

supervision of financial institutions, money managers have concocted increasingly esoteric instruments that quickly spread around the World" (Wray, 2009) currently perceivable in a parallel financial system or shadow financial system in China (Girón, 2018).

2. BEHAVIOR OF FINANCIAL FLOWS FROM CHINESE BANKS AND COMPANIES IN AFRICA

Before the Great Crisis, China managed to set the foundations for a constant expansion at a global level. An era of "... unprecedented globalization, and no country would profit more from the coming tidal wave of economic change. In little more than a decade, China went from being a poor society with an economy that produced few goods for export and imported little, to positioning itself to become the so-called factory of the World, as we recognize it today" (French, 2014). During 2017, the value of infrastructure investments and projects outside of China was close to 1.8 trillion dollars. This amount is mainly represented by large acquisitions and projects within the framework of the BRI according to "China Global Investment Tracker" (2018). Nowadays China's imperial vision to move its companies' large investments to Africa, Latin America, Central Asia, and Southeast Asia, even to developed countries such as Canada, the United States, and Europe, could not be understood without taking into account the reforms of 40 years ago and the "employer of last resort" policy undertaken by the PBOC since the Great Crisis and the Great Recession during 2009.

The economic and financial reform undertaken over 40 years ago by China allowed for the expansion of the internationalization of companies and banks to the socialist bloc's territories in a bipolar world. As the economic reforms deepened and, beyond strengthening relations with the countries of the Non-Aligned Movement, the necessary

foundations were created to enter the World Trade Organization (WTO) greatly strengthened through a development model of exports based on manufacturing.

Claiming a development model for raw materials encouraged Chinese banks and companies to participate in the economic development of the bidding countries through investments and loans. “Despite increased efficiency and rising domestic production, rapid urbanization and heavy industrialization continue to spur robust Chinese demand for coal, oil, and natural gas. China’s banks, notably the People’s Bank of China, the China Development Bank, and the Export-Import Bank of China (Exim Bank of China), have supported large-scale investments in African infrastructure.” (Pigato and Tang, 2015)

Product demand, mainly from sub-Saharan Africa (SSA), made exporting countries very important trading partners for China. A causal relationship was established both by the demand for non-renewable products and also by the increase of commodities in financial futures’ markets allowing growth rates of over 5 per cent per year in SSA. For Pigato and Tang (2015), trade intensified, making SSA the largest exporter of agricultural products, coal, oil, minerals, and gas to China.⁵

Consequently, from the post-crisis period, the search for a development model that aimed at satisfying the internal market as well as raising strategic sectors through changes towards renewable energies, technology, sustainability, and

5 Meanwhile Alicia Giron in this chapter, approaches China’s presence in Africa from the financial perspective, explaining the relation between supplies of raw materials, development of strategic sectors and the expansion activity of Chinese banks in Africa, in chapter 4, Jerónimo Delegado & Juliana Guzmán analyse development corridors in Africa from the foreign policy and regional integration perspectives. They explain the aim of African countries in terms of infrastructure development and regional connectivity and, the foreign policy strategy of emerging powers like China, India, and Japan in relation to the development of economic corridors.

better revenues made it necessary to carry out reforms in order to allow greater participation of the private sector and foreign investors in China. While the development in the world's economy, prior to the crisis, remained above two digits of the GDP, the economic growth of China had an important effect on the SSA countries' constant growth, added to this is the deepening of financial relations aside from direct investments.

China reaches 24 billion dollars in SSA for FDI, which is mainly concentrated in Nigeria, South Africa, Sudan, Zambia, Ethiopia, and Tanzania. The trade between China and the SSA countries is valued at 170 billion dollars, representing rates rising above the European Union, the United States, Brazil, and India. According to data from the Ministry of Commerce of China (MOFCOM), "...Chinese FDI in Africa surged during and in the wake of the global financial crisis and continues to diversify. FDI flows from China to SSA rose from next to nothing a decade ago to US \$ 3.1 billion in 2013, representing 7 per cent of global FDI flows to SSA. China has established itself as a major investor in Africa, a dynamic that runs parallel to China's growing trade involvement. China's FDI stock in SSA reached nearly US \$ 24 billion in 2013, reflecting an annual growth rate of 50 per cent between 2004-2013" (MOFCOM 2003-2014, Copley, Maret-Rakotondrazaka, and Sy, 2014).

The challenge of maintaining economic and financial stability in China while facing the Great Crisis meant the reorientation of the development model and the creation of strategies outside its borders. Definitely, financial flows through Chinese company investments in Africa represent a distinctive geo-economic and geopolitical change from the Chinese expansion in Africa and of the pursuit for hegemony in blurred spaces by the OECD. While accelerated expansion is a fact, the links established from the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries and the establishment of economic reforms resulting in the opening to other countries

under Deng Xiaping should not be forgotten. The exchanges between China and some African countries starts from the postwar and “cold war” periods.

Consequently, the field established since before the Great Crisis is reinforced through great investments during the post-crisis period, transforming country scenarios, especially that of Africa and, particularly, the SSA. The strategy of China goes beyond constant internal economic growth; it is a joint dialectic relationship of an economic and political nature. Economic growth is maintained and the need for energy products and others is fulfilled in the countries receiving Chinese investment allied with Chinese companies and banks. An example of the latter is the expansion of firms such as “... China National Petroleum Corp. (CNPC) and Sinopec, China’s first and second largest oil firms have quickly expanded their activities abroad” (Avendano, 2017, p. 3). According to the report of the 2017 African Economic Outlook, “...in the aftermath of the 2007-2008 financial crisis, FDI inflows to Africa increased by 22 per cent between 2010-2014”.

TABLE 1. SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA: CHINESE INVESTMENTS AND CONTRACTS 2005-2017

Number	Country	Billion	Number	Country	Billion
1	Democratic Republic of the Congo	11740	15	Cameroon	1700
2	South Africa	10830	16	Ghana	1310
3	Nigeria	7640	17	Chad	1150
4	Niger	5180	18	Ethiopia	790
5	Mozambique	5000	19	Mauritius	740
6	Uganda	4670	20	Kenya	670
7	Guinea	4560	21	Liberia	520

8	Sierra Leone	4220	22	Sao Tome	270
9	Angola	4170	23	Djibouti	190
10	Tanzania	2700	24	Togo	190
11	Zimbabwe	2330	25	Guinea-Bissau	170
12	Namibia	2190	26	Madagascar	150
13	Zambia	2110	27	Rwanda	120
14	Congo	1950	28	Malawi	100
Total \$ 77,360					

Source: China Global Investment Tracker <<http://bit.ly/1LfXVbJ>>

TABLE 2. SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA: CHINESE BANK INVESTMENTS
2005-2017

Bank	Billion
ICBC	5600
Ex-Im Bank	2000
China Evergreen	1270
Bank of China	1140
CITIC, China Development Bank, Long March Capital	470
China Merchants	380
CITIC	360
China Energy Engineering	160
China Communications Construction	120
Total	11500

Source: China Global Investment Tracker <<http://bit.ly/1LfXVbJ>>

TABLE 3. SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA: CHINESE COMPANIES
INVESTMENTS 2005-2017

	Billion
China National Petroleum Corporation (CNPC)	10390
China National Offshore Oil Corporation	5740
Sinopec	5450
Sichuan Hanlong	2700
China Molybdenum	2650
Dreal	2600
China Railway Construction, Nanjing Government, China Development Bank, and Guangdong Xinguang	2590
Chinalco	2450
Shandong Iron	2260
Sinosteel	2070
China General Nuclear	2000
China Nonferrous	1910
Kingho Energy	1700
Jinchuan	1360
MCC and Sinohydro	1350
BAIC	1290
Minmetals	1280
Bosai Minerals	1200
China Railway Engineering	1190
Dreal Group	1190
BHR	1140
Rest	11580
Total	\$66,09

Source: China Global Investment Tracker <<http://bit.ly/1LfXVbJ>>

3. CONSTANT GROWTH OF THE PROCESS OF INDEBTEDNESS SINCE THE POST-CRISIS PERIOD

The numbers of the total amount of Africa's external debt is close, according to World Bank data, to 600 billion dollars, out of which 454 billion dollars correspond to the SSA. According to the analysis made by *People's Daily* the contracted external debt with China represents 22 per cent; it is notable that between 2000-2016 the African public sector contracted 132 billion dollars.

SSA's country indebtedness with Chinese banks and the increasing expansion of the largest companies of China are within the framework of the post-crisis period since the causal relationship demanded by the development model is characterized by sustained growth. On the one side, the Central Bank, PBOC, and a strong State are the foundations not only to understanding the BRI, but also to understanding the way in which China, through the intervention of a *Big Bank* and a *Big Government*, is essential to energizing economic development. While traditional creditors and investors gradually strayed from the African continent because "...of instability, migration and terrorism — and, of course, precious minerals - China sees opportunity. Africa has oil, copper, cobalt and iron ore. It has markets for Chinese manufacturers and construction companies. And, perhaps least understood, it is a promising vehicle for Chinese geopolitical influence." (Pilling, 2017)

A great part of the SSA's indebtedness related to China is different to previous years debt with multilateral organisms, World Bank, and International Monetary Fund (IMF), the SSA's debt is mostly private debt and ascends to 450 billion dollars of the total external debt which is in the amount of 450 billion dollars according to Standard and Poor's (S&P). According to the World Bank Group (WBG), "...Indeed, some of the region's largest economies, such as Ethiopia and Nigeria, are particularly vulnerable to an

uptick in social unrest. Risks to debt sustainability are also high in the region. Heavy reliance on commercially-priced debt could lead to debt service difficulties in some countries, including Ghana, Nigeria, and Zambia (interest payments on government debt as a share of tax revenue in 2017 was estimated at more than 40 per cent in Ghana, and more than 25 per cent in Nigeria and Zambia).” (WBG, 2018, p. 144).

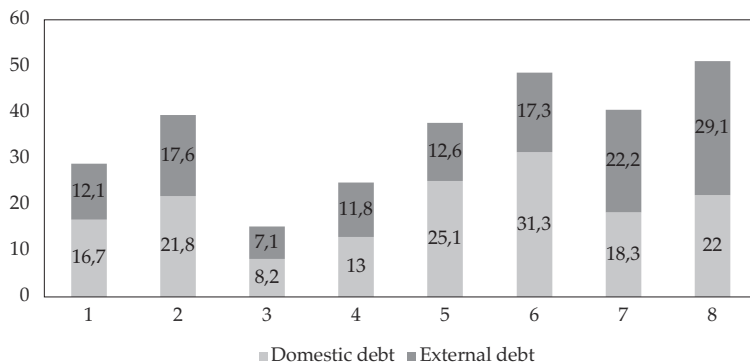
One of the characteristics of indebtedness with China is the “barter system” since “China has used a form of financing that functions like a bartering system: In return for investment capital and infrastructure development projects, some SSA’s countries grant China resource concessions (such was the case with the Sicomines copper project in the Democratic Republic of Congo and in various oil projects in Angola.)” (Friedman and Snyder, 2018). Instead of granting other loans by occidental creditors, China has utilized a different strategy for financing. While the IMF and the WB conditioned structural adjustment policies to liberalize the market and the privatization of state companies in order to obtain new credits and face the lack of financing and the payment of the external debt service, China initiated a policy unlike the help-for-development traditional policy. To such an extent that granting loans to Africa has been a concern for Europe and the United States, “The president of the European Investment Bank, a public funding agency, angrily accused the Chinese of “unscrupulous” behavior after losing contracts to Chinese banks. The IMF and the WB watched Chinese banks stepping in to compete directly with their own offers of finance” (Brautigam, 2009, p. 12).

The risk of indebtedness for African countries lies in the growth of the interest rate related to the fall of the prices of their main export products. The contracted debt until before 2014 relates to interest rates close to zero, but as the Federal Reserve of the United States (Fed), the Central European Bank (CEB), and the PBOC started progressive increases in the interest rates, the effect is much higher in the debt

service. On the other hand, commodity prices in financial banks progressively reduced when China had a two-digit PNB reaching rates between 6 and 7 per cent. Interest rates and the volatility of commodities hinder a constant growth scenario for the SSA. "As much as 70 per cent of this debt is denominated in foreign currencies, according to S&P, though the figure is much lower for Nigeria and South Africa, which together constitute a large portion of total sub-Saharan African debt. A decline in global demand for commodities—say, if China were to enter a recession— would once again put pressure on these government revenues, many of which are still dependent on natural resources" (Friedman and Snyder, 2018).

China Eximbank is the way through which loans are granted to governments in order to simplify investment of their companies in countries where there is no risk and there is a payment guarantee, such as loans for Botswana or Mauritius. But for countries with unstable governments such as "...Sudan or Angola, the Eximbank disburses the loan directly to a Chinese company or joint venture, believing this can better guarantee its productive use, and thus repayment" (Brautigam, 2009:142). Another example is the credit line that Huawei (telecommunications) received from "...China development Bank to support its "going global" activities. China National Oil Company landed a soft loan of \$1.6 billion (repayable over ten years) for its investments in Nigeria. Several large construction firms like Beijing construction engineering Group (which built the US embassy in Beijing) received attractive lines of credit from China Eximbank" (Brautigam, 2009:87).

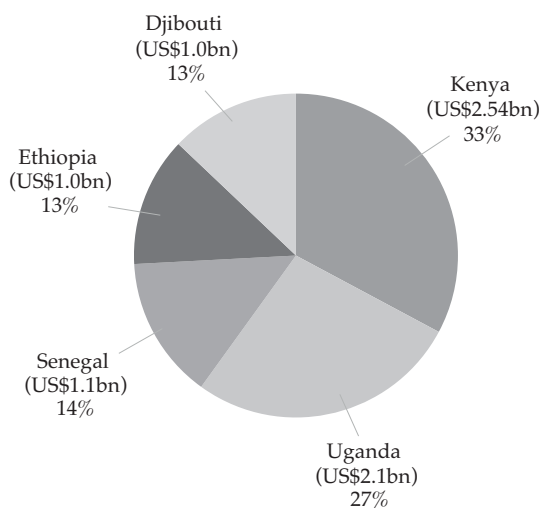
GRAPH 1. SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA:
PUBLIC DEBT STRUCTURE 2010-2016



Sources: IMF, Debt Sustainability Analysis database. IMF staff calculations.

IMF (2018), Regional Economic Outlook: Sub-Saharan Africa. Domestic Revenue Mobilization and Private Investment.

GRAPH 2. CHINESE CREDITS SUBSAHARAN AFRICA



Source: China-Africa Research Initiative 2017, Economic bulletin No.1 2017, Johns Hopkins University's, School of Advanced International Studies

4. CONCLUDING REMARKS: CHALLENGES FACING AFRICA IN THE FACE OF FINANCIAL FLOWS

The rearranging of Chinese financial flows to African countries is not so different from the way in which direct investment has been made and from the loans granted to other countries in South America, Southeast Asia, or Central Asia. Its vast liquidity is what makes it so important for their companies and banks to collect the needed supplies for the accumulation process at an international level. The role of China through its companies, and banks, concentration and centralization shall be determined by financial capital transformation of the global perspective. BRI is carrying out an expansion strategy in which the relationship between countries that are receiving investment and credit necessarily use financing in order to improve their infrastructure and rise above poverty levels. On the other hand, China needs these countries' products. Capital and goods exporting from African countries go hand in hand with loans. Openness to independent life and to the formation of nation-states is still fragile and needs the relationship between money, credit and know-how to develop the required infrastructure for economic growth.

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4. DEVELOPMENT CORRIDORS IN AFRICA: FOREIGN POLICY AND REGIONAL INTEGRATION STRATEGIES IN THE GLOBAL SOUTH

JERÓNIMO DELGADO CAICEDO
JULIANA ANDREA GUZMÁN CÁRDENAS

ABSTRACT

The International System is undergoing a major power shift in which the rise of different powers, both at the global and regional level, is shifting power from West to East and from North to South. Within this international power shift, the importance of African countries and the African region as a whole has increased considerably. In this framework, African countries have implemented initiatives to insert themselves both regionally and globally, being one of the most important the creation of development corridors. This chapter argues that development corridors in Africa have become, on the one hand, a foreign policy strategy of various countries such as China, India and Japan within the framework of soft-balancing. Also, for the main regional organisation – the African Union- they result both in the consolidation of regional integration and greater connectivity, which would modify the current economic position of the continent in the international economy. However, the success of these initiatives is conditioned on a series of factors such as security, trade barriers and the so-called

'Chinese neo-colonialism', which must be overcome in order for development corridors to be a relevant and viable alternative to resolve problems related to local development, regional integration and inclusion in global economic dynamics. Through a real transfer of knowledge, Africa will independently manage the different challenges that arise in the development of a corridors policy and will continue its process of rising without relapsing into the dynamics of colonialism.

Key Words: development corridors, Africa, soft-balancing, Chinese neo-colonialism.

RESUMEN

El sistema internacional está experimentando un cambio de poder en el que el incremento de diferentes potencias, tanto a nivel mundial como regional, está cambiando el poder de oeste a este y de norte a sur. Dentro de este cambio, la importancia de los países africanos y de la región africana en general ha aumentado considerablemente. En este marco, los países africanos han implementado iniciativas para insertarse tanto a nivel regional como global, siendo uno de los más importantes la creación de corredores de desarrollo. Este capítulo sostiene que los corredores de desarrollo en África se han convertido, por un lado, en una estrategia de política exterior de varios países, como China, India y Japón, en el marco de un equilibrio suave. Por el otro, para la principal organización regional, la Unión Africana, resultan tanto en la consolidación de la integración regional como en una mayor conectividad, lo que modificaría la posición económica actual del continente en la economía internacional. Sin embargo, el éxito de estas iniciativas está condicionado por una serie de factores como la seguridad, las barreras comerciales y el llamado 'neocolonialismo chino', que deben superarse para que los corredores de desarrollo sean una alternativa relevante y viable para resolver problemas

relacionados con el desarrollo local, la integración regional y la inclusión en las dinámicas económicas globales. A través de una transferencia real de conocimiento, África manejará, de manera independiente, los diferentes desafíos que surgen en el desarrollo de la política de corredores y continuará su proceso de ascenso sin caer en la dinámica del colonialismo.

Palabras clave: corredores de desarrollo, África, balance suave, neocolonialismo chino.

INTRODUCTION

The International System is currently undergoing a major power shift. The unipolar structure that emerged after the Cold War has been replaced by a new world order (Pastrana Buelvas & Vera Piñeros, 2014) in which the rise of different powers, both at the global and regional level, is shifting power from West to East and from North to South (Arancón, 2015; Ardila, 2014; Cooper & Flandes, 2013; Eliades, 2011). These dynamics are framed within a changing international power hierarchy in which “new powers arise as established ones, even the greatest, decline” (Bolarinwa, 2010, p. 175).

The redistribution of power worldwide has, in turn, allowed for the emergence of States that were traditionally not taken into consideration in the international decision-making processes and, today, are altering global and regional power hierarchies (Nolte, 2010) there is no consensus regarding the defining characteristics of a regional power. The article discusses different theoretical approaches that address the topic of power hierarchies in international politics and make reference to the concept of regional power. Marking differences as well as common ground with the more traditional concept of ‘middle powers’, the article outlines an analytical concept of regional powers adequate for contemporary IR research. The analytical dimensions of the framework may be employed to differentiate regional powers from other states and to compare regional powers with regard to their

power status or relative power. Furthermore, the article investigates the possible repercussions of the rise of regional powers for international politics and discusses the probable importance and functions of regional governance structures for regional powers.” (Nolte, 2010). The rise of emerging countries such as China, India, Brazil and South Africa is especially noticeable in the global economy and politics (Flemes, 2012), especially after 1990 when, with the end of bipolarity, these economies began to grow significantly. Furthermore, while the growth rates for the Chinese and Indian economies have been much higher than that of the United States, those of Brazil, South Africa and Russia have also been significant (International Monetary Fund, 2018).

Within this international power shift, the importance of African countries and the African region as a whole has increased considerably. And although Africa has traditionally been perceived as a place of war, poverty, instability and underdevelopment, reality shows a much different scenario. Currently, African countries have a greater ability to project power regionally and internationally due to changes in the international distribution of power (Cilliers, Schünemann, & Moyer, 2015). The importance of African States in the international arena is clear through the role they have started to play in issues related to international trade and their participation in several groupings of the Global South, amongst others (Brown, 2012).

The initiatives of African leaders at the international level, the new discourses related to the development and consolidation of strategic alliances by the African States in different negotiation scenarios, all

seem to suggest that the continent now has more fully acquired subject status in the international system. To a great extent this has been built on the rebalancing of international economic forces and the added leverage afforded by ascendant alliances of the South led by the largest new economies from the devel-

oping world. It has also been determined by a change in orientation by the North and a more receptive stance towards the African-generated initiatives of transformation (Cornelissen, 2009, p. 24). It explores the way in which the rise of emerging powers has affected the continent's international position, and the impulses which have arisen through emerging powers' closer engagement with the continent. It is contended that rather than having eclipsed the role traditionally played by the powers of the North on the continent, the presence of emerging powers—and particularly the leadership they provide in new Southern-based multilateral fora—moulds Africa's interaction with the North. At the same time the prominence of emerging powers requires new ways of understanding international hierarchy, hegemony and power. Three predominant trends and their implications in contemporary African international relations are discussed: the North's greater interest in the African continent and its involvement in the establishment of major aid and development programmes; deepening multilateralism in the South, with the enhanced creation in recent years of major Southern alliances led by emerging powers; and the more extensive securitisation of international politics stemming from, *inter alia*, the so-called Global War on Terror." Emerging and established powers and the shifting fortunes of Africa's international relations in the twenty-first century" (Cornelissen, 2009, p. 24).

African countries, like those in Latin America and Asia, have implemented initiatives to insert themselves both regionally and globally, especially in economic and development terms. One of the most important initiatives is the creation of development corridors that have allowed greater social and economic progress than various other regions of the world (Hope & Cox, 2015). These corridors can be understood from two different perspectives: First, from the States that benefit socially and economically from infrastructure projects through trade facilitation, reduction in transportation costs and connection with global markets (Hope & Cox, 2015). Second, from the countries

that lead and fund these corridors as they have become strategic tools of foreign policy that allow them to expand their margin of manoeuvre within the International System (Wang, 2016).

In Africa, development corridors have existed for many years. According to Hope and Cox (2015), the trans-Saharan trade routes from the Nile to the Red Sea through the Wadi Hammamat date back to around 4000 BC. These scholars also indicate that, around 200BC, Wadi Hammamat was a fundamental part of the Silk Road, “a network of trade and cultural transmission routes that were central to cultural interaction through regions of the Asian continent connecting the West to the East by linking traders, merchants, nomads and urban dwellers from China and India to the Mediterranean Sea” (Hope & Cox, 2015, p. 1). Nowadays, as Enns mentions, the International Community has been in charge of promoting a narrative focused on the benefits of the African corridors agenda “framing development corridors as an effective way of creating conditions that are attractive to investors, while simultaneously driving local, domestic and regional development” (Enns, 2018, p. 105).

Taking into account the previous paragraphs, this chapter seeks to answer the question as to what extent development corridors in Africa are a foreign policy and regional integration strategy? From this main question, other secondary ones arise: what are development corridors? Could these corridors be considered soft-balancing strategies? And what are the challenges that the African continent must overcome in relation to these corridors?

Based on the previous questions, this chapter’s main objective is to analyse development corridors in Africa as a foreign policy and regional integration strategy in the Global South. The specific objectives are: i) to understand what development corridors are, ii) analyse the role of these corridors in Africa and iii) identify the main challenges in relation to these initiatives.

Consequently, the hypothesis to be demonstrated suggests that development corridors in Africa have become, on the one hand, a foreign policy strategy of various countries such as China, India and Japan within the framework of soft-balancing. And, on the other hand, for the African Union, the creation of development corridors results in the consolidation of regional integration and greater connectivity within the continent and the rest of the world, which would modify the current economic position of the continent in the international economy. However, the success of these initiatives is conditioned on a series of factors such as security, trade barriers and the so-called 'Chinese neo-colonialism'.

In order to answer the main research questions and the ones derived from it, this chapter is divided into four sections. In the first section, the theoretical framework of this research is presented with the objective of comprehensively understanding what development corridors are. In addition, a literature review of this subject with emphasis on the African continent is briefly presented. The second section presents an analysis of development corridors in Africa from two different approaches: on the one hand, taking into consideration the construction of these corridors as a foreign policy strategy of emerging countries of the Global South. On the other hand, understanding them as a tool used by the African Union with the aim of achieving regional integration and a greater insertion in the world economy.

The third section identifies and analyses the main challenges, both internal and external, faced by economic corridors in order to become successful. Reference is made to issues such as continental security, coordination between private, public and governmental actors, barriers to trade and the 'Chinese neo-colonialism'. Finally, based on the content of the previous sections, a series of final conclusions are presented.

1. DEVELOPMENT CORRIDORS

1.1 From transport corridor to economic corridor

The concept of development corridors cannot be simply defined as there are different perceptions and opinions on the topic (Kleynhans, 2001). The Development Corridors Partnership, made up by Tanzania, Kenya, China and the United Kingdom, provides a general definition of development corridor by indicating that it is

a geographical area identified as a priority for investment to catalyse economic growth and development. This is usually through the creation of infrastructure such as railways or pipelines. They can be designed to attract new investments, boost agricultural production, open access to natural resources and facilitate their export to world markets" (Development Corridors Partnership, n.d., paragraph. 1).

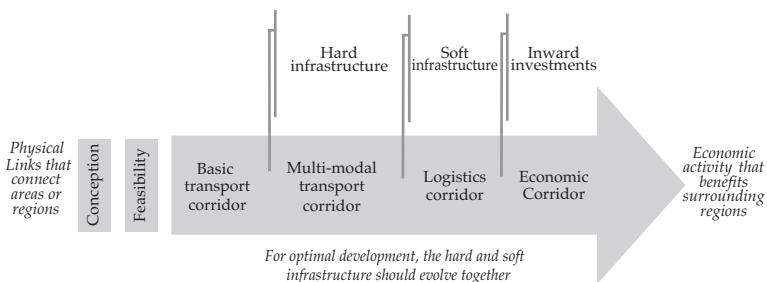
Kleynhans (2001) introduces the difference between an urban corridor and a national corridor, indicating that the former usually focuses on the reconstruction and improvement of urban growth in the strategic areas that are needed. The national corridor, on the other hand, is built with a more extensive objective "to expand the development opportunities for a specific economic sector and /or industry and increased access to public amenities and private investments within the corridor area, as well as between the corridor and surrounding areas" (Kleynhans, 2001, p. 81). Elshahawany *et al.* (2017) include in the definition the regional scope by indicating that the development corridors approach uses transport corridors as a relevant focal space for regional co-operation projects and activities. These academics claim that

the idea behind the approach is to cluster such activities along corridors or at nodal centres on the corridors, where certain agglomeration economies naturally arise and are hopefully nurtured. Such agglomerations are expected to facilitate growth

in surrounding areas by catalysing further investment from both within and outside the region. The spatial focus can also facilitate prioritisation of regional projects, and coordination of national projects among neighbouring countries” (Elshahwany *et al.*, 2017, p. 257).

Hope and Cox (2015) transcend from a single definition and argue that there are different types of corridors and that is why it is necessary to clarify concepts and approaches. They take into account the physical dimensions – transport routes that connect economic centres – and the functional dimensions – interconnection and external connection – of the World Bank’s approach (Kunaka & Carruthers, 2014), complementing them with the understanding of the Asian Development Bank and the African Development Bank about the extended impacts in terms of social and economic development that these corridors may have. Figure 1 shows the evolution model of corridors that Hope and Cox (2015) propose, starting from a basic transportation corridor, passing through a multimodal transport corridor and a logistics corridor, and ending in an economic corridor with much broader benefits.

FIGURE 1. EVOLUTION OF A DEVELOPMENT CORRIDOR

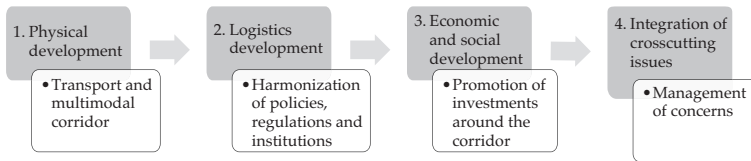


Source: Adapted by the authors from Hope, A., & Cox, J. (2015).

Mulenga (2013) also writes in this regard and identifies four stages of transformation in these corridors. The first one is

physical development which includes the basic transport corridor and the multimodal corridor, understood as the strengthening of the physical elements needed to achieve effective transport and trade. Second, the logistics development understood as “the right logistics can harmonise corridor policies, regulations and institutions, moving people and goods more efficiently” (Mulenga, 2013, p. 2). The third stage is economic and social development which includes the promotion of investments around the corridor in matters such as the creation of companies, the promotion of tourism and health infrastructure, amongst others. Finally, in the stage of integration of crosscutting issues, concerns related to environmental and institutional matters, as well as other social problems, are managed.

FIGURE 2: STAGES OF A CORRIDOR’S TRANSFORMATION



Source: Own elaboration based on Mulenga, G. (2013).

Brunner goes deeper in the definition of economic corridors – the last stage of evolution according to Hope and Cox – by affirming that they “connect economic agents along a defined geography. They provide connection between economic nodes or hubs, usually centred on urban landscapes, in which large amounts of economic resources and actors are concentrated” (Brunner, 2013, p. 1). Hope and Cox (2015) complement his work by stating that, unlike transport and logistics corridors¹, the objective of the economic ones is to

1 For these authors, the focus of transport corridors is the investment in infrastructure in order to increase efficiency in the transport of people and goods,

achieve a significant increase in economic activity along the corridor and regional integration.

In general terms, this work will be based on the definition proposed by Kleynhans, who indicates that

a development corridor could be regarded as a development concept, supported by a range of development programmes and policies, which organises (when implemented) other urban elements in such a manner that it forms an obvious identifiable linear urban strip, characterised by a definite higher intensity of mixed economic and public activity, movement and direct interaction, than found in the surrounding environment (Kleynhans, 2001, p. 82).

In addition, due to the interest in analysing development corridors in Africa as a strategy of foreign policy and regional integration in the Global South, the regional aspect proposed by Elshahawany *et al.* (2017) will be taken into account. They propose that in these geographic spaces, the investments in corridors “contribute to economic development by stimulating a variety of interconnected economy-wide processes. These yield spatial and regional effects that augment overall productivity” (Elshahawany *et al.*, 2017, p. 258).

1.2 Development corridors and Africa

Regarding the African region specifically, a series of analyses were identified that focus on the regional and sub-regional agenda in relation to corridors. Authors such as Bowland and Otto (2012), Dzumbira, Geyer, and Geyer (2017), Ehi-zuelen (2017), Elshahawany and al (2017), Enns (2018), Kuhlmann, Sechler, and Guinan (2011), Taylor (2003), Todes

while reducing costs. In the case of multimodal and logistics corridors, the objectives focus on trade facilitation through the reduction of barriers and the improvement of logistics services (Hope & Cox, 2015).

(2014) and Williams (2017) have written about the importance of African corridors in issues such as attracting foreign investment, agricultural development, intraregional trade and regional integration. They have also made references to the positive impacts, the challenges and the lessons that have been learned.

Currently, Africa is one of the continents that has the greatest potential to generate ample trade – including products necessary for food security worldwide – and to occupy a more relevant place in the global economy (Kuhlmann *et al.*, 2011). Through investment in hard infrastructure – road networks, railways, pipelines, ports, among others – and soft infrastructure – regulatory and institutional systems – in Africa, development corridors are being built up not only to transport goods and services or provide a continental exit point to landlocked countries, but also to stimulate economic and social development (Enns, 2018; Mulenga, 2013). This development strategy was strongly fostered by Nelson Mandela after the end of Apartheid in South Africa. He saw it as an option to connect the entire continent “through stronger infrastructure and better policies connecting rural and urban communities to create functioning regional market systems and build opportunities across economic sectors and sovereign states” (Kuhlmann *et al.*, 2011, p. 6).

In turn, the South African leadership on the issue has been reflected through the Space Development Initiative (SDI), a tool that seeks to promote investments in sectors such as transport in areas of Southern Africa that have a relevant potential for growth (Mulenga, 2013). The Maputo Development Corridor is an example of this type of initiative as it has become the main connection between Southern Africa and the world economy (Taylor, 2003). Bowland and Otto (2012) state that the main objectives of this corridor included the rehabilitation of the existing infrastructure, the attraction of investments to the region, sustainability through diverse policies and strategies and

the maximisation of the impact of the investments destined to develop the corridor. The existence of the Maputo Corridor has facilitated the development of new corridors and the expansion of economic opportunities in this sub-region (de Beer, 2001) to the point that it accounts for about 50 per cent of the 30 corridors existing throughout the continent (Bowland & Otto, 2012; Enns, 2018).

Africa's agenda with regard to development corridors began to be implemented in 1998 when the Organisation for African Unity (OAU) - now the African Union - scaled "the [SDI] concept up to the entire continent with its Resource-Based African Industrialisation and Development Strategy" (Mulenga, 2013, p. 4). Consequently, the Infrastructure Consortium for Africa (ICA) and the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) endorsed the concept, which led to the design of other corridors such as the one in Central and Eastern Africa (Mulenga, 2013). These last two institutions have played an important role, especially in the coordination of resources and the removal of barriers that do not allow the continent to increase its production and commercialisation capacity (Kuhlmann *et al.*, 2011).

Enns summarises the overall importance of the African agenda in terms of development corridors as follows

Africa's corridor agenda promises to serve the interests of investors, governments and everyday people alike. The premise underlying this perspective is that constructing integrated networks of roads, railways, pipelines and ports attracts investors and drives industrial development in 'underdeveloped' rural spaces that 'lack' market linkages. This, in turn, drives the growth of secondary and supporting industries in the same spaces, which are key to development. Furthermore, well-planned corridors are also promised to deliver broader development benefits, including improved transportation and market and economic opportunities for rural people and better service delivery in rural spaces (Enns, 2018, p. 106).

The positive impacts of these types of corridors in Africa are related to the growth of agriculture, food security, greater economic opportunities and economic integration in the continent (Kuhlmann *et al.*, 2011; Williams, 2017). Through the development of physical and regulatory infrastructure, the demand for businesses around the corridor is increased, and this constitutes a powerful tool to manage regional trade barriers that still limit African potential and openness to other markets (Kuhlmann *et al.*, 2011). For African leaders such as Cheikh Bedda and Amadou Oumarou, investment in development corridors allows jobs to be generated, development to increase and greater participation in the global economy (African Union, 2017). According to the Development Corridors Partnership, these corridors managed to potentiate, diversify and improve the living conditions of people through greater efficiency of trade, communications, and services (Development Corridors Partnership, n.d.).

In relation to the challenges that stakeholders may face, Bowland and Otto (2012) exemplify what happened specifically with the Maputo Corridor. In this regard, they mention that the main challenges of this initiative are the delays caused by the lack of coordination between the border post and the Port of Maputo, issues related to security, low coordination amongst governments regarding trade facilitation, an unequal flow of trade, internal problems such as the South African railways crisis and the lack of political will on issues such as administration and implementation (Bowland & Otto, 2012). In general terms, regarding corridors, the Development Corridors Partnership indicates that in addition to the challenges concerning political, economic and logistic coordination, those related to the protection of the integrity of ecosystems and the respect of the rights of communities must also be taken into account throughout the entire process (Development Corridors Partnership, n.d.). According to this Partnership, corridors that are poorly

planned and implemented “may leave communities with few benefits and greater vulnerability to, for example, the impacts of climate change” (Development Corridors Partnership, n.d., paragraph. 6).

Now, Bowland and Otto (2012), Ehizuelen (2017), Kuhlmann *et al.* (2011) and Mulenga (2013) have discussed the relationship that exists between development corridors and African regional integration. In general terms, as was previously mentioned, these corridors are conceived as a tool to open markets and promote trade and investment. For Bowland and Otto (2012), the above *per se* drives the economic and regional integration agenda. This is complemented by Ehizuelen (2017), who, in conducting an analysis of the impacts of China’s Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) on Africa, states that economic integration can be achieved through these corridors by developing infrastructure and promoting regional trade. Mulenga (2013) agrees with all the above and emphasises the role that a regional organisation, such as the African Development Bank, can have in the development of economic corridors with tools such as investment in hard and soft infrastructure. Finally, for Kuhlmann *et al.*

the Development Corridors provide viable means for overcoming some of the seemingly intractable problems of political will and governance that have bogged down previous efforts at regional integration and policy change in Africa. The Development Corridors are by definition economic markets that cut across borders and political alliances rather than being yet another set of political entities themselves (Kuhlmann *et al.*, 2011, p. 12).

Based on the definition of development corridors and the literature review on this topic with an emphasis on Africa, it can be argued that elaborating on these initiatives as a foreign policy and a regional integration strategy in the

Global South is indeed relevant. Regarding foreign policy, although there have been analyses of the influence that certain states (such as China) can have on their development, these works have not been focused on the soft-balancing approach and on other States such as Japan and India. On the other hand, the way in which the corridors have been included in the analysis of the African regional integration process has been superficial, even though they have become a pillar of integration for the African Union.

2. DEVELOPMENT CORRIDORS AS A FOREIGN POLICY AND REGIONAL INTEGRATION TOOL

2.1 Foreign Policy in the Global South

The Montevideo Convention on the Rights and Duties of States indicates that a State is understood as a subject of International Law which has a permanent population, a determined territory, a government and the ability to initiate relations with other States (Organisation of American States, 1933). Based on the ability of States to have relations with others, their ability to conduct foreign policy arises. For Padelford and Lincoln “foreign policy is the key element in the process by which a state translates its broadly conceived goals and interests into concrete courses of action to attain these objectives and pressure its interests” (Padelford & Lincoln, 1962, p. 197). In turn, the construction of development corridors in Africa has become a foreign policy tool used by emerging countries of the Global South such as China, India and Japan.

The logistical and economic support of emerging countries of the Global South for African corridors is framed in what, since 2005, Pape (2005) and Paul (2005) called soft-balancing. In this framework, countries have “challenged traditional modes of conducting foreign policy, privileging new kinds of soft power and rewarding new kinds of

diplomacy” (Hurrell, 2006, p. 4). In addition, States focus on increasing their influence against more powerful actors, taking into account the limits of their material capacities (Kelley, 2005; Whitaker, 2010), the defence of their interests (Actis, 2014) and the protection of their autonomy in the international system (Feng & He, 2017). Soft-balancing strategies by emerging countries such as China are used “to counter the perceived threats from the hegemon through economic, political, diplomatic and institutional means, since the traditional hard balancing is too costly and risky” (Zhou & Esteban, 2018, p. 493).

The countries of the Global South that have supported the construction of corridors in Africa, such as China, have strategically taken advantage of their economic resources to improve their positioning beyond their areas of influence and to gain access to the natural resources they require (Ehizuelen, 2017; Wang, 2016). This type of investment and support can be considered a tool of soft power that greatly favours the rise of emerging powers in the international hierarchy and generates a counterweight to the influence that other States, such as France or the United States, may have in the continent (Zhou & Esteban, 2018). It should be noted that although the objective of emerging States may not be to change the world order completely or to move away from traditional powers, they do seek to gain more influence and a better position in the system (De Sousa, 2008; Flandes, 2007; Gill, 2010; Gratius, 2008) through soft-balancing strategies such as investment in development corridors in areas of particular interest.

In the specific case of China, the Government has developed the BRI. It was proposed by Chinese President Xi Jinping in 2013 with the aim of improving connectivity throughout Eurasia by means of developing infrastructure, transport, communications and trade, as well as promoting regional integration (Pantucci & Lain, 2016). In addition to involving more than 60 countries in the continents of Europe,

Asia and Africa, which represent approximately 70 per cent of the world population and more than 40 per cent of the GDP (Zhou & Esteban, 2018), China has invested more than USD \$50 billion in the development of projects in other nations through the Silk Road Fund and the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (Ehizuelen, 2017). It is important to note that this initiative exemplifies China's interest in ascending the international hierarchy and increasing its influence "not reinforcing a Western-centred world order (it does not involve the US), nor is it relying on US- and EU-led financial institutions in its implementation" (Benabdallah, 2018, p. 7).

According to Zhou and Esteban (2018), the BRI is driven by geo-economic, geopolitical and geostrategic factors within China's foreign policy. In the first case, they indicate that with the development of these corridors China seeks to establish and strengthen economic ties with regions such as Central Asia, Southeast Asia and South Asia to maintain its economic growth (Zhou & Esteban, 2018). Regarding geopolitical interests, they mention that through the BRI, China can promote its interests related to energy security, geopolitical influence and maritime issues (Zhou & Esteban, 2018). Finally, the geostrategic interests are related to the competition that exists between different States in the Asia-Pacific region, so the BRI allows China to increase its influence in areas of interest at the same time as it counteracts that of other countries (Zhou & Esteban, 2018).

Among the African countries that will benefit from Chinese investment in the BRI corridors are Egypt, Djibouti and Kenya, although others will benefit as the built infrastructure will also impact their exports and imports positively (Chen, 2016; Ehizuelen, 2017). According to Ehizuelen,

Africa, with its abundant natural resources, wealth of infrastructure opportunities and convenient location, is a perfect match for China's global infrastructure plan, 'One Belt, One Road,' which sets out to create new land and sea trade routes

to ensure energy supplies, increase foreign trade, promote Chinese enterprise and products, a necessary step for economic growth in Africa and in particular industrialisation (Ehizuelen, 2017, p. 242).

For Chen (2017), although there are few African countries considered within this initiative, it is an opportunity for other Chinese economic initiatives related to infrastructure development to deepen their reach in the continent. It should be remembered that the Chinese State is involved in a large number of large-scale projects in Africa, especially in the power generation and transport sectors (Ehizuelen, 2017).

Now, countries such as India and Japan have generated alliances to counter the geoeconomic, geopolitical and geostrategic interests of China in key regions of the Global South such as Africa (Panda, 2017; Shepard, 2017). Since 2017, these two countries have promoted the Asia-Africa Growth Corridor (AAGC) through which they aim to develop a series of industrial and institutional corridors that allow a free and fluid movement of people, trade, investment and energy (Prakash, 2018). For Shepard, this growth corridor is defined as “a series of enhanced, mostly sea-based economic triangles which will connect cities and other production hubs across regions that are predicted to rapidly rise and become the world’s next epicentres of economic growth” (Shepard, 2017, paragraph. 3).

Although both the Chinese initiative and that of India and Japan could be perceived as similar, Panda (2017) makes an analysis of the main differences and summarises them in the following points:

1. The BRI is a unilateral initiative of China, while the AAGC is a bilateral initiative.
2. In the AAGC, Africa will have a role in the decision making of projects, which is not clear in the BRI.
3. The financing of the BRI projects comes, essentially, from government sources or Chinese banks, while the AAGC

“intends to generate private, government, and also international funding, including from the African Development Bank” (Panda, 2017, p. 9).

In summary, the investment in development corridors by emerging countries of the Global South can be understood as a soft-balancing strategy in the framework of their interest to improve their position in the hierarchies of power. According to Zhou and Esteban (2018), for example, the BRI seeks to thwart the United States’ containment of China, as well as diminish its influence through the use of Chinese soft power. In addition, the construction of development corridors in other regions allows countries such as China, Japan and India to promote economic diplomacy and diversify their trading partners in order to increase their relative economic power and, as a consequence, their influence compared to other States (Ehizuelen, 2017). The promotion and investment in development corridors has given the opportunity to these emerging countries of the Global South to project themselves as Emerging Middle Powers, as they have increased their importance both within the hierarchy of international power and in the global economic dynamics.

2.2. African Regional Integration

Now, for the African Union, the construction of development corridors results in the consolidation of regional integration based on growth in intraregional trade and greater connectivity with the rest of the world (Kuhlmann *et al.*, 2011). In the African continent, there have been different integration initiatives; from 1963 with the creation of the Organisation for African Unity (OAU), through the 1991 Treaty of Abuja that constituted the African Economic Community (AEC), to the signing of the Syrte Declaration which created the African Union (AU) (Delgado Caicedo, 2002; Lechini, 2001) (Delgado Caicedo, 2002; Lechini, 2001), the most important

regional integration organisation in Africa. The AU has prioritised the need to promote “African solutions for African problems” (Essuman-Johnson, 2009, p. 409), the creation of institutions² and legal frameworks around critical issues for the continent such as the development of an economic infrastructure (Apuuli, 2016) and the articulation of the interests of its members (Bolarinwa, 2010).

Within the framework of regional integration, the Regional Economic Communities (RECS) that make up the AEC have played an important role. In fact, the African Union, beyond articulating the interests of African States, has sought to strengthen relations within and amongst the RECS, with the aim of achieving greater regional integration (Cilliers *et al.*, 2015). These communities have managed to politically and economically coordinate their members in areas such as peace, security, development and governance (African Union, 2018). For Louw-Vaudran (2016) the RECS are designed to guarantee economic cooperation and development in the continent. Currently, the eight RECS that are part of the AEC are: the Arab Maghreb Union (AMU), the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), the Community of Sahel-Saharan States (CEN-SAD), the East African Community (EAC), the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the Southern African Development Community (SADC) (Akokpari, 2001).

The importance of development corridors in African regional integration is evidenced in the 2063 Agenda of the African Union, which aims to “accelerate the modernisation and industrialisation progress of African countries. Since the

2 Examples include the Pan-African Parliament, the Economic, Social and Cultural Council and the African Court of Justice (Kabunda, 2009), the Council for Peace and Security and the African Court of Human and Peoples’ Rights (UMA, n.d.).

continent launched the AU's Vision 2063, Africa has been identified as the future driver of global growth" (Ehizuelen, 2017, p. 348). This regional organisation is committed to accelerating actions related to the eradication of poverty, the construction of human capital around innovation, the transformation and industrialisation of economies, the modernisation of agriculture, the management of climate change, the support to young people and the connection of the continent through world-class infrastructure, among others (African Union, 2015). Regarding the connection of the continent, this plan indicates that the priority lies on transport infrastructure

connecting all African capitals and commercial centres through the Africa Integrated High Speed Train Network, the PIDA transport corridors; improving the efficiency and connections of the African aviation sector and implementing the Yamoussoukro Declaration, and strengthening the African port and shipping sector as regional and continental assets (African Union, 2015, p. 16).

The African Union Commission, the NEPAD and the African Development Bank are the agencies in charge of executing the Program for Infrastructure Development in Africa (PIDA), a strategic initiative that seeks to mobilise resources to transform the region through new infrastructure (African Union, n.d.). This program is the most relevant within the continent in relation to the promotion of development corridors taking into account that currently it manages more than 230 projects in the transport sector that are in different stages – roads, railways, ports, airports, among others – (PIDA, 2018). The construction of development corridors based on the 2063 Agenda of the African Union and the PIDA has allowed the continent to be "identified as the future driver of global growth" (Ehizuelen, 2017, p. 348).

Through development corridors, African regional integration is being promoted since it allows communities and fragmented, isolated and underdeveloped markets to move towards an integrated and diverse regional economy (Kuhlmann *et al.*, 2011). Also, taking into account the size of the continent and the number of landlocked countries, corridors allow more African countries to connect with global markets (Kunaka & Carruthers, 2014). In 2017, Cheikh Bedda, Director of Energy and Infrastructure at the African Union Commission, stated that “only by scaling up investments in Corridor infrastructure could African countries participate in, and benefit from, today’s integrated and digital global economy” (African Union, 2017, para. 1).

The process of integration in Africa is also strengthened by the development corridors in that they promote the imaginary of a fluid and unhindered continent in economic flows by allowing the circulation of capital, raw materials and people (Enns, 2018). Connecting rural and urban areas, as well as integrating small farmers into regional economic dynamics, can overcome development obstacles that in turn affect regional integration processes (Kuhlmann *et al.*, 2011). According to Mulenga

Africa’s transport corridors can not only facilitate regional integration and trade but can also reduce poverty, particularly in catchment regions. Planners can achieve this by carefully coordinating the social, economic and physical development of the corridors and their surroundings (Mulenga, 2013, p. 7).

In sum, the development corridors in Africa are alternatives for regional integration for the African Union in that they allow for greater economic flows between different states and sub regions, and a greater connection with the global economy. Consequently, as mentioned by Ehizuelen (2017), it has allowed the continent to begin to be perceived as one of the most relevant actors in the future economic

growth worldwide. It is important to note that these African corridors not only allow countries to trade regionally and internationally, but also generate the possibility for benefits of trade to be distributed more equitably within the region and for greater access to better economic opportunities (Kuhlmann *et al.*, 2011).

3. CHALLENGES

As mentioned in the previous sections, the development corridors in Africa are, on the one hand, foreign policy strategies for various emerging countries of the Global South that seek to improve their position in the hierarchy of power and international economy and, on the other hand, a tool used by the African Union to consolidate regional integration. However, this type of development brings with it social, economic, political and environmental challenges that, if not properly managed, could generate negative impacts such as greater marginalisation of the poorest or the threatening of biodiversity (UN Environment, n.d.). In the literature review, it was identified that in the African case, the main challenges related to development corridors are summarised in continental security, adequate coordination between private, public and governmental actors, barriers to trade and 'Chinese neo-colonialism'.

Improving the security situation in all African countries is relevant to attract investment both with the aim of building corridors and developing economic flows within them (Ehizuelen, 2017). Insecurity within countries such as South Africa has generated negative impacts on national economic growth, tourism, investor confidence and the use of corridors by different traders (Marrian, 2001). For Ehizuelen, the security of the continent is crucial in such a way that it creates a friendly environment for doing business and, as a consequence, a private sector development that "does not come to Africa to give aid – they come to

Africa to do business, but through the business they achieve development goals. A vibrant private sector is the engine of productivity, economic growth and higher incomes” (Ehizuelen, 2017, p. 354).

On the other hand, achieving coordination between private, public and governmental actors would allow a smooth operation of the corridors as well as the overcoming of obstacles related, for example, to the existence of policies that do not correspond with the general objectives of the corridor, economic barriers, poor physical infrastructure and high transportation costs (Hope & Cox, 2015). Through coordination between the different actors, better financing, construction, operation and maintenance opportunities can be achieved (de Beer, 2001). In addition to attaining coherence between different types of actors, it is also important that there is coordination, collaboration and a shared responsibility amongst the governments that participate in the development of the corridors regarding their functioning and problem solving (Hagerman, 2012). For Reeg (2107) the existence of failures in communication, coordination and harmonisation between actors can generate very expensive operational costs from the perspective of space planning.

Trade barriers, also known as soft infrastructure barriers, are considered one of the most common and important challenges that must be addressed in order for a development corridor to reach the level of success for which it was planned (Kuhlmann *et al.*, 2011). Within this group are non-tariff obstacles such as poor infrastructure at border crossings or corruption from people seeking to gain money from the movement of goods and services within corridors (Hagerman, 2012). On the other hand, amongst the barriers to trade that must be managed are exchange rates, limitations on imports and exports, difficulty in customs procedures and trade preferences (Reeg, 2107). For Hope and Cox (2015), regional integration through development

corridors is a reality that has not yet been achieved due to the high number of trade barriers that still exist and the lack of will of several countries to eliminate, for example, customs duties.

Finally, one of the main threats and challenges that must be addressed by African countries in the development of economic corridors is 'Chinese neo-colonialism'. In terms of building development corridors, China is one of the most relevant partners for the African continent. This is evident in events such as the signing in January 2015 of a memorandum of understanding between the African Union and this country aiming to "connect all 54 African countries through transportation infrastructure projects, including modern highways, airports, and high-speed railways" (Chen, 2016, p. 181). Unlike the cooperation and assistance offered by countries from the Global North, China provides loans and invests in infrastructure in Africa under few or non-existent political conditions (Condon, 2012; Pantucci & Lain, 2016). According to Condon, "China's non-interference policy and respect for sovereignty has meant that it pays very little attention to the negative externalities that arise from its investment spending. Unlike the West, it does not require recipients of development funding to implement [for example] anti-corruption measures" (Condon, 2012, p. 7).

Now, the term neo-colonialism has rhetorical power and refers to the influence exerted by any external power on the political and/or economic affairs of less developed countries by means different than political control (Menell, 2010). Taking into account the above definition, the debate about Chinese neo-colonialism has arisen due to the high levels of investment this country has disbursed in continents such as Africa in exchange for, among other things, having security regarding access to natural resources (Condon, 2012). Added to this is the control that China has acquired of local economies, the high levels of indebtedness of various countries in favour of China and the weight it has begun to

have in political, cultural and internal security dynamics in the continent (Blanchard, 2018). For Menell (2010) Chinese neo-colonialism could only exist with respect to Africa if the investments fail to really promote mutual development.

In this case, both the governments and the African Union are responsible for properly managing African interests and thus preventing the materialisation of Chinese neo-colonialism. The African countries must prove that they are “legitimate and capable of effectively regulating Chinese investment, trade and aid” (Menell, 2010, p. 59). Regarding the construction of infrastructure projects and development corridors, although these are promoted by China to achieve security in terms of natural resources, they also achieve that the beneficiary countries are integrated into regional and international trade (Blanchard, 2018). The success behind these projects lies in transcending the construction of dependency schemes towards the effective transfer of knowledge and resources, allowing the African continent to continue its process of rising without returning to the dynamics of colonialism.

4. CONCLUSIONS

The transformations of the International System and the hierarchies of power in different fields are evident. The rise of emerging powers such as China, India and Japan shows a transition towards a new distribution of power in which the schemes imposed by the Global North are beginning to compete with those proposed by the Global South. From this last group, the generation of projects that have favourable results for all the participating parties is sought, which has led to more favourable conditions for the countries that receive the investment and / or cooperation. This is the case with the construction of development corridors in Africa, which have become a foreign policy strategy for the emerging countries of the Global South, as well as a tool for regional integration within the continent.

Considering the definitions of corridors provided by authors such as Brunner, Elshahawany *et al.*, Hope and Cox and Kleynhans in this chapter, development corridors were understood as economic tools that organise other urban and rural elements with the aim of generating a more intensive economic activity in a specific area, increase the growth of the surrounding areas, attract more investment and diversify economic flows. All of the above means that these corridors do not only have a local impact, but also promote broader dynamics such as regional integration and the social and economic development of the entire continent.

Now, this chapter demonstrated that, currently, development corridors – in this case in Africa – are used as a strategy for foreign policy and regional integration in the Global South. In the first case, through investment in hard and soft infrastructure, countries such as China, Japan and India have strategically taken advantage of their economic resources to improve their position in other regions such as Africa. Under principles such as non-interference in internal affairs and respect for sovereignty, emerging countries of the Global South have become potential strategic partners that, in the eyes of African countries, can promote their development without the conditions normally demanded by the West – respect for democracy, no corruption, governability, amongst others.

The ability of countries of the Global South to strategically use their economic resources in other regions of the world is framed in the dynamics of soft-balancing which characterise the foreign policy of emerging countries. Through soft-balancing, they seek to increase their relative power with respect to other more powerful states without generating a direct confrontation or using hard power tools. In this case, the economic investment and technical support in the development of corridors is a strategy framed by soft power through which these countries improve their position in the hierarchy of power, counteract the influence of

others and assure matters of national interest such as access to natural resources.

On the other hand, these corridors have become a pillar of regional integration for continental organisations such as the African Union. Although after the end of Apartheid in South Africa, Nelson Mandela was one of the main advocates of this development strategy, the African Union and other organisations such as NEPAD have endorsed the concept and prioritised it within their agendas. In the specific case of the African Union, the 2063 Agenda recognises the connection of the continent through world-class infrastructure as one of its priorities. Through increased mobilisation of resources, products, services and people, as well as increased intraregional trade and with the rest of the world, the African Union sees in the development corridors an option to overcome those development obstacles that in turn affect regional integration processes. This vision has allowed Africa to be currently perceived as one of the main drivers of the future world economy.

Now, this chapter also identified a series of challenges that must be overcome in relation to development corridors. Although these are not exhaustive nor are they the only ones related to the African continent, they were considered as the most relevant insofar as they are related to both internal and external issues in each country. The effective management of security, the coordination between different types of actors, the commercial barriers and the dependency schemes that can result in a Chinese neo-colonialism are problems that must be taken into account from the planning of a corridor and during its implementation. The objective of correctly addressing these challenges is aimed at avoiding negative development impacts that could result in greater marginalisation of those countries and communities that were already marginalised and greater poverty for those who sought to overcome it.

The promotion and execution of development corridors in Africa is a relevant and viable alternative to overcome the

problems related to local development, regional integration and inclusion in global economic dynamics. In addition, it is an option to move away from the traditional practices of North-South Cooperation, moving towards South-South Cooperation and Triangular Cooperation schemes, which go beyond the scope of this paper. The most important issue to keep in mind is that only the real transfer of knowledge will allow Africa to independently manage the different challenges that arise in the development of a corridors policy. This, in turn, will allow the African continent to continue its process of growth and will avoid it relapsing into the dynamics of colonialism.

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5. A CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF THE CHINA-PAKISTAN ECONOMIC CORRIDOR. MAPPING PUBLIC DISCOURSE IN PAKISTAN: THE CASE STUDY OF THE INSTITUTE OF STRATEGIC STUDIES

AHMAD SAFFEE

ABSTRACT

This research study analyses Pakistan-China relations and its new “game changing” manifestation in the form of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), a 62 billion dollar energy and economic growth project. Through Critical Discourse Analysis’ (CDA), 30 reports of the Institute of Strategic Studies in Islamabad on the subject of CPEC were analysed. The Chapter concludes with some recommendations on Latin America’s engagement with China.

Key Words: China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, Critical Discourse Analysis.

RESUMEN

La investigación analiza la relación Pakistán-China y su nueva manifestación de “cambio de juego” en la forma del corredor económico China-Pakistán (CPEC), un proyecto de 62 mil millones de dólares, en planes de energía y de infraestructura para el crecimiento económico. A través del

análisis del discurso crítico (CDA) se estudiaron 30 informes del Instituto de Estudios Estratégicos en Islamabad sobre el tema de la CPEC. El capítulo concluye con algunas recomendaciones para el relacionamiento de América Latina con China.

Palabras clave: corredor económico China-Pakistán, análisis crítico del discurso.

INTRODUCTION

In an evolving world, change remains the only constant, a proverbial expression that is very relevant to the twenty-first century. Since the advent of China as global player, 'change' has become the currency for this new era of globalisation. The rate of change is on a steep curve. Non-state actors, migration, cyberspace, artificial intelligence and much more are now variables in this changing geo-political equation. To keep up with the pace of these changes, forecasting becomes a norm rather than the exception. Also, any forecasting must be flexible enough to cater to 'change', which makes this calculus more complex. One way of going about this is to keep a finger on the pulse of those driving this change, who in this case are the people. The complex interaction of people with their created institutions, their underlying processes and their implications are all a part of varying discourses.

The word 'discourse' is often used in multiple disciplines as a way or means of studying a particular subject. In general, 'discourse' refers to a dialogue or discussion undertaken formally or informally. Moreover, discourse analysis is the study of both the text and the context. The term 'public discourse' refers to all the conversations, ideas and discussions taking place within the public domain generally regarding the public good or issues of national concern. Its significance is multifold especially in a pluralistic society where chances of polarisation and divergence remain a risk and there is a conscious need to converge varying segments and ideas into a coherent national identity.

Public discourse, therefore, has application and relation with different levels of state and society. These relations can be explored from different dimensions. However, for the purpose of this study, public discourse shall be studied from the political dimension and critically analysed to explore underlying strategic objectives. The relation of public discourse to politics is of much significance especially in a democracy where the public at large are at the core of the political system. Under such a political system, public opinion becomes a key driver of both domestic and foreign policy. And media becomes a tool for managing public opinion. It is for this reason that nowadays the media is often called the fourth pillar on which the democratic political system rests.

It is under this backdrop and perspective that this study focuses on public discourse surrounding CPEC. The purpose of this study is to highlight the different contours and shades of public discourse on CPEC and their underlying strategic implications.

1. SITUATIONAL ANALYSIS OF GEO-POLITICAL ENVIRONMENT

In order to continue with the main section of the paper, it is pertinent to provide a background or context of the geo-political environment in which this study is being conducted. As mentioned earlier, change has surfaced as a crosscutting theme in socio-economic and political spheres of the international system.

Firstly, humanity today is facing a plethora of problems, some of which have been lingering for ages and others are new products of the changing dynamics on all fronts. Briefly describing some new trends on the social forefront, the issue of terrorism and its transnational network has grown to become a top priority for the international world. The franchise of global terrorism and its command and control in the hands of non-state actors has changed the security

landscape. Moreover, the rise of extremism and radicalism as a product of natural grievances has further given place to societal problems such as Islamophobia especially in the west and likewise an anti-west sentiment among Muslims. This has led to polarisation and social stratification even in developed societies. The places torn apart by conflict and war have forced many to migrate to other suitable countries, while the question of opening borders to migrants have spurred a global debate. Humanity demands accommodation, yet in a changed security landscape, these migrants pose a security risk and are also a burden to the global economy.

Secondly, there is a strategic shift towards geo-economics from geo-politics, where economic power is overriding political interests. China being the pioneer and steering force in shaping the new world order on the basis of its rising economic might and the forging of new relations with the rest of the world based on its economic dividends. No longer do political ideals dictate alliances, but rather humanity is witnessing two opposing political entities become tied and interdependent in an economic relation. Therefore, economic supremacy has dawned in a world where neo-liberal ideals and free trade is a norm. However, the growing trend of protectionism and nationalism in contrast to free trade and globalisation is also noteworthy. One manifestation of this is the on-going trade wars between United States of America (USA) and China enveloped in protectionist and nationalistic sentiment, are not just hindsight to the economic interests of their respective countries.

Thirdly, there is a shift in international power structures, from a unipolar to a multipolar world. This change is a product of emerging countries like China and India willing to take a leading global role. Moreover, there is a growing trend towards regionalism and regional blocs. Also, multilateralism is on the rise with new organisations such as BRICS, SCO, APEC and others being developed to challenge the unipolar dominance of the USA and its allies in the west.

Although the USA remains a superpower due to its military might and diplomatic influence as the most powerful multilateral institution, still the emerging powers are giving USA a run for its money.

Fourthly, innovation and technological advancement have also struck new heights with artificial intelligence and missions into outer space. Humanity is progressing and setting new standards in all fields of life, be it cyberspace, military and defence capabilities or progress in the health and medical domains. Innovation is driving the new knowledge economy that will usher in a new phase for the world civilisation and humanity.

Finally, the implications of these changes in the global system remain unknown and can only be predicted in a calculated manner. The transitional shocks to the global system will initially be unpleasant and produce some new problems, however in the long run, the international system and humanity will adjust. But some things cannot be reversed and should be taken seriously and in such a list of things, climate change surfaces at the top. Nevertheless, it still fails to find a position on the priority list of the world powers.

Therefore, it can be concluded that the international system is undergoing a transitional phase encompassing opportunities and challenges, progress and perils. The balance of power is in search of a new equilibrium or a new optimal. The optics of geo-strategic environment is clouded with multiple variables and transitions. Only the future will confirm if it is to be a transformed world or merely a reformed one.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1. Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA)

The theoretical framework of 'Critical Discourse Analysis' (CDA) shall be used as a lens to decipher the primary data

(text) selected for the purpose of this study. This method joins conceptual representation to linguistics, views its power relations and structure contextualised within the socio-cultural background. One of the reasons for selecting CDA is due to its multi-purpose use and inter-disciplinary approach. CDA shall be used in this study to present research outcomes from various dimensions and from different perspectives adhering to multiple disciplines.

Moreover, the emphasis of considering text and context together in CDA provides a better understanding of the latent power structures and social actors involved in the process (Wodak, 2000c; Benke, 2000). CDA regards 'language as social practice' (Fairclough and Wodak, 1997), particularly the relation between language and power. A think tank, an institution and also a social actor that creates agency around public and national interest, publish the primary text that is used as data in this study. The word 'critical' or "critique" is essentially making visible the interconnectedness of things' (Fairclough, 1985, p. 747). Thus, CDA may be defined as fundamentally concerned with analysing opaque as well as transparent structural relationships of dominance, discrimination, power and control as manifested in linguistics (Methods of Critical Discourse Analysis, p. 3).

There are different subjects that are being investigated under CDA and the methodologies to conducting it also vary from small case studies to large corpora of data drawn from primary and secondary sources. CDA, as a network of scholars, emerged in the early 1990s, following a small symposium in Amsterdam, in January 1991 (Methods of CDA, pg. 4). Scholars like Norman Fairclough, Gunther Kress, Theo van Leeuwen and Ruth Wodak spent days discussing various theories and methods of CDA. This tradition is still continued under various conferences and symposiums and has also led to the inclusion of various disciplines and scholars into CDA. However, the historical evolution of discourse analysis and text analysis within the domains of linguistics can be

traced back to 1970s when the role of language in structuring power relations in a society was recognized (Anthonissen, 2001). For the purpose of this study, the work of Fairclough shall be considered, as an early scholar of discourse analysis as well as a linguistic. His work investigated the language of mass media to underscore power structures and believed that media is not neutral but has a role in the construction and mediation of narratives.

Fairclough's work on CDA highlights the three-dimensional framework for CDA, which is of importance for this study. First is the 'text analysis' which simply put means the selection of words. It notes specific linguistic features, i.e. vocabulary, grammar and sentence structures. As already mentioned, language is a social practice and the words chosen have underlying meanings and background. Therefore, at a linguistic level, the first dimension of CDA adheres to simple text analysis – choice of words. The second dimension is discourse as a discursive practice, meaning that it is something that is produced, circulated and consumed in society. This is important as the way people talk about a subject may change views about it. The text is always subject to interpretation as language is not neutral; it contains values, attributes and intentions. The third dimension adheres to discourse as a social practice, as language creates opinions and characterises people's attitudes, it creates social relationships and practices. Communication is a social event as it can be within a society that has norms and traditions, and language forms the context of this social event. Therefore, the third dimension views the ideological effect and hegemonic processes in which discourse is seen to operate.

Under Fairclough's model of CDA, the following tasks shall be undertaken (CDA an interdisciplinary pg. 10):

1. *Description*: CDA focuses on the textual-linguistic features of the material. It is related to the first dimension of discourse as mentioned above.

2. *Interpretation*: It is about the way in which participants arrive at some kind of understanding of discourse on the basis of their cognitive, social and ideological resources.

3. *Explanation*: It is about drawing on social theory in order to reveal the ideological underpinnings of lay interpretive procedures. The use of social theory provides an unbiased lens or a critical approach to CDA.

In light of Fairclough's three-dimensional model, certain concepts are important to define and also for the purpose of this study, where these concepts shall be applied to practical, real world entities. Firstly, people are social creatures living in society with defined roles, and each social role has an inherent social power which according to van Dijk (2008) is crucial for the proper functioning of society. Social power can be institutionalised in a social structure such as government institutions, which are explicit manifestations. Whereas, implicit manifestations are also of importance as "power is not only a way to control the acts of other people, but also their minds, and such mind control, which is again at the basis of action control, is largely discursive. In other words, discourse plays a fundamental role in the cycle of the reproduction of social power" (van Dijk 2004, p.25).

Secondly, ideology is an inherent part of CDA as it adheres to the intrinsic beliefs, values and norms that guide social beings in their lives. These ideological underpinnings are encoded in the texts manifested in lexical choice, cliché and presuppositions. CDA provides the relationship and connections between these socio-cultural voices in the texts with power and ideology in the broader social frameworks. According to van Dijk (1995) ideologies are basic systems of fundamental social cognitions and organisation of attitudes and other social representations shared by members of groups. Thus, ideologies indirectly control the mental representations that form the interpretation basis and contextual embeddedness of discourse and its structures.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study shall use critical discourse analysis as a theoretical framework through which the subject under investigation shall be reviewed. As already mentioned, CDA has evolved into an inter-disciplinary approach and has no fixed methodology. However, for the purpose of this study, online automated software for text analysis will be used, in addition to manual reviews of the texts. The online tools for text analysis will provide us with word count, word and phrase frequencies and the nature of adjectives, underlying tones of the texts and any other indicators of significance.

The selection of data, its sampling and period under investigation are also of critical importance, and due weightage has been given to each dimension. However, certain limitations still remain at large, including most importantly the limitation of researchers and resources involved in conducting this research. Moreover, there is a single resource used which only provides a detailed view or CDA of that particular social organisation. In the future, comparative analysis involving different sources can be conducted and will be helpful in providing and authenticating a cross-sectional discourse.

For the purpose of this study, a CDA shall be conducted on the text produced by the Institute of Strategic Studies in Islamabad on the subject of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor. The institute is a semi-autonomous, government-funded organisation under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Pakistan. The text selected for CDA is from the reports produced by the Institute published as a result of various public engagements on this specific subject. Scholars and research fellows working at the Institute on this specific topic write these reports. Moreover, each report entails a question and answer session in which the participants question the panelists on the topic. This question and answer

session is interactive and highlights public sentiment on the specific topic.

The period of analysis is six years, starting from year 2012 until the end of the year 2018. In terms of primary documents, more than 30 reports were reviewed. The reason for selecting this period is essentially based on the availability of report archives. However, there are few gaps in the data, therefore, some periods of the investigation were grouped into one unit for simplification of the analysis. Furthermore, the paper shall be categorizing the analysis on a yearly basis, where each year will present the thematic review of the content and critically connect the narrative that is being presented in these reports. As mentioned above, online text analysis tools will be used to quantify indicators adhering to content. For this purpose, Intencheck and Voyant tools were used as basic aids. These are free-to-use software available online and present key indicators that will be used later in the paper to shed light on the underlying power relations and leanings in the text.

Under the CDA approach, the text remains the basic unit for this investigation, however the analysis as mentioned above shall cover all dimensions. Most importantly, the Institute represents a social power that is exercised throughout these public engagements. The text analysis will highlight the underlying ideological presuppositions and orientations of the scholars and researchers and most importantly of the Institute. The question and answer sessions will not only highlight public opinion but will also provide key insights into the counter-narrative being set forth by the experts. Also, the participants of these events are not layman but members from academia, government officials and the media. Therefore, a high quality of informed content is manifested in the form these reports take and powerful social actors are involved in the due process.

The power relations that radiate from these texts shall be considered and analyzed within the socio-cultural context.

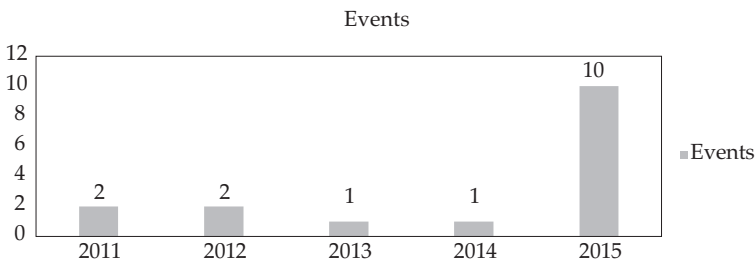
The Institute itself as mentioned is a social actor yielding social power, but also of interest will be the power dynamics discussed in these reports surrounding the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor. This kind of power analysis will shed some light on the power politics that are associated with this topic. In the due process of CDA, thematic segmentation of the text and reports shall be conducted. The purpose of such categorization is to highlight which issues and concerns are raised and with what frequencies, furthermore, highlighting the priorities in agenda-setting for the mainstream media.

4. RESEARCH ANALYSIS – A CRITICAL THEMATIC ANALYSIS OF DISCOURSE

As already mentioned, there are some gaps in terms of availability of data, especially for the years 2012, 2013, 2014 and 2015. Therefore, for simplification purposes, the paper shall be grouping this period into one singular unit of analysis.

During this period the Institute hosted a total of sixteen events including both public talks and in-house meetings. The bar graph below shows the frequency of these events and it is evident that year 2015 saw the highest engagement.

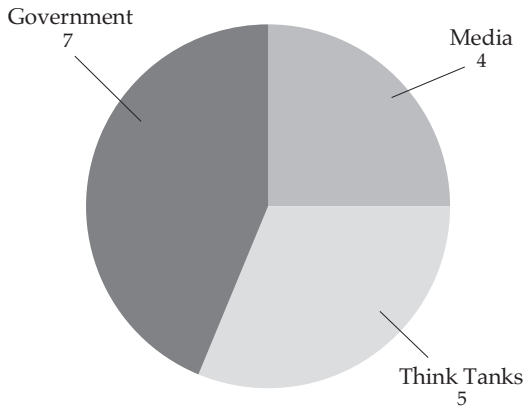
FIGURE 1: FREQUENCY OF EVENTS OF THE STRATEGIC INSTITUTE IN ISLAMABAD



Source: Self elaboration.

Furthermore, these Chinese delegations came from a mix of segments including media, think-tank communities and China's Communist Party representing their government. The following pie chart highlights the break-down of this segmentation. As can be seen, delegations from China's Communist Party paid the highest number of visits followed by think tanks and the media. This trend also highlights that in the initial stages of CPEC most of the engagement was between the governments of the two countries. Most of the agreements of the CPEC implemented in the first phase were either government funded, or government implemented with private investment.

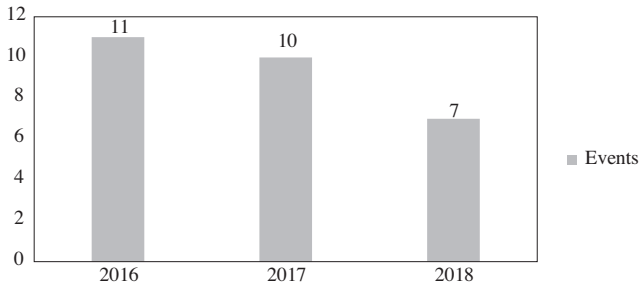
FIGURE 2: SEGMENTATION OF CHINESE DELEGATIONS
(2011-2015)



Source: Self elaboration.

For the combined three years, covering years 2016, 2017 and 2018, a total of twenty-eight Chinese delegations visited ISSI. Both government and civil society were almost equally represented during this period. The following graph highlights the break-down of these engagements and also their segmentation.

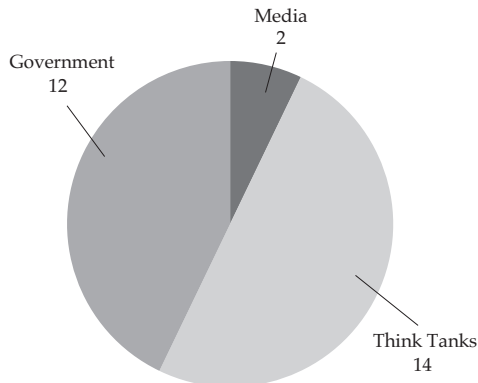
FIGURE 3: CHINESE DELEGATIONS VISITED ISSI (2016-2018)



Source: Self elaboration.

As can be observed, the year 2016 hosted the highest number of delegations, the second year being 2017 with a small margin and finally the year 2018 saw the least number of delegations. In terms of their segmentation as presented in the pie-chart below, it can be seen that think-tank communities hold the greater share followed by government. Therefore, the following section will highlight the text analysis of both segments.

FIGURE 4: SEGMENTATION OF CHINESE DELEGATIONS (2016-2018)



Source: Self elaboration.

The following section will highlight the issues discussed under the engagement held in each of the above-mentioned segments combined. Also, text analyses of these reports were conducted with the aid of online tools and shall be shared and critically analysed.

4.1 The Communist Party of China

The delegations representing the government held the maximum share of engagement with the Institute of Strategic Studies for this period. These delegations came from the Department of External Security Affairs, a delegation from the Foreign Ministry, a delegation from the Chinese Peoples Institute of Foreign Affairs, a delegation from the Peoples' Bank of China and other financial institutions and also from the Central Party School of Communist Party. Most of these delegations were headed by the second in command and deputy heads of their respective departments. It is interesting to note that most of these government engagements were carried out in the form of in-house meetings, which are invitation only and not open to the public. Another interesting thing is that Chinese translators accompanied each of these delegations, despite all the participants having a good understanding of English.

The content of these government engagements usually covered geo-strategic issues of mutual concern. The opening remarks made in most of these engagements highlighted the deep-rooted historic bilateral relations between the two countries. Phrases like "Sino-Pak friendship is eternal" or "higher than Himalayas and deeper than the ocean" categorized most of these introductory remarks. Unlike contemporary international relations based on national interest, both Chinese and Pakistani sides had framed adjectives as mentioned above to describe their relations. These glossy words do not change the hard facts of international relations, however they do provide some warmth and sense

of trust between the two countries. Both countries have a shared history where they have been beneficial for each other. A hope for such an arrangement to continue in the future possibly motivates them to reinstate their glorious past before they begin their conversations. Another possible explanation may be to make the other guest feel comfortable, however the repeated use of such expressions on other forums also adds significance to this trend and highlights the strategic use of mentioning their friendly relations in the past through literary phrases.

The rest of these discussions usually addressed the current issues of geo-political and strategic importance for that period. In this regard, the reports that were reviewed dated for years 2012 and 2013, discussed the new leadership in China, challenges China faced in the Asia-Pacific region, rapid Chinese growth and economic stability, terrorism and security issues in Pakistan and most importantly the United States and its policy towards China. It is interesting to note that there are hardly a few instances where CPEC or BRI is mentioned in depth other than casual reference.

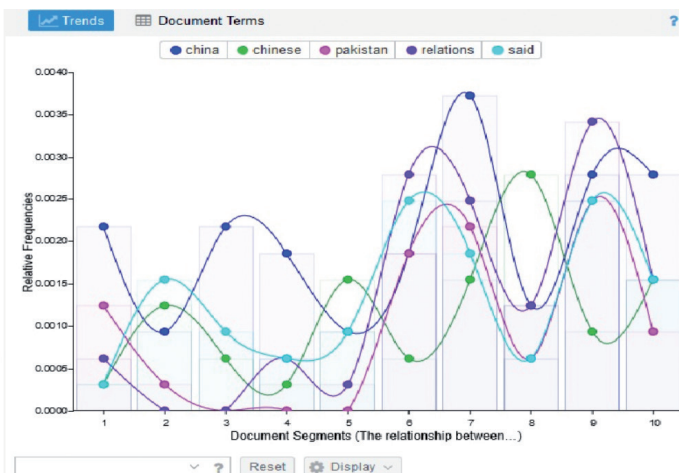
From a Chinese perspective, the most important event during this period was the emergence of new leadership in China under Xi Jinping. One quote from a senior official describing the 18th session of Congress defines it as “one of the most comprehensive transfers of power”. The word “comprehensive” can now be contextualized and understood as under President Xi, China has undergone reform in both state and society. Public opinion and approval are categorized as important indicators and milestones for the Chinese, as most of these delegations inquired about what others think? They also shared high rates of public approval for their agenda in China and what they termed as similar public sentiment for them in Pakistan and other areas of their engagement.

Another important and repeated theme adheres to US-China relations. The Chinese delegation on numerous occasions expressed their concerns regarding the challenges

they face in the Asia-Pacific region, especially with United States (US) policy and alliance system. The Chinese delegates present an opinion where they express their belief that the US's soft power is on a decline and somewhere in their conception of the world order they view the rise of China as a threat to the US. However, China arguably does not view a clash or conflict in the short to medium term or for that matter also in the long term with the US. They have talked about co-existence and peace and stability together. However, on other occasions in the text, Chinese officials have said that "China will make assertive policies for its defense" and at the same time that peaceful co-existence will lead to a rise in China's strategic capabilities. These statements are again assertive but when inquired about, China's vision for world order is conciliatory. Therefore, from the text China's intention and posture with regards to US can be distinguished. However, who is to blame? Is the Chinese response a reaction to US policy? Are these questions not to be addressed in this chapter?

Another important reference made was to the economic issues on both sides. From the Chinese side, rapid economic growth and resulting challenges were discussed. Pakistan also believes that not only could it learn from Chinese experience but also that China has an important role to play in its economic transformation. Pakistan assures China about the national consensus on relations with China and also believes that China will help Pakistan realize its potential. However, in these reports there is no specific mention of CPEC details as can be noticed in later period reports. Interestingly, one of the Chinese officials in 2012 had preempted trade wars between US and China and commented that such an instance would not be beneficial for the world economy. It can be also be seen that Pakistan has some expectations from China that are expressed. Also, China has expressed similar expectations, but they are not specifically and openly laid out. China believes that it will be based on socialism and adhere to its win-win strategy through cooperation and mutual benefit.

The text analysis with online tools (Intencheck) used for the analysis of the reports addressing ISSI's engagement with Communist Party of China (CPC) highlights 100 per cent positive and strong attitude. The words like unique relationship, glossy phrases to describe historic relations, repeated use of friendship, cooperation, peace and stability, mutually beneficial etc., are very highly used in the text. On the emotions barometer the text is 99% full of joy and surprise. The words like prosperous, optimistic, bright, respect adhere to this section and as the strong and positive attitude is 100% such a account of emotions is in the right place. The communication style is also termed as 79% rationale, with words like co-existence, development and learning being used in the text. The timeline of the text is talking 91% of present and 100% of future and the motivation is 100% forward looking. The perceptual position of the text falls in the fourth category that talks about "we", "our" like subjects and "us". The maximum word frequency is of the word "China" occurring 66 times followed by "Chinese" 37 times and "Pakistan" 31 times occurring in the entire text under investigation for this section only.



Source: Self elaboration based on Intencheck.

Furthermore, the graph of relative frequencies and document segments also shows interesting correlations. There is a correlation between the word “Chinese” and “said” of 1. Also, there is a similar correlation between “Pakistan”, “China” and “relation”. These correlations highlight the overarching direction of the text and what is being discussed throughout. Moreover, it has been seen from the word frequencies that China is the most frequently occurring word; hence China remains the most discussed subject in the text.

4.2. Media and Think Tank Community

Media and think tank delegations that visited included the China Centre of Contemporary World Studies, the China Institute of International Relations, the Institute of International Strategic Studies of Beijing, and other important print and electronic media. The reports available for this period and category cover think tank roundtable discussions only. The reference made to deep-rooted historic ties and the warmth of brotherly relations in the introductory remarks echo the other engagements.

In comparison to government engagement, the think tank community tends to focus more on socio-political issues. The issue of Afghanistan and the menace of terrorism were of concern for the academics and scholars from Afghanistan. They wanted to learn from Pakistan in this regard. The Pakistani narrative focused on the Afghan-led peace process and how Pakistan wants to have peace in Afghanistan, as its geo-strategic location is of significance and central towards regional connectivity. Pakistan also blamed the Afghan government and the failure of the Afghan National Army in restoring sustainable peace. Pakistan also believes that the impact of the Afghan situation is reflected in the Pakistan security situation, where cross border terror attacks and other terrorism incidents are of major concern. The issues of non-state actors and the understanding of

counter extremism policies was also sought through the panel discussions. Undoubtedly, Pakistan has experience to share in this regard and the Chinese seemed to be concerned and have helped in this area.

Issues of human and drug trafficking, cultural and ethnicity came under discussion as the Chinese delegates inquired into a more comprehensive understanding. Critical issues as the difference between a terrorist and a freedom fighter came under discussion. China seemed to have recognized Pakistani efforts and sympathizes with their loss.

The membership of Pakistan to the Shanghai Cooperation Organization was also discussed and preempted. Also, the withdrawal of US troops from Afghanistan was discussed and it was agreed that an early withdrawal would not be beneficial. Another interesting comparison would be the mention of Chinese led Maritime Silk Route and economic zones that would promote connectivity in Asia. Therefore, a clear distinction can be made that the concept of economic corridors was not well-developed or even discussed in 2012 and 2013, nor were the prospects of an Afghan withdrawal.

The think-tank delegations for 2016, 2017, and 2018 included the Institute of International and Strategic Studies, the China Foundation of Peace and Development, the Chinese Institute of Contemporary International Relations, the Shanghai Institute of International Studies, China's Special Economic Zones Think-tank, and others. Some of the renowned think-tanks have signed Memorandums of Understanding with ISSI and as a result undertake annual exchanges. In terms of gender representation, most of the delegations were dominated by men and only a few hosted females.

In terms of the topics and issues that came under discussion, these included the situation in Afghanistan, the security situation in Pakistan, CPEC progress and updates, India and US interference and the policy towards CPEC, China's engagement in South China Sea and other relevant

geo-political issues. In comparison to earlier periods, the mention and articulation of CPEC and BRI was found to be comprehensively described in all discussions. Also, the intensity of the mentioning of Afghanistan and India was found to be more compared to previous years as mentioned above.

As usual, most of these discussions started with the historical background of China-Pakistan relations and their “ever-growing, time-tested and strong friendship”. Both sides acknowledged historical references where they had cooperated and assisted each other. Pakistan was one of the first countries to have recognized the People’s Republic of China and also played a bridging role in US-China relations. Similarly, China helped Pakistan in times of emergency, especially during wars with India. Hence, these historical references provided a strong foundation not only to Pakistan-China relations but also to these discussions which never shy away from their mentioning.

Secondly, CPEC became another important component of all discussions. The Chinese delegations were interested in knowing all the dimensions of CPEC, what threats and challenges it faced? Who and why it was opposed? And How to counter anti-CPEC propaganda? The significance of Pakistan’s geo-strategic location to CPEC was emphasized. The Chinese portrayed CPEC as a “reward” for Pakistan’s services to mainland China. The Chinese believed that CPEC will have far-reaching strategic implications for Pakistan that would totally benefit it. They elaborated on the Chinese model of inclusive growth and win-win cooperation towards a “shared destiny” of peaceful co-existence. CPEC will help in improving connectivity and integration of infrastructure, industry and people. CPEC is also a model of cultural exchanges and people-to-people interaction.

The researchers from ISSI updated the Chinese delegates on the progress of CPEC, especially the early harvest projects that were on the verge of completion in the year 2018-19.

Both sides expressed their satisfaction on its implementation while raising certain concerns. In particular the security situation especially with regards to CPEC was highly ranked by the Chinese, followed by the domestic political situation and criticism of CPEC in the media in Pakistan. The security concern ranked high for a period, especially during 2016 and 2017, but since Pakistan law enforcement agencies had launched operation Zarb-e-Azb, the security situation improved a lot and even the Chinese acknowledged this betterment in security related matters. Also China has a policy of non-interference in the domestic affairs of other countries, however, it can be seen that since Pakistan saw the elections and coming of a new-government in these years, thusly the Chinese were concerned about the changes in domestic politics and how these would fare with CPEC. Also, some of the provinces in Pakistan had raised the issue of not being given an equitable share under CPEC projects, these voices were not taken in their true spirit in China. As a result, these Chinese delegations wanted to know about public opinion and the domestic political situation with regards to CPEC. On this note, Pakistan assured the Chinese that there is a national consensus on CPEC and whatever discontent they experience is not regarding CPEC but on the distribution of these projects as every province wants a bigger share of the development being ushered in by CPEC. Similarly, the 18th amendment in the Pakistani constitution granted greater autonomy to provinces and the devolution of power gave provinces the authority to implement these projects. In this context, the Chinese were informed of the political system and its functioning in Pakistan, as their concerns regarding domestic politics were misplaced. Moreover, researchers at ISSI advocated for a set of proposals with regards to CPEC. These included a review of the Free Trade Agreement with China, setting up a new industry in Special Economic Zones which were to be established near urban centers, business to business interaction should increase, there is a need to

establish one window of operations for CPEC related issues, there was also a need for civil reform and business laws and a lot of institutional coordination was required. Another important CPEC related issue was ensuring transparency on financial agreements and also clarifying misperceptions that these would add to the burden of debt in Pakistan. The Chinese embassy in Pakistan was quick to fire back fighting these allegations and soon these arrangements and financial portfolios were made public.

In comparison to previous years examined, this period discussed geo-political and regional issues in detail. In addition to the situation in Afghanistan, India's posturing *viz á viz* Pakistan and CPEC, some new issues had also surfaced. Among these the US-China confrontation ranked as most discussed. Pakistani researchers wanted to know in particular about the situation in the South China Sea and how this confrontation could impact CPEC. Therefore, foreign policy alignment and balancing diplomatic relations became a top priority agenda for the discussions reviewed in this section. One reason for this could also be the rapidly changing global situation and increased international activity in terms of high-level meetings, seminars, conferences and the developing security situation in the Middle East. Picking each thread one by one.

The situation in Afghanistan was a major concern for the Chinese delegation, and for Pakistani researchers, India's involvement in Afghanistan morphed in the larger context of India-Pakistan relations, as a major concern. The Pakistani researchers informed the Chinese delegates about India's efforts to subvert CPEC and its stubborn behavior. Both sides agreed to the fact that India is of strategic importance, within the context to Indo-Japan alliance and its arms buildup in the Indian Ocean. Any security framework that was to develop had to cater to the Indian factor. Explaining the Chinese perspective, one of the reports mentioned that "China is not against cooperation but it does object to any initiative

which tends to disturb regional peace and security.” China perceived the developing Indo-US military alliance as a threat and with India and Pakistan both becoming members of Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), China hoped to work with both under SCO’s security framework.

India’s membership in the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) and its opposition to BRI highlighted a confused and ambiguous position. In addition to CPEC opposition, Pakistan-India have a history of hostile relations. The dispute of Jammu and Kashmir came under discussion as Pakistan regards it as a fundamental problem with India. Pakistan informed the Chinese about India’s Cold Start military doctrine and how recent violations from India on the international borders with Pakistan could lead to a deterioration in regional peace. Pakistan’s relation with the US and the latter’s South Asia policy which now favored India could also disturb the strategic balance in the region. One of the Pakistani scholars believed that the US will maintain a transactional relation with Pakistan, which is a continuation of past administration policy in the US. However, President Trump’s ability to take unexpected decisions remains a volatile factor in US policy and engagement with South Asia. With regards to President Trump’s new Afghan policy, the Chinese believed that it focused more on a military solution, rather than a political discourse. Also, there was a consensus regarding no early US military withdrawal from Afghanistan, which on the contrary has not happened.

Another important thread from these discussions addressed the growing US-China confrontation, in the South China Sea, in trade wars and on other geo-political frontiers. The Chinese believed that international forces were not happy with China getting away with oil imports from Malacca Strait and with its outreach through connectivity projects. CPEC will reduce time and money for Chinese oil imports. Also, China does not want confrontation with the US over the South China Sea. They believed that the US

has no territorial claims and has no right over the South China Sea.

Other issues also came up in several of the discussions with media delegations, town council delegations and in the young diplomats' delegation. These issues covered a spectrum, from the media's role in CPEC to cultural exchanges, the Chinese involvement in socio-economic development was encouraged from the Pakistani side. It was suggested that in-order to clarify misperceptions regarding CPEC in public, media exchanges and joint ventures can play a vital role. Understanding each other through cultural exchanges and people-to-people contacts was regarded as vital for future collaboration and mutual development. The need for broadening financial linkages was also termed necessary and all countries in BRI should undertake reform. With regards to economic growth, the Pakistani side stressed innovative development which is fairly distributed, investment in cheap labor and ecological concerns. In addition to misperceptions on financial arrangements, there was also a lot of misunderstanding on the part of the ecological impact of CPEC energy projects, and also Pakistan wanted China to invest more in local labor and human development through vocational trainings and investment in learning outcomes for the labor force.

The paper will be randomly making the text analysis for the year 2016 conducted through online text analysis tools, as it had the highest number of delegations. For the year 2016, on Intencheck it was found that just like previous years, the document is rated positive and strong in emotions. On the scale of attitude there is only 6% anger in places where Indian opposition is mentioned. The communication style is termed 99% rationale, and the timeline marks 99% in present and 100% in future. The motivation was forward looking, and it adhered to position 3 which talks about "them" or "they" as third person.

From the text analyzer tool, it was found that the word frequencies and other important indicators were as presented below:

TABLE 1: FREQUENCY AND TOP WORDS

Word	Occurrences	Frequency	Rank
CPEC	103	3.1%	1
China	99	2.9%	2
Pakistan	93	2.8%	3
said	83	2.5%	4
Chinese	41	1.2%	5
delegation	38	1.1%	6
economic	26	0.8%	7
relations	25	0.7%	8
strategic	23	0.7%	8
between	22	0.7%	8
Total word count:			3374
Number of different words:			1340
Complexity factor (Lexical Density):			39.7%
Readability (Gunning-Fog Index): (6-easy 20-hard)			10.3
Total number of characters:			36919
Number of characters without spaces:			22999
Average Syllables per Word:			1.82
Sentence count:			359

Average sentence length (words):	16.6
Max sentence length (words):	70
(• a model of south south cooperation • a model of win win inclusive economic cooperation • a model of “shared destiny” based on shared responsibility • an emerging model of integration of multiple regions • an impetus for building other economic corridors • a model of constructing a new civilisational zone she said that various projects under cpec include the karot hydropower project invested by the ifc of the world bank and the silk fund)	
Min sentence length (words):	1
Readability (Alternative) beta: (100-easy 20-hard, optimal 60-70)	36.2

Source: Self elaboration.

CONCLUSION

China-Pakistan Economic Corridor is a flagship project under the Chinese Belt and Road Initiative, negotiated in the bilateral framework of Pakistan-China relations. This paper has mapped the public discourse around CPEC and Pakistan-China relations at the Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad. During the course of this research, certain themes and issues have come to the forefront that can be helpful for Latin American nations who are yet to experience similar engagement with China. Firstly, among the trends it was noticed that in the early phase the engagement is largely focused between the government organizations and departments especially on the Chinese side.

Secondly, it was seen how the issues of regional and geo-political concern remained the major part of discussions. Also, the difference in the issues being debated by the think-tank community and Chinese government is also

highlighted above. It was also noticed that there are certain stereotypes and concerns attached with the Chinese, i.e. ensuring employment of local labor, financial transparency, and security. The Chinese government expects local institutions like ISSI to do the fire fighting and clear misperceptions associated with Chinese projects. Another interesting take away was the Chinese interest in the domestic politics of Pakistan and public opinion about Chinese projects. Despite China's policy of non-interference, it can be argued that the Chinese are very particular about the domestic politics and its impact on Chinese projects.

Thirdly, it can be seen that once CPEC took proper shape and form, it became the most debated theme. The need to vent misperceptions arises from the very fact that these projects were not debated in the public realm only before they were decided and ground operations started.

For the Latin American countries, it is pertinent to align their foreign policy with the Chinese vision and also to adopt a cooperative framework when it comes to working under the Chinese win-win framework. The Latin American countries should also approach these Chinese projects in away that they are open to scrutiny and deemed transparent in public opinion. Other to-dos are mentioned in the paper above, it gives a broad base policy orientation and it is important not only to understand but also to share their concerns.

For Latin American countries, balancing relations with China and the United States of America becomes a very critical factor. Pakistan is a similar case study, maintaining strategic relations with both and yet maintaining a balance in terms of cooperation. Therefore, it is very pertinent to leverage the right drivers of policy and engagement in order to drive optimal results and benefits. As emphasized, understanding China and the Chinese systems is very important and a pre-requisite to Latin America - China relations. This paper, in light of Pakistan's interaction and

engagement with China, lays down a series of issues and concerns that explain the Chinese systems, their concerns and how to avoid certain recurrent issues that China faces around the world with their engagement, that if properly managed and catered during the initial stages of engagement can prove a vital success in long-term engagement.

Also interesting for Latin American countries is to prioritize the areas of cooperation. As Pakistan is cooperating with China along a spectrum of areas, it might not be possible for Latin American countries to do the same, possibly due to their close proximity to the USA. Therefore, Latin America can focus on Industrial cooperation, joint ventures and sharing of products and markets. Latin American countries provide a unique opportunity to Chinese businesses and companies to shift their manufacturing units to Latin America in order to capture the American market and at the same time avoid possible hurdles as faced by those producing in mainland China. In light of the recent trade war between China and the USA, Latin America is pivotal for China and their economy. Therefore, the Chinese would be willing to cooperate and initiate joint ventures. However, it is up to Latin American countries to extract optimal benefit in terms of missing links to their growth in terms of missing infrastructural projects, connectivity initiatives and other areas of socio-economic cooperation which require additional resources that China is willing to provide. The Chinese framework of win-win policy and its vision under Belt and Road Initiative is a way forward. Now Latin American countries should integrate their economies and society into this vision of global connectivity to reduce their dependence and gain a universal market.

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6. RESURGENCE OF SOUTH-SOUTH COOPERATION AND CHINA'S BELT AND ROAD INITIATIVE IN ASIA AND LATIN AMERICA

UME FARWA
GUZANFAR ALI GAREWAL

ABSTRACT

With the rise of the East and decline of the West, South-South Cooperation (SSC) is witnessing a surge again. Being at the forefront of development initiatives in the global South, China is adding momentum to SSC. Its economic corridors – a mix of infrastructure, energy and seaport projects – are accelerating cooperation among the countries of the South. SSC is not a new idea rather it has been a recurring theme. Although it achieved a great deal in terms of laying down conceptual framework, the true spirit of SSC remained dampened throughout its history. The overarching control of the North and the South's deficiencies to design and execute concrete initiatives were the biggest impediments. Through its multilateral economic and development initiatives, China is advancing the cause of SSC by adding to its policy discourse, finance and development initiatives. The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) is one such project. In Asia, the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) is being implemented at a fast pace. Though it is a bilateral project, it is opening up new avenues of cooperation and progress

and development not only for Pakistan but for the regional countries also, giving a boost to intra- and inter-regional connectivity. In the same vein, Latin American countries can maximize their benefits from BRI. However, for fully capitalizing on China's 'win-win cooperation' formula, it is up to the Asian and Latin American countries to identify their targets, increase their bargaining position and draw an all-comprehensive approach to turn the benefits of joining BRI in their favor. And that is not as easy as pie.

Key Words: South-South Cooperation, Belt and Road Initiative, China-Pakistan Economic Corridor.

RESUMEN

Con el resurgimiento de oriente y el declive de occidente, la Cooperación Sur-Sur (SSC, por su sigla en inglés) está experimentando una nueva oleada. Al estar a la vanguardia de las iniciativas de desarrollo en el sur global, China está agregando impulso a la SSC. Sus corredores económicos, una combinación de proyectos de infraestructura, energía y puertos marítimos, están acelerando la cooperación entre los países del sur. A pesar de que logró mucho en términos de establecer un marco conceptual, el verdadero espíritu del SSC se mantuvo amortiguado a lo largo de su historia. El control excesivo del norte y las deficiencias del sur para diseñar y ejecutar iniciativas concretas fueron los mayores impedimentos. A través de iniciativas multilaterales para el desarrollo económico, China está promoviendo la causa de la SSC al agregarla a su discurso político y financiero y a sus iniciativas de desarrollo. *Belt and Road Initiative* (BRI) es una de esas iniciativas. En Asia, el corredor económico China-Pakistán (CPEC) se está implementando a un ritmo acelerado. Aunque es un proyecto que se ejecuta de manera bilateral, está abriendo nuevas vías de cooperación, progreso y desarrollo no solo para Pakistán sino también para los países del Asia Meridional, dando un impulso a

la conectividad intrarregional e interregional. En la misma línea, los países latinoamericanos pueden maximizar los beneficios del BRI. Sin embargo, para capitalizar plenamente la fórmula china de “ganar-ganar”, los países asiáticos y latinoamericanos deben identificar sus objetivos, aumentar su posición de negociación y adoptar un enfoque integral para aprovechar los beneficios de vincularse a BRI.

Palabras clave: Cooperación Sur-Sur, Iniciativa del Cinturón y la Ruta, corredor económico China-Pakistán.

INTRODUCTION

The recent economic achievements of several developing countries have brought the idea of South-South Cooperation (SSC) onto the world stage again. The economic rise of Brazil, Russia, India and China (BRIC), has given impetus to economic cooperation and trade among the poor and developing countries. (Gills, 2016) Moreover, the production and manufacturing centres have shifted from the North to the South, which has altered the global economic landscape. With this shift, the globalization tendencies highlighted the South’s latent potentials of economic growth and accelerated the process of industrialization. Many factors account for the current wave of SSC resurgence but the most important are the economic crisis in the West; the growing development and economic needs of the South and the strengthening cooperation of BRIC with the developing countries. (Gills, 2016)

Above all, the most significant factor is China. After its increasing economic engagement in Africa and Asia, on the principle of mutual benefit and “win-win cooperation”, it has been helping developing countries in strengthening and diversifying their economies by building infrastructure at the national and regional level. China has multiplied its ties with the big and small countries of the South: it has become one of their major trading partners; importer of their

products; exporter of their goods; investor of infrastructure projects and provider of financial resources. Generally, it is on favorable terms with the countries of the South since it has intentionally avoided the traditional intrusiveness of the North, paternalism and the conditional strings attached to economic assistance and aid. Nonetheless, how long and to what extent China is willing to continue its current benign attitude is a matter of debate.

When it comes to infrastructure and development, Asia appears to be an under-developed region. According to the Asia Development Bank (ADB) report, Asia has US\$8 trillion funding gap in infrastructure development (Asian Development Bank, 2013). Another report maintains that the region is in dire need of US\$1.4 trillion investment in infrastructure per annum, between 2017 and 2030, in order to maintain its growth momentum (Wall Street Journal, 2017). Europe after the Brexit and the US after the rise of Populism are not in a position to commit themselves to the progress and development of Asia. China, in such critical times, rose to the occasion and employed its model of cooperation to help deal with its own economic problems and other countries of the South as well.

Being an investment-grant-loan model, Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) promises economic equality, suitability to each country's investment needs and economic environment, inclusive applicability and, above all, the consensus of all the stakeholders. Indeed, it is opening new vistas of cooperation among developing countries. Assistant Director of the United Nations Office of SSC, Adam Roger, acknowledging China's efforts in advancing cooperation among the developing countries of the world stated that "China had been an important partner of South for many years and its OBOR initiative was very well received at the headquarters in New York. China provided support to SSC and the initiative of OBOR is but one example" (Rowlands, 2015).

BRI was announced by President Xi in his speech at Nazarbayev University, Kazakhstan (Ministry of Foreign

Affairs of the People's Republic of China, 2013). The trans-continental *Belt* is the land-based route which links China to Central Asia and Europe while the maritime *Road* is the chain of seaports in the South China Sea, the Indian Ocean and the Mediterranean. These will connect China with South and Southeast Asia, the Middle East and Europe, facilitating Beijing in coping with its Malacca Dilemma. With China's commitment to forging deeper ties of cooperation among developing countries, two major hurdles seem to be removed: lack of national commitment and concrete policy initiatives. When the 'Belt' and the 'Road' are combined, BRI emerges as a chain of six corridors. The New Eurasian Land Bridge; China-Mongolia-Russia Corridor; The Bangladesh-China-India-Myanmar (BCIM) Corridor; The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC); The China-Indochina Peninsula Economic Corridor (CIPEC); and China-Central Asia West-Asia Economic Corridor (CCAWAEC).

In 2017, China began to expand BRI to the Latin American and Caribbean countries (LAC). During his visit to Panama in September 2017, the Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi called Latin America "*a natural extension*" of BRI (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, 2017a). Later on, President Xi also mooted the idea of extending BRI to Latin America (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, 2017b). Again in January 2018, at a Summit between China and the Community of Latin America and Caribbean States (CELAC), Wang Yi invited the LAC to join BRI and called them "*a natural fit for BRI.*" (Sherwood, 2018)

Already stretching across almost 68 countries, BRI would become truly global with the possible inclusion of LAC. Within the context of cooperation among poor and developing countries, which is SSC, here two questions arise: will BRI prove beneficial to the countries of the South and add momentum to the resurgence of SSC?

With this background, this chapter argues that BRI is not unguided rather it is driven by Beijing's geo-economic and

geo-political vision which will have far-reaching implications at many levels: national, regional and international. As of now, CPEC is the only fast developing corridor in BRI, this essay utilizes Pakistan's experiences to make an assessment for gauging its impacts on SSC and drawing lessons for the inclusion in BRI of Latin American countries.

1. BELT AND ROAD AS A PROJECT OF SOUTH-SOUTH COOPERATION

The factors which impeded the progress of SSC can be broadly classified into two categories, the one which stemmed from the lack of interest in and shortcomings of the South, and the other which resulted from the over assertive approach of the North towards the South. Although these two factors are intertwined, it is generally believed that if the South works on addressing its own shortcomings and challenges, a great deal of progress can be achieved. On the part of the South, the lack of effective actions which could yield tangible outcomes has been a major stumbling block. Four broad measures need to be taken for substantive advances in SSC:

- Establishment of the South's own conceptual framework for SSC;
- Cooperation between the big countries and the smaller countries of the South;
- National commitment to developing countries and institutional cooperation;
- Ample financing and institutional support at the global, regional and sub-regional levels.

As far as the conceptual framework is concerned, much needs to be done. However, as a policy initiative, BRI has the potential to rekindle national commitments of the developing countries towards SSC and to reinvigorate economic cooperation of big countries of the South with the smaller ones.

BRI extends to over 40 to 60 countries, consisting of approximately 65 per cent of the World's population and generating 30 per cent of the world's GDP (Sahoo, 2015).

Such an ambitious project needs a well thought-out policy to connect with other developing countries. China's Ministry of National Development and Reforms Commission (NDRC) and Ministry of Foreign Affairs penned down the blueprint of BRI which was previously called the One Belt One Road (OBOR), "Visions and Actions on Jointly Building the Silk Road Economic Belt and 21st Century Maritime Silk Road." (National Development and Reforms Commission, n.d.). The publication bears far-reaching implications on the conceptual framework and provides a platform for the South. It is an avowal to stay away from any act similar to the traditional intrusiveness of the North. In this document, the Chinese authorities pledged to stand by the five principles of peaceful co-existence:

- Non-interference;
- Mutual respect for each other's sovereignty and territorial integrity;
- Mutual non-aggression;
- Mutual non-interference in each other's internal affairs;
- Equality and mutual benefits and peaceful co-existence.

Since the major task of BRI is to increase trade and investment across the Eurasian continent, this publication encourages other developing countries to follow their own models of development so that a pattern of economic engagement could be formed, which reduces dependencies of the developing countries even on the donor countries of the South. It advocates the use of dialogue to shelve differences and further develop cooperation instead of sanctions and threatening measures. As per the document, BRI will be implemented according to the principles and purposes of the United Nations (UN) Charter. The document accepts the decisive role of the market in resource allocation and the primary role of enterprises while letting the government perform their due functions. It states that OBOR will follow the market operation and pledges to abide by the rules of

the market and the international norms, which imply no drastic implications for the liberal economic world order.

BRI has the support of international, regional and sub-regional institutions which removes the long-standing barriers of financing the projects of SSC. The UN (2017) fully backed OBOR in the UNSC Resolution 2344 which calls on all the countries “to strengthen the process of regional economic cooperation through regional development initiatives such as the Silk Road Economic Belt and the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road initiative”.

At the Belt and Road Forum, held in Beijing on May 14, 2017, the President of the World Bank pledged to support the project and predicted the improvement of trade, investment and people-to-people contacts due to OBOR (World Bank, 2017). Other than these international institutions, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), AIIB and the Silk Road Fund (SRF) are also financing BRI projects. As BRI aims to connect the developing countries in Asia, North Africa, Central and Eastern Europe, and now Latin American and Caribbean Countries, it becomes a major vehicle of SSC.

Over the course of time, China’s infrastructure construction became one of its signature economic successes. This success is China’s comparative advantage which it could utilize to develop its neighboring countries and even beyond. Being an exclusive initiative of infrastructure and energy projects, BRI presents a huge opportunity to the participating countries to engage in mutual assistance in trade, technology and economics while offering them a chance to enhance their self-reliance and independent development. Yet, it is a matter of time what practical outcomes it would yield. To investigate this, the next section discusses CPEC and examines the interplay of the elements of SSC in its implementation.

2. CHINA-PAKISTAN ECONOMIC CORRIDOR: CHINA AS A LOCOMOTIVE AND PAKISTAN AS A CATALYST

CPEC, a flagship project of BRI, is the term coined for a network of roads and railways complimented with energy projects, Special Economic Zones (SEZs) and Gwadar Port. MoUs on CPEC were signed in April 2015, when President Xi Jinping visited Pakistan (Haider, 2015). At that time, the total investment that the Chinese president offered under CPEC was US\$46 billion but, later on, the amount increased abruptly and, now, it is worth US\$ 62 billion (Siddiqui, 2017). Still, it is an ongoing project which is being negotiated and adjusted according to the progress of CPEC and evaluation of the government of China and Pakistan. CPEC, for a country like Pakistan where foreign investment has almost come to a halt after its security and energy crisis, is more of a metaphor of an unprecedented opportunity to develop and prosper. In the larger picture, there are many benefits that both the countries could accrue from this mega-project which is encapsulated in the spirit of 'win-win cooperation.' Since the South always demanded filling the much-needed gap in infrastructure development, this bilateral project of infrastructure and energy is much appreciated. This is one way that CPEC is adding momentum to cooperation in the South.

Along with energy and infrastructure projects, SEZs have been planned to be established in each province of Pakistan under the umbrella of CPEC. The idea of SEZs is to establish a specific area of land in which industrial growth is promoted by giving special concessions on taxes and economic policies. 46 sites have been identified for establishing the zones in coordination with the Government of Pakistan and China. Nine out of these 46 sites have been declared as Priority Zones under CPEC. Pakistan's SEZ Act 2012 details the governing structure of the zones and allows the federal and provincial governments to set them up under various

administrative structures. Pakistan's Board of Investment (BoI) has established "CPEC-SEZ" cell for facilitating all the stakeholders involved. According to Chairman BoI, Saleem H. Mandiwala, the investment policy under this law is open to foreign investors and protects the local investors.

Being a massive bilateral project, it has been decided to implement CPEC by 2030 in four phases:

- Early Harvest Projects (to be completed by the end of 2018)
- Short-term Projects (2020)
- Mid-term Projects (2025)
- Long-term Projects (2030)

CPEC is an entirely bilateral (Government-to-Government) arrangement. It is a cross-party and cross-government project; it is not directed at third parties or countries. State-to-State bilateral cooperation has allowed the control of money being spent on the projects. It is favorable to Beijing to retain ownership of the tendering process and to award contracts to Chinese companies. However, this is not the case in all the projects. Though Chinese companies are given priority, any company from the world over can invest in CPEC. The Government of Pakistan has the ultimate say in deciding to which companies it shall give project contracts.

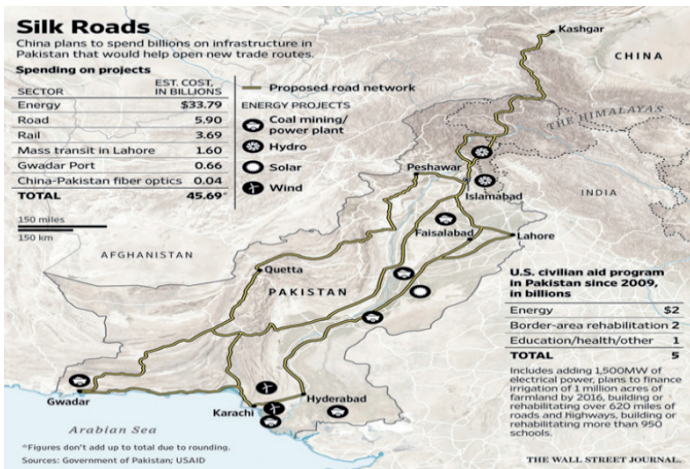
The mechanism of development finances in CPEC is a mix of aid, investment, grants and loans. Investment, aid, equity ratio and debt depend upon the sector and financial arrangement of the projects. A major part of CPEC loans are covered through concession or soft loans, with 2 to 3 per cent interest rate, which is less than the 5 to 8.5 per cent interest rate loans given by the IMF and the World Bank. All energy projects are investments and based on an Independent Public-Private (IPP) mode. Yet, some of them are based on grants; others are joint ventures and funded by the Silk Fund, IMF and the World Bank. Others are invested by IFC of the World Bank and the Silk Road Fund. Port Qasim Power plant has a net worth of \$2.085 billion; its equity ratio is 21 per cent and

the rest is to be arranged by the companies involved. The financial burden will be borne by the companies not the state of Pakistan. Debt China is providing the project with infrastructure and industrial projects in soft loans, which is based on G2G basis. The projects are being constructed on a Build-Own-Transfer (BOT) model. When BOT is not feasible, China provides three kinds of soft loans:

1. Preferential Buyer's Credit (KKHII and KLM; and Railway Projects)
2. Concessional Loans (Cross Border Optical Fiber)
3. Interest Free Loans (Gwadar Eastbay Expressway)

For a brief overview of the CPEC projects, the following tables and figures may be of help.

FIGURE 1: THE BREAK-DOWN OF US\$ 46 BILLION DEAL UNDER CPEC



Source: Wall Street Journal

Some of the major energy projects are given below in figure 2.

FIGURE 2: MAJOR ENERGY PROJECTS

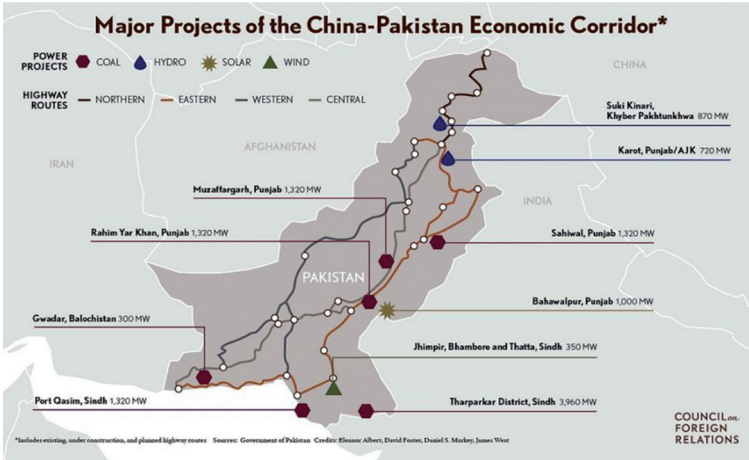


TABLE 1: CHINESE INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS

Project name	Length (KM)	Estimated Cost (US\$M)	Financing method
Road			
KKH Phase II (Thakot - Havelian Section)	118	\$ 1.366	Chinese Government Concessional Loans
Peshawar - Karachi Motorway (Multan - Sukkur Section)	392	\$ 2.980	Chinese Government Concessional Loans
Khuzdar - Basima Road N-30	110	\$ 80	
Upgradation of D.I. Khan (Yarik) - Zhob. N-50 Phase-I	210	\$ 195	
KKH Thakot-Raikot N35 remaining portion	136	\$ 720	

Project name	length (KM)	Estimated Cost (US\$M)	Financing method
Rail Sector Projects			
Expansion and reconstruction of existing Line ML-1	1830	\$ 8.172,00	Chinese Government Concessional Loans
Havelian Dry port (450 M. Twenty-Foot Equivalent Units)	136	\$ 65,00	Chinese Government Concessional Loans
Capacity Development of Pakistan Railways			

Source: Adapted by the authors from (Dawei, 2018)

3. THE GOOD AND THE BEST

If there was anything which was always emphasized by the champions of SSC, it was regional connectivity. CPEC is filling the gaps in intra- and inter-regional connectivity. There are two broader categories of regionalism: old and new. The old form of regionalism refers to the EU model and the one which was established by the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR). After the fall of USSR, its model collapsed and was no longer an example but the EU persisted. However, with the surge of populism and Brexit, the EU model is also coming apart. Therefore, the countries from the South are huddling together to carve out a new shape of regionalism. This is where China's trans-national corridors fit into the bigger scheme of boosting cooperation and enhancing multi-lateral ties in the Global South. Spearheaded by Chinese President, Xi Jinping, the new regionalism is being shaped by the phenomenon of "win-win cooperation", "shared destiny" and five principles of peaceful co-existence.

This new regionalism has normative underpinnings, so it is expected to weave a closely-knit community of nations

which belong to the Global South. This spirit will last long if peace, security, national interests and the principle of non-interference are followed religiously. In the economic field especially, this evolving form of regionalism can inject a new spirit of cooperation. Pakistan, due to its unique geostrategic position, stands at the crossroads of Central Asia, West Asia, Middle East and East Asia.

In the pursuit of China's Asian Dream, Xi Jinping visited South Asian countries and announced huge investment plans. Pakistan, having special ties with China, became a hot spot of these investment projects. It is a mega-investment project in Pakistan which aims to connect Xingjiang with the Gwadar Port by building a network of roads, rail routes, and oil and natural gas pipelines. CPEC is a mega-investment Chinese project in Pakistan, which has four subsets of the investments: Gwadar Port, energy, infrastructure and industry. The multi-billion dollar Chinese project will boost Pakistan's economic profile and increase the probabilities of attracting Foreign Direct Investment (FDI), which will consequently carve out bright prospects for Pakistan's export industries. In fact, it has begun to serve these two purposes. It can mark a new era of regional integration and, while employing the Chinese normative approach, much more cooperation can be encouraged in an all-embracing manner. Along with this normative diplomacy, economic diplomacy will help shape the hyper-connected Asian peoples. The flourishing economic and cultural affinities can lead to building the foundation of a new regional economic order. Also, a new economic model of regional integration can also be introduced by creating economic unions, common currencies, uniting markets and laying down common rules and regulations.

Pakistan has been one of those countries which looked up to the developed countries for their economic growth and sustainable development. It has been the second biggest recipient of US foreign aid and economic assistance. Given the strings attached to this foreign aid and the intrusiveness

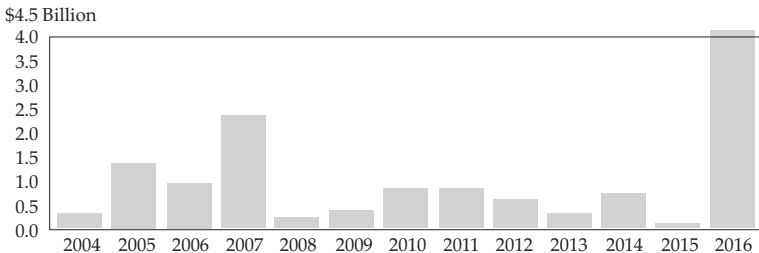
of the donor, aid never brought the country down the path of progress and prosperity. Ironically, the debts released by the IMF and the World Bank got Pakistan caught up in a vicious cycle of debt which never let the country flourish. It is that aid failed to promote sustainable development, impeded local capacity building and eroded the institutional foundation of the recipient. In 2009, Dambisa Moyo wrote a stinging indictment of foreign aid and labeled all aid as dead aid. In 2015, Noble economics prizewinner, Angus Deaton, argued that foreign aid is a waste and more of a destructive use of productive money. Based on his 20 years of research, he maintained that aid undermines local state capacity building. This research showed that developing countries should promote policies of sustainable growth, diversify their economies, increase trade with rich countries, and invest in infrastructure projects and education, and technological exchanges with other countries instead of relying on aid.

In this context, CPEC indeed is a quantum leap forward and a big step of collective imagination in the larger interest of Chinese and Pakistani communities. CPEC altered the economic landscape for Pakistan. Now, investors are returning to Pakistan as CPEC has brightened the economic prospects of Pakistan. Germany, Great Britain, Switzerland, Iran and Hungary showed their interest in doing business in Pakistan. But Pakistan must come up with a mix of policies for incentivizing foreign companies and protecting its local industry. Pakistan's steel and cement industries are a case in point. Chinese Banks are lending money to the companies engaged in power plant equipment and steel manufacturing sectors, an employer in Industrial and Commercial Bank of China, Sichuan Province. As the return of investment is not sure, Chinese banks are giving loans in two major forms. Loan schemes are designed for companies which are transferring manufacturing capacity abroad with the aim of addressing China's overcapacity problems. Those

companies which will be moving their steel refining and cement production capacities abroad will be preferred. An Executive at China Export and Credit Corp. (Sinosure), which is China's Policy-Oriented Credit Insurance Agency, outlined the risk in transferring overseas capacities in the Belt and Road countries. He said, "Companies on the OBOR bandwagon would do well to pay attention to what governments and other nations are saying about local demand for industrial and business projects". China is encouraging its steel, chemical and engineering companies to relocate to Pakistan.

Pakistan, which had flat direct foreign investment for decades, became an attractive destination for foreign investors (Figure 1). International credit rating agencies observed this change and began to rate the country higher. Morgan Stanley Capital International (MSCI), which provides international investment support tools worldwide, reclassified Pakistan as an emerging economy. Stockholm-based chief investment officer at Tundra Founder AB, Mattias Martinson said, "Pakistan has turned the tide. The CPEC agreement was probably the trigger for many investors to start looking. We all know China does not take short term decisions" (Mangi, 2016).

FIGURE 3: SURGING M&A TRANSACTIONS IN PAKISTAN
AFTER CHINESE INVESTMENTS



Source: (Mangi, 2016)

4. THE FIX

Given the huge investments and the enormity of the project that covers all four provinces and other areas of Pakistan, it is not unfair if CPEC is assuming a development and prosperity project for the country and its people. On paper, it is nonetheless an awe-inspiring project. In practical terms, however, CPEC shrouds ambiguity, complexity, misconception and confusion. The most perplexing is what exactly CPEC is and how it will be implemented.

One prevailing misconception is that China is giving money to Pakistan; it is not (Jamal, 2018). It is giving loans to Pakistan which will be released to the Chinese companies mostly via different modalities and institutions, China's EXIM bank is one of them. Here, naturally, confusion abounds as China is giving loans to its own companies but will be returned by Pakistan. In this way too, CPEC is being shaped by a bilateral understanding of each other's economic and political urgencies. In fact, CPEC is not an exclusive economic deal rather it has political undertones as well. Both China and Pakistan are making an attempt to benefit the most from this bilateral arrangement. While materializing Xi Jinping's vision of property for its own people dubbed the "China Dream", the Chinese government is facilitating its people and business to go abroad, hence CPEC symbolizes such feasible arena. It also gives a boost to Beijing's ambitious initiative of relocating its businesses and companies, China goes Global. For Pakistan, CPEC symbolizes a low-hanging fruit which can help its politicians to cater to the populistic needs, raise the economic profile of the country and ensure its credibility at least in terms of a booming economy and an attractive market for foreign investors. This convergence of bilateral interests, thus, can be fairly labeled as a square deal.

While talking at an in-house meeting in ISSI, the Deputy Chief of the Mission at the Chinese Embassy in Pakistan, Zhao Lijian was briefed about the mode of loans and

development finances under CPEC. He presented a rather surprising simplified version of the loans. Stating that CPEC is a bilateral project and not aimed at third parties, he emphasized that other parties will also be welcomed. How third parties can contribute to any of the CPEC project is again a process which is still unfolding. Recently, with Prime Minister Imran Khan's visit to Saudi Arabia and its inclusion in CPEC, many questions were raised about third-party involvement in the bilateral project and extension of BRI to Oman and Riyadh (Kiani, 2018). This development alludes to the fluid nature of the agreements and modalities which have been concluded for the implementation of CPEC. However, analyzed realistically, CPEC is also unfolding in the complex web of the national dynamics. As of now, Pakistan is grappling with an acute economic crisis. Therefore, it needs a boost of economic activity to manage the strict conditions that IMF could impose on Islamabad.

For clearing the ambiguity and misconceptions, Pakistan's Information Minister and the Minister of Planning and Development, Fawad Chaudhry and Khusro Bakhtiar, called a press conference and stated that "there was no decision of bringing a third party under the framework of CPEC" (Kiani, 2018). Leaving the audience in confusion again, the minister said that there could be many offshoots of CPEC in which the third party can participate (Kiani, 2018). In the Chinese media, this piece of news was hailed as a "diplomatic victory" (Awan, 2018) while senior Chinese officials welcomed Saudi participation in CPEC (Gul, 2018). Although the expansion of BRI to Oman and Riyadh will be an initiative worth appreciation but 'how' remains a question prone to confusion and ambiguities. It will add more uncertainty but more importantly, such favors to Saudi Arabia can upset the geopolitical balance in the Middle East, which could have far-reaching ramifications

for South Asia in particular. It is particularly applicable on Iran and its evolving relations with South Asian countries.

Pakistan's business community looks at CPEC with a very optimistic vision, yet there are certain fears too. President of FPCCI, Abdul Rauf Alam suggested the government make the private sector a main player of CPEC, which is basically a primary domain of the private sector. In a research report on CPEC, the Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce (FPCCI) laid open all its fears and apprehensions on the CPEC. It is a lengthy report which revolves around four major concerns of Pakistan's business community (FPCCI launches research report on CPEC, 2016):

a) Flooding of the market with cheap Chinese products, the signing of free trade agreement, inflow of Chinese investment and migration of Chinese labor to Pakistan;

b) Issue of transparency in the funding of these projects, and corruption;

c) Domination of foreign investment in political and economic policy making;

d) Dominant role of Chinese investors and entrepreneurship in private sectors.

President of FPCCI said that either the government should withdraw excessive incentives to the Chinese companies in SEZs or give the same to the local industries.

These concerns must be addressed and analyzed as they are linked to one vital concern in civil society of Pakistan: Is Pakistan becoming too dependent on China? Some of these concerns are valid and others are not. For instance, incentives could not be drawn as these will decrease prospects of foreign investment. To fully address these issues, the Pakistani business community must come up to a level where it can meet international standards. On addressing these concerns, Deputy Director CPEC, Hasan Dawood Butt said: "fears are good as they point out to the potential obstacles. If addressed effectively, they can help us better implement this mega-project. Yet, it is a fact that Pakistani

industries and firms, and human resources need to improve and they have to go an extra mile to compete with the Chinese industries". He also expressed his satisfaction with the step-by-step implementation of CPEC and maintained that the industrial sector was to make a part of consultation process after the Gwadar, infrastructure and energy projects are finalized. The pattern of loan-investment-aid-grant is confusing on many grounds. The Governor of State Bank of Pakistan, Prof Ashraf Mahmood Wathra, said, "I don't know out of the \$46 billion, how much is debt, how much is equity and how much is in kind" (Wasan, 2017). Ambiguity on this issue is raising many questions such as will Pakistan forever be indebted to China?

China will save around \$2 billion annually from its Kashgar-Gwadar trade route while Pakistan will get indirect benefits only. Infrastructure projects will not be owned by Pakistan. According to a rough estimate by Kashmir Affairs Gilgit Baltistan, Chaudhry Muhammad Barjees. Pakistan would earn \$70 billion in transit fees annually but officially, (Salman, 2015) it is not clear if and how much Pakistan would get as a transit fee.

There has been criticism of unequal distribution and discrimination in allocations of a lesser number of projects to the smaller provinces to favor the Punjab (Pakistan) province. KPK province especially raised concerns and the Chinese ambassador had to meet the PTI chief, Imran Khan to appease such notions. CPEC has been pitched as a grand national project that will bring benefits to the whole country. In reality, CPEC is only exacerbating the country's provincial and ethnic tensions. Some of Pakistan's poorer communities worry that CPEC will simply pass them by and not bring them any benefits, and instead create a situation where only those in Punjab—already Pakistan's most affluent province, and the political bastion of the country's ruling party—will benefit in a very real way.

5. LOOKING FORWARD: LESSONS FOR LATIN AMERICA AND IMPACT ON SSC

From the discussion in the previous section, the inference comes to light that CPEC is unfolding within the confines of bilateral dynamics of China-Pakistan relations. It has been shaped and influenced by the domestic politics of Pakistan, its geo-strategic and geo-economic realities. One thing which is disappointing is that there is no such clear-cut policy guideline and, for that matter, any country that suits the political and economic needs of the country is influencing the process of negotiation and implementation of CPEC. The absence of a policy framework for CPEC adds ambiguity and raises concerns, which is not fruitful either for SSC nor for any other country looking for inclusion in CPEC or any other project of BRI. This is a point of contemplation for Latin American countries.

Domestic politics is also a hurdle. For instance, Pakistani politicians seem to be in consensus when it comes to CPEC. Had it been agreed upon and approved by the Parliament of Pakistan, it would have different bearings. Here is another lesson for Latin American countries: BRI must come through as political negotiations with all the stakeholders on the boards take place.

A country's bargaining position in BRI also affects the outcomes of the inclusion. If it is solely relying on China, it would become counter-productive. Although it is not absolutely true for Pakistan, its options are limited when it comes to financial assistance. Becoming a vehicle of new regionalism, of which BRI is an effective platform, the countries of the South must not make a clean break from the countries of the North. Here again, Pakistan emerges as a prime example, it has been advised time and again that it should somehow become a part of triangular cooperation in which the developed countries become a part of it. This would not only increase the options for the small and

developing countries but would help reduce the friction from the North, which might come in handy.

CONCLUSION

China's rise owes a great deal to finding an innovative way of progress and development: development and integration in globalization with Chinese characteristics. In the big picture, the secret behind China's ascendancy to economic power lies in striking a delicate balance between friction-losses of reforms and innovation in the equation of sustainability and equality. Pakistan needs to learn from this development model and introduce reforms and bring innovation wherever necessary, be it institutions, technology or human resources. Ambassador Sun Weidong (2016), while addressing a seminar at the Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad highlighted the importance of reforms and stability, and alluded to the need for setting the same goals for Pakistan:

Development, reforms and stability are the three key elements without which a country cannot achieve progress. Development serves as the core and reforms help achieve stability and progress. China is working to help end the poverty of its people and the people of other countries as well.

Pakistan must meet China halfway in applying a bottom-up approach to sustainable development, therefore, following the mentioned measures is necessary. This is applicable to any other country which intends to become a part of BRI.

Advanced technology has had a huge impact on China's economy through cell phones, online shopping, air travel, space technology, and biological sciences. However, elements of the knowledge-economy have been disappointingly overlooked in BRI. It needs to be incorporated to meet future challenges such as cyber economic warfare. By bringing universities into the fold of governmental and industrial

cooperation, BRI can be used as a tool not only for “Shared Destiny” but also for innovating the future and defining the destiny of the region and the world. In this way, it will create a model civilizational zone along BRI which has its roots deep in the ancient traditions of the two communities and its eyes fixed on the future. Indeed, it will strengthen Xi Jinping’s vision of reviving the old Silk Road and the bond of the Pak-China friendship. BRI is based on a South-South Development Cooperation Model and the likelihood of expanding this model will increase in this multipolar world. Therefore, China needs to enhance its sphere of aid and grants in Asia and Latin America.

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7. THE INFRASTRUCTURE GAP IN LATIN AMERICA AND THE ARRIVAL OF CHINESE INFRASTRUCTURE FIRMS: SPECIAL REFERENCE TO THE ARGENTINIAN CASE

LEONARDO E. STANLEY

ABSTRACT

China's involvement in Latin American countries is expanding in a visible and dramatic way. The recent interest of regional leaders to advance with the infrastructure agenda has induced great enthusiasm among Chinese top global contractors. Following years of under-investment, the region's infrastructure gap is serious. A series of economic and political factors are pushing Chinese firms to Latin American shores, an arrival which might provoke vast consequences in the whole infrastructure industry. This chapter aims to answer if the Chinese infrastructure wager could become a "win-win" opportunity as Chinese leaders have expressed, with special focus on the Argentinian case.

Key Words: Infrastructure Gap, Chinese Firms, Chinese investments.

RESUMEN

La participación de China en los países de América Latina se está expandiendo de manera visible y dramática. El reciente interés de los líderes regionales por avanzar con la agenda

de infraestructura ha provocado un gran entusiasmo entre los principales contratistas globales chinos. Luego de años de baja inversión, la brecha en infraestructura de la región es grave. Una serie de factores económicos y políticos están empujando a las empresas chinas a las costas latinoamericanas, llegada que podría provocar grandes consecuencias en toda la industria de la infraestructura. El objetivo de este capítulo es responder si la apuesta por la infraestructura china podría convertirse en una oportunidad “gana-gana”, como han expresado los líderes chinos; se hace énfasis en el caso argentino.

Palabras clave: brecha de infraestructura, empresas chinas, inversiones chinas.

INTRODUCTION

Investments, particularly in infrastructure, are vital for economic growth and development as they can increase productivity, reduce production costs, support production diversification, as well as create employment (Dollar, 2017; FAL Bulletin, 2014, 2016; Fay and Morrison, 2007; Serebrisky *et al.*, 2015). Previous studies have found that there is a positive association between infrastructure investment and Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth (FAL Bulletin, 2014, 2016; Serebrisky *et al.*, 2015). If Latin America were to increase the current average rate of infrastructure investment (less than 3 per cent) to 6-8 per cent, the region would be able to catch up with advanced economies (FAL Bulletin, 2014, 2016). However, institutional and regulatory weaknesses, as well as the lack of a more active public sector have been some of the factors that have hindered greater infrastructure investment inflows. Moreover, most foreign direct investment has usually not been directed toward this sector (Serebrisky *et al.*, 2015, p. 17). In Latin America, Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) comprises less than 3 per

cent of GDP, and only 10 per cent of that is destined to infrastructure projects (Serebrisky *et al.*, 2015, pp. 17-27).

Nevertheless, the economic prosperity that the region experienced between 2003 and 2013, mostly due to the commodity boom and increasing trade with China, also saw a slight increase in infrastructure investment. The averages remained below the numbers the region experienced in the 1980s, when infrastructure investment was at a regional high, reaching over 3 per cent of the GDP (FAL Bulletin, 2016; Serebrisky *et al.*, 2017). Interestingly, before the scarcity of public infrastructure's flows of resources, countries in Latin America had relied on private infrastructure investments. Between 1990-2013, the private sector invested about 30 per cent more than in high-growth economies in Asia and as much as five times more than in Sub-Saharan Africa (Serebrisky *et al.*, 2017, pp. 10-11). What is lacking and remains poorly managed, however, is investment funding and budgeting. Although private infrastructure investment has been relatively higher than other regional averages, it has not been enough to replace the weak participation of the public sector.

Large infrastructure works are technically complex and, often requiring hard financial - engineering staff. The cash flow profile of typical infrastructure work (for example, in the construction of a dam or a new road), involves massive capital outflow, to be reduced by revenue generation in a distant future. The temporal mismatch imposes large challenges for governments and developers alike. Until recently, infrastructure has been under the monopoly of the government, taking under its control not only the project design, construction, and operation, but also the funding. As the fiscal situation began to deteriorate and the infrastructure gap grew, governments worldwide decided to go after new ventures. Privatization became an option. However, it was not the only one and often came under political dispute.

The Public-Private Partnership (PPP) scheme came as a new alternative, initially undertaken by the UK government later to be propagated in other developed countries and Emerging Market Economy (EMES) alike. The scheme keeps expanding, particularly after the global financial crisis — the ample diffusion associated with the more efficient provision of infrastructure and of services, but also with the fact that the PPP permits an efficient risk allocation between the private contractor and the state. So, for the Macri administration, the scheme was envisioned to tackle two of the critical problems facing infrastructure development in Argentina: efficiency gains and new capital sources.

One key ingredient for PPP success is trust, which should be cemented by both (public and private) partners, as also observed by third parties: society and potential investors. Trust in the sense that the risk sharing agreement is seen as fair and the project remains sound and sustainable. But corruption might also alter trust, mainly as it affects the vision of those not participating in the contract¹. Otherwise, the temptation to alter the original contract might increase in both participants - to further intensify when civil society feels betrayed². A sound macro environment becomes another relevant aspect to accomplish this, which is usually associated with lower financial risk. Then, under an unstable context, the PPP scheme becomes inviable. As will be shown, both key ingredients have recently broken down

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- 1 Popular pressure on the government to punish those involved in the scandal and potential legal consequences for implicated firms including a prohibition on holding or competing for public contracts threaten the continued participation of connected firms in public works contracts (Fintech Solutions, 2018).
 - 2 A sensation observed in Argentina during the 2001 crisis, at least in some industries was that the privatization process was too biased in favor of the winner - as found in several route concessions contracts. Henceforth, consumers' protests somehow forced the national government to renegotiate the original contract.

in Argentina, paving the way for the entrance of Chinese construction companies.

In addition to trade exchanges, Chinese investments and loans in the region—which have generally been destined to aid and support the search and extraction of resources—have also been rapidly increasing with the redefinition of its going-global strategy by favoring infrastructure investment under the so-called Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), one of China's most ambitious global development plans. Since its inception, the initiative sought to ameliorate infrastructure gaps and connect Asia with Europe. As the strategy expanded its geographical coverage and Latin American countries were invited to participate (Reuters, 2018), the BRI has increasingly been under scrutiny. For Latin America, this is an opportunity to close its relatively large infrastructure gap. The commodity super-cycle that heightened China's interest in Latin America has also stressed the inadequacy of the region's infrastructure system and its desperate need for more roads, railways, energy facilities, water and sewage, and so forth. This need can be answered with collaboration and funding from Chinese International construction companies (CICCS) as well as their financing entities.

Indeed, CICCS are aware of this gap and ready to enter the Latin American market. The fall of the Brazilian construction giant, Odebrecht—which until 2018 was among the top ten global infrastructure firms and had a strong presence in several countries in the region—could be a golden opportunity for Chinese firms to enter Brazil. Likewise, the corruption notebook scandal recently disclosed in Argentina might bring CICCS an auspicious entry to this country. Techint, an Italo-Argentinean global group, among others, appears to be participating in the most massive bribery game in recent history. Might the scandal become a new gold opportunity for CICCS?

Additionally, the country has recently entered into a profound economic and financial crisis, which paves the way

for deep - pocket Chinese firms. Could the infrastructure wager become a “win-win” opportunity, as Chinese leaders are expressing? Alternatively, perhaps the matching of the twin (financial and reputational) crises and CICC interest (and Chinese funding) tilt the wager in favor of one player.

Previous academic studies have identified modes of entry of earlier Chinese investments in the region—especially in the mining industry—and the dynamics between Chinese State-Owned Enterprises (SOE) and the different actors in the host country (Gonzales-Vicente, 2012; Irwin & Gallagher, 2013; Sanborn & Chonn Ching, 2016). In the infrastructure sector, these issues remain important as they highlight rising concerns about the main incentives of the presence of CICC in Latin America. The next paragraph will demonstrate that both, economic and political factors are influencing incentives for entrance into Latin America (in particular, reference will be made to the Argentine case), to finally assert that the arrival of CICC is the next big thing.

1. THE NATURE OF THE FIRM (OR WHY CHINESE FIRMS ARE SOMETHING SPECIAL THAT SHOULD BE CONSIDERED)

Unlike other large investors in Latin America, the Chinese state has played an important role in “conducting business”. Through state-bodies such as the State Asset Supervision and Administrative Commission (SASAC), which is under the direct supervision of the State Council, Chinese state-owned enterprises (SOES) have been directed to “go out” and become global leaders. This push has been further encouraged through the facilitation of economic and financial resources, thus giving the appearance of unlimited state funding and support for these firms. While true for many Chinese SOES, China is not the only case in which the government plays an active role in promoting local firms to go global (Goldstein, 2007; Linder, 1994).

Nevertheless, with the renewed interest in the “going out” policy and the importance given to infrastructure after the global financial crisis of 2008, Chinese infrastructure firms have continuously expanded both at home and abroad, and many have become global competitors in key industries such as construction, engineering, railways, nuclear and renewable energies, and communication. This is due to the government’s emphasis on strengthening China’s investments since the global financial crisis of 2008 (Lardy, 2012), and the authorities’ preference in focusing on specific industries to gain competitiveness (Stanley, 2018). In addition, the combination of other factors also contributed to the internationalization of Chinese firms, including finding a channel for excess capacity at home, access to capital and financial resources, as well as constant technological and engineering upgrading. Yet, the corporate globalization of Chinese SOEs has raised some questions for the traditional international business literature (Buckley *et al.*, 2007; Ramamurti, 2009; Cuervo Cazorra *et al.*, 2014; Liang *et al.*, 2015; Rugman *et al.*, 2016). Particularly for the infrastructure sector, Chinese SOEs have remained dominant in contrast to other industries in which Chinese private participation has gradually emerged. One question to ask is the kind of incentives that are behind these SOE internationalization decisions: is going abroad solely a response to economic goals or is it also a response to political objectives? How does state ownership take place at these firms—that is, what government levels are involved? (Cuervo Cazorra *et al.*, 2014).

While the professionalization of management has increased among these SOEs, the influence of political directives remains strong. So, one challenge as they establish their global presence is the extent to which these SOEs can continue relying on political networks, their efficacy in international markets, and when more professional management could or should be more prevalent. Chinese firms have enjoyed what could be considered country-specific advantages (CSA),

like relatively lower wages and strong networks, yet they also need to develop further firm-specific advantages (FSA) that include technical skills and knowledge. For long-term success, CICC need more significant investment in the latter. Over the years, they have made significant progress in the technology front and innovation—their competitiveness is no longer based solely on cheap labor—and this is becoming a key driver of China’s “go global” strategy (Williamson & Zeng, 2009), “on the ground” knowledge is still dependent on previous investment outcomes and/or networks of Chinese associations in the host location (Sanborn & Chonn Ching, 2016).

As China focuses on its new growth model, which is envisioned to boost consumption and to continue pushing for Chinese OFDI, the above issues are significant as Chinese firms steadily enter previously less explored infrastructure sectors and seek to become global leaders. Even more striking is the emphasis by the Chinese leadership on the quality provided by these firms and China’s efforts in supporting the development of infrastructure in developing countries. Chinese SOEs are actively participating abroad, covering several infrastructure sectors, including civil construction and engineering; renewable energy; railway; nuclear power; and, hydropower (dam construction)³.

Construction multinational companies (MNCs) are rapidly expanding their global activities, and the CICC are not an exception. CICC globalization has been a sequenced process, beginning first in neighboring Asia, then expanding to Africa, North America, and Eastern Europe, and only lately to Latin America (Pheng, Jiang & Leong, 2004; Chen *et al.*, 2015). Chinese construction companies have been

3 As the analysis here centers on routes, attention will be on companies of the civil construction and engineering sector. Further investigation of other industries such as of Chinese infrastructure involvement in Latin America will be done. (Armony, Dussel Peters & Cui, 2018).

growing steadily in international markets for the past decade. In 2010 the number of CIICCS listed as 250 top global contractors reached 54 (Lu *et al.*, 2013). In 2013, 55 were on the list (Chen *et al.*, 2015), and, a year later that number increased to 62 (Parsa *et al.*, 2015). By 2018 CIICCS dominated the market, with 3 of them among the top 10 contractors (China Railway Group, China Railway Construction Corp Ltd. and China Communications Construction Co., Ltd (EY, 2018) and almost a quarter in the top 100⁴.

TABLE 1: ENR 2018 - TOP 100 INTERNATIONAL CONTRACTORS, TOP 10 AND MAIN CHINESE FIRMS (AUGUST 2018)

Rank	Firm	Country
1	ACS, Actividades de Construcción y Servicios SA, Madrid,	Spain
2	Hochtief Aktiengesellschaft, Essen, NRW,	Germany
3	China Communications Construction Group LTD., Beijing,	China
4	VINCI, Rueil-Malmaison, Hauts-de-Seine,	France
5	Strabag SE, Vienna,	Austria
6	Technipfmc, London,	UK
7	Bouygues, Paris, France	France
8	China State Construction Engineering Corp. LTD., Beijing	China
9	Skanska AB, Stockholm,	Sweden
10	Power Construction Corp. of China, Beijing	China

Source: (ENR online, 2018)<https://www.enr.com/toplists/2018-Top-250-International-Contractors-1>

4 By comparison, there are 8 US firms and none of them within the top 10 chart. Likewise, none of the 8 South Korean firms are among the top 10.

Chinese contractors “are becoming bigger competitors” (Zhang & London, 2016), and two political initiatives explain their recent expansion: the “Go-out” policy and BRI. CICC are actively seeking to enter new markets - and particularly active in global merger and acquisitions markets (EY, 2018)⁵, both financial stress and political factors (a particular judiciary situation) in Latin America are giving them an unexpected and golden opportunity. It is important to point out that until now, the expansion of Chinese infrastructure in Latin America remained closely associated with funding which firms, particularly CICCs, offer for project development and financing. This allows these companies to obtain implicit guarantees for contracts and, indeed, low-cost capital from Chinese institutions. While the bundling of projects is a widespread mechanism, Chinese financial institutions can also adapt to other alternatives.

In Latin America, many large infrastructure projects are obtained through open tenders in which firms compete with each other by presenting the best offers⁶. This means that foreign firms have to respond to a series of administrative procedures in the host country. Chinese engineering and construction firms entering Latin America’s markets are not alien to these processes as they usually need to participate in open-bidding contests to win projects. In general, the easier access to financial resources gives these construction firms some comparative advantage vis-à-vis companies that are more financially limited.

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- 5 As an example, China Communications Construction Company Ltd. aims to increase its overseas sales to 50% of total revenue by 2035, from the current 19%.³ (EY, 2018). In contrast, international revenues of South Korean or US-based construction companies have reduced in recent years, which explains the active attitude recently adopted by both governments
 - 6 Other practices are also observed, but even if some countries prefer direct contracts the competitive, open tender has become the primary trend in the region.

Nonetheless, according to a group of scholars, CICC have limited experience with market-oriented mechanisms, similar to their Chinese SOE counterparts in other industries (Irwin & Gallagher, 2013; Sanborn & Chonn Ching, 2016), which lead them to face essential challenges during the bidding process, especially on issues regarding transparency. Chinese firm governance (and funding) appear to be slowly adjusting, as the government becomes more assertive on going global. Additionally, Chinese firms have an important tradition with the PPP scheme (Osei-Kyei & Chan, 2015; Zhang *et al.*, 2015), showing that they are permanently open to new business opportunities (Lu *et al.*, 2013). Public-Private Partnership was originally introduced in China during the 1980s, but its diffusion would begin to flourish a decade later and its use to boom after the large stimulus policy implemented by the central government in the aftermath of the global financial crisis. Highway-toll roads became one of the most popular sectors to profit from, although Municipalities were actively using it for water and gas related infrastructure (Zhang *et al.*, 2015). Last but not least, most of the large Chinese constructors have been awarded PPP contracts all around the world - including the highly competitive US market.

So, Chinese firms might be ready to accept the “rules of the game,” including to compete under different procurement schemes. They could undoubtedly offer to bundle (traditional procurement or PPPs) but also go after an unbundling package⁷. The creation of the Asian Infrastructure and Investment Bank (AIIB), in this sense, may signal increasing efforts in moving toward a more market-oriented tendering approach which departs from earlier Chinese investment experiences. Loans granted by this new Multilateral

7 This could be labelled tied procurement, as observed in Chinese development programs which tied loans to public work contracts.

Development Bank (MDB) would be attached to projects (bundling), which is a practice usually associated with Chinese bilateral funding (Brautigam, D., 2009; Sanderson, H. & M. Forsythe, 2013). If this is the expected trend for entering firms whether it is in Latin America or elsewhere in the upcoming years, then there is also pressure from the host countries to ensure the enforceability of these principles.

2. THE BELT AND ROAD INITIATIVE AND LATIN AMERICA INFRASTRUCTURE GAP

At the end of China's boom period in Latin America (2003-2013) and facing stagnation as the result of lower global economic growth and commodity prices, China introduced a series of frameworks as an effort to redefine its ties with the region. Proposed as a key blueprint for China-LATAM relations, the China-Latin American and the Caribbean Countries Cooperation Plan (2015-2020) introduced the 1+3+6 cooperation framework. It highlights the use of one plan in which trade, investment, and financial cooperation are considered as the principal three driving forces to deepen ties. Six sectors are prioritized, including energy and resources, infrastructure construction, agriculture, manufacturing, scientific and technological innovations, and information technology. While this is the first official plan China has released regarding how to enhance cooperation with its many Latin American counterparts, it retains the generality found in previous guiding documents such as the white policy papers of 2008 and 2011. Nevertheless, the desire to formulate more concrete cooperation initiatives as stated in the plan was received with enthusiasm and encouraged Latin American leaders to become more active when negotiating projects with China.

In addition to this "1+3+6" plan, during his visit to Brazil in 2015, Premier Li Keqiang also introduced his own "3x3 model." According to what could be a complementary plan

to increase China-Latin America cooperation in production capacity, it is essential to build and strengthen three key channels, including logistics, electricity, and information (IT)—with the essential goal of meeting the needs of Latin American countries. This also involves the participation of and collaboration between three principal actors: the business sector, society, and the government. This suggestion stands out as it appears to give more agency to non-state actors in this cooperative endeavor. The model also explores the expansion of three financing mechanisms to support cooperation projects, such as furthering funds for China-Latin America projects on production capacity, as well as improving credit and insurance for firms that seek to set foot in the region.

Moreover, with the announcement of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), which initially focused on infrastructure development collaboration in Central Asia, the Middle East, Europe, and Africa, China is opening the path for its firms to assert their industrial leadership at an international level. As a result of this initiative, in 2016 CICC signed over 8,000 new overseas contracts (US\$ 126 billion) in the countries along the OBOR routes (EY, 2018). A natural step for the internationalization of Chinese firms since during 2016, OBOR has represented half of CICC's total overseas projects (EY, 2018). Arguably, this could allow the Chinese industry to set their standards abroad as well as to help expand the worldwide presence of Chinese banks and the internationalization of the Renminbi (RMB) as projects are negotiated and established. In addition to the geopolitical expansion of Chinese companies, this initiative could also represent Xi Jinping's more assertive foreign policy.

Comparatively speaking, Chinese investment in infrastructure in the region has been small. For the past five years, countries such as Spain, Germany, and the United States have provided the most significant investments in infrastructure projects in Latin America, in the sub-areas of telecommunications, transportation, electricity, and

airport construction (CEPAL, 2015). However, even then, the region's infrastructure investments have remained lagging and underfunded. Even for multilateral organizations that have traditionally financed infrastructure projects, there has been a steep decline over the decades. According to Dollar, 70 per cent of the World Bank's core business was infrastructure financing in earlier decades. In the 2000s, that amount fell to 30 per cent. While development banks provided USD 50 billion of infrastructure financing in 2013, the amount destined to infrastructure projects in developing countries was less than 1 per cent (Dollar, 2017:12). The rise of China and its position as a significant funder of projects in primary sectors, which have been accompanied by some infrastructure, has incited renewed enthusiasm.

With this signal from the Chinese government to continue strengthening a considerably stagnant relationship with Latin America since 2013, more Chinese investors have tried to tap into Latin America, particularly the infrastructure sector in areas that are not necessarily related to primary materials⁸. According to a survey by *Caijing Magazine*, Chinese investors indicated their desire to expand investments into sectors other than energy and mining. While these industries would continue to receive capital from Chinese firms, investors are also seeking diversification to other areas including transportation and housing. More recent efforts to strengthen collaboration in infrastructure investments and projects have included an agreement between the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) and the Export-Import Bank of China in 2011 to establish infrastructure investment mechanisms to finance public and private sector projects. Furthermore, after the

8 Infrastructure has been attracting an important number of Chinese SOEs to Latin America, among others: Three Gorges (Brazil, Ecuador), SinoHydro (Ecuador), Gezhouba (Ecuador / Argentina), all associated with the hydroelectric projects and dam construction.

first ministerial forum between China and the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC) in 2015, China pledged to increase investments to USD 250 billion for the next decade in the region (Reuters, 2015), particularly in the areas of transportation and infrastructure, for which infrastructure cooperation meetings were held twice in 2016 (China-CELAC Forum, 2016). Although more specific plans and projects remain to be consolidated, there appears to be a gradual movement toward sectors other than mining and oil. As Latin American countries start asking foreigners to complete large-scale infrastructure construction, China has stepped in to fill the gap. Authorities have recently proposed extending the BRI to the South American continent, urging regional leaders to play a “meaningful role in the New Silk Road and to support free trade as part of an open world economy” (China.org.en, 2018)⁹.

3. INDUSTRY ANALYSIS (WITH A FOCUS ON THE ARGENTINEAN CASE)

Argentina has significant infrastructure needs, around USD 155 billion according to the World Bank (World Bank, 2017). The country ranked 85th among 138 countries in infrastructure development per the Global Competitiveness Index. During the 2009-2012 period, average private infrastructure investment represented 15-20 per cent of the total - against 50 to 55 per cent in Brazil or 45 to 50 in Chile or Colombia (Ministry of Transport, 2016). In other words, Argentina is facing a series of challenges in transport infrastructure. From a more optimistic perspective, Argentinean figures are showing a great business opportunity, mainly to improve

9 This was the message of Wang Yi (Chinese Foreign Minister, n.d.) during the 2nd meeting of the China - CELAC Forum, which took place in Santiago - Chile in January 2018.

the existing transport infrastructure. The government of Mauricio Macri announced a highly ambitious plan (USD 83 billion investment to be completed during the first mandate), primarily aimed at addressing the infrastructure gap. Unfortunately, Argentina lacks the entrepreneurial expertise to meet infrastructure demands as well as the funds, which opened opportunities to foreigners - to become a golden opportunity for some among them (e.g., China). Henceforth, alongside the launching of a vast infrastructure program, Argentinian government officials initiated a series of visits abroad, resulting in new / renewed agreements. For the case of China, the list included several projects (up to \$25 billion in public works) to be implemented by the national government or provincial administrations. Some among them qualify as the most substantial outward investments undertaken by Chinese firms. Investments and contracts might also be considered strategic for the overseas expansion of Chinese firms. Consider, for example, the Belgrano Cargas project or the \$15 billion credit in the nuclear sector, which would permit the exporting of homegrown pressurized water technology for the first time in Latin America (Stanley, 2018). Chinese investments in transport, renewable energy, or other public works-related industries would certainly transform Argentina. As noted by Argentinean ambassador to China Diego Guelar, Chinese involvement in energy-related works would delineate Argentina's energy matrix for the next forty years (Cronista 2017). CICCs are becoming an important group with the Chinese delegation arriving in the Southern Cone - Argentina in particular. A Chinese consortium (including the state owner Power China and the Chinese Communication Construction Company) has put forward a bid to build a 13 km tunnel under the Andes to connect Chile's Pacific Coquimbo region with the Argentine province of San Juan. The Agua Negra (black water) tunnel is a binational project costing US\$ 1.5 billion, to be

funded by MDBs. This gave enthusiastic Chinese construction firms a golden opportunity to enter into the generally protected infrastructure industry in Latin America (Stanley and Ching, 2018).

Argentina public works funding involves three primary sources: multilateral, bilateral and PPP. Three different international financial entities -Development Bank of Latin America (CAF), Inter-American Development Bank (IADB), and World Bank- are financing projects, totaling US\$ 1.25 billion in public investments. On the bilateral front, an example is seen in the Chinese Eximbank US\$ 330 million loans directed towards the development of the Cauchari Photovoltaic Park in Jujuy Province. However, the bulk of the funds would be mediated through the PPP scheme. It has resulted in one of the preferred tools the government has promoted to go with procurement. Argentina introduced the scheme in the nineties, but later it was discontinued. Henceforth, the re-emergence of PPPs represented an alternative to encourage the establishment through the provision of better infrastructure services (Serebrisky *et al.*, 2015, p. 10). PPPs have been promoted, particularly in the developing world, for the more efficient provision of infrastructure and of services through the use of market-like mechanisms (Bovaird, 2010; Peters & Pierre, 1998). Additionally, the PPP permits an efficient risk allocation between the private contractor and the state.

However, despite their advantages, PPPs are not a panacea. They can open the path for abuse and corruption, and the distinction between the private firm's responsibilities and the government—particularly regarding funding and financial obligations—can become blurry. The scheme could be particularly challenged if the macroeconomic does not resonate, and trust is under stress. In this instance, China emerged as a more flexible option.

3.1 Argentina Infrastructure Gap (particular emphasis on roads)

Argentina's ambitious road concession program launched by the Minister of Transport, Guillermo Dietrich, has the purpose "to improve the infrastructure of the Republic of Argentina by promoting the interaction between the public and private sectors and the use of PPPs as a capital mobilization tool" (Gobierno de Argentina, n.d.). When elaborating the proposal, efficiency was one of the most sought after objectives to be introduced by the tendering process - transparency was taken for granted, after the design of the tender process. In the process of guaranteeing efficiency, the highest number of bidders was considered highly relevant. Diversifying the financing sources, through the creation of appropriate incentives, was also supposed to be essential. A 15-year contract was offered to all bidders, the winners of which would then be in charge of the design, construction, operation, maintenance, and financing of road corridors.

The final government objective is to enhance road capacity and safety, introducing the first tender for corridors entailing 5.500 km of roads, of which 1.200 km will be highway corridors. The National Road Department (Dirección Nacional de Vialidad - DNV) examined the feasibility for tendering up to 12 brownfield road corridors and finally agreed on six for tender¹⁰. The first set of highways awarded in July 2017 to six different groups (9 locals, 4 international), totaled investments for US\$ 12.5 billion - an initial disbursement of US\$ 6 million. According to the official schedule, the first works of the National Highway and Safe Routes Plan should begin to be executed in October of this year. The participating companies (originally) have until August 2019

10 During the process of project evaluation, the planner should look at both, the feasibility of the road project (construction costs, number of vehicles daily passing/toll rate, capital, and operating expenses) but also on the financing engineering of the project.

to secure funding. The 2018 economic crisis turned the normal clouds accompanying the scheme into a storm and put the whole system under stress.

TABLE 2: ARGENTINA - ROAD CORRIDORS
UNDER THE PPP SCHEME, THE MAIN FACTS

PPP	Roads	Length (km)	Investment (expected) (US\$ millions)	Companies	Funding
A	RN 3 & 226	707	984	Paolini, Vial Agro and INC	No
B	RN 5	539	989	China Construction America and Green SA	Chinese funding
C	RN 7	914	631	Jose Cartellone Construcciones Civiles SA / ASTRIS Infrastructure (*)	US Overseas Private Investment Corporation (OPIC)
E	RN AU 9, 193, 34 & 19	433	1342	Helpport, Panedile, Eleprint and Copasa	No
F	RN AU 9, 9 & 33	666	1114	Helpport, Panedile, Eleprint and Copasa	No
Sur	South Corridor (Ac. Ricchieri, RN 3 & RN 205)	299	975	Rovella Carranza, JCR SA and Mota - Engil.	No

Source: The consortium conformed by the local Green S.A., and the China Construction America (CCA)¹¹ obtained corridor B: national route 5, connecting the provinces of Buenos Aires and La Pampa (China Construction America, 2018).

11 CCA is a subsidiary of China State Construction Engineering Corp. Ltd., Beijing (CSCEC), the world largest construction company and real estate conglomerate,

The project obtained bank guarantees from the Chinese assurance company Cinda Asset Management, paving the way to initiate works on schedule¹². Therefore, the Argentinian-Chinese consortium is one of the two to have the financial guarantees, starting with the works on schedule (Cronista Comercial, 2018). PPP corridor C project has also obtained bilateral funding, in this case coming from the US development finance institution - the overseas private investment corporation (OPIC) (Fitch Solutions, December 2018)¹³.

3.2 The entry of Chinese firms and local business groups: competition or cooperation

The entry of flagship SOEs in Latin American infrastructure projects have generally been viewed as having asset-seeking objectives. This is because local companies and projects that have traditionally dominated the infrastructure sector have stayed within regional boundaries—as is often the case for construction and engineering related firms. The Brazilian giant Odebrecht used to be a leading example. However, the emergence of China and its increasing assertiveness, accompanied with the recent creation of the AIIB, has led to the birth of more alternatives—namely, Chinese dominated ones. After all, it is not a coincidence that there is an increasing presence of Chinese financial institutions, such as the China Development Bank (CDB), in areas where large

ranked 26th in Fortune Global 500 list. Considering its overseas sales as a global contractor, CSCEC is in 14th place.

- 12 To the same extent, the announcement put pressure on Dietrich's idea to give special treatment to the remaining participants. The Green-CCA consortium is, somehow, putting the scheme under stress.
- 13 Following the bilateral agreement, US Astris infrastructure became entrenched as partner of the original bidder - local José Cartellone Construcciones Civiles SA firm.

infrastructure projects with Chinese participation are about to take place (Brautigam, 2009; Sanderson *et al.*, 2013).

Business opposition remains unimportant as few industries are affected—an attitude ultimately explained by the process of deindustrialization observed in the recent past. Until recently the construction sector remained an exception to this trend, but not any longer. A series of technological and institutional factors, however, suddenly began to erode traditional country boundaries. This sum of elements has transformed the international construction market into a fiercely competitive place. Despite this global trend, Argentina's local infrastructure groups remained untouched, keeping intact their political influence¹⁴. Therefore, after the election of Mauricio Macri and his wager on infrastructure investments, everybody within the sector was expecting nothing but a revival. Then and unexpectedly, judicial affairs made its entrance into politics and the construction lobby went from a solid castle to a house of cards.

Latin America has a historical record of inefficiency and corruption, mainly affecting public procurement. Similarly, the infrastructure gap keeps growing. The issue changed Brazil first, as the Lava Jato operation landed Marcelo Odebrecht in jail - to be followed by a political schism affecting several politicians across the boards but mostly about the PT. Initially focused on construction, it would become one of the leading Latin American engineering and civil construction companies (Fleury & Fleury, 2012)¹⁵. At the time the scandal ignited, the company was among the top 10

14 Franco Macri, the Presidents' father, one of their most prominent figures - his political cloud erupted in the 1980s. The Macri Group have interests in several industries, from the automotive to services (post), but their traditional business was in the construction and civil engineering industry.

15 In the 1980s, the firm began its international journey with a project in Peru. During the next decade, it would transform itself into a global company. Along with its internationalization, the company began to take on more challenging projects and expand operations into new areas. Odebrecht also decided

global contractors, which explains why the case was quickly spread and affected several countries in the region. As corruption scandals surrounded Brazilian firms and lost the confidence of the domestic market, foreign firms stepped in. Not surprisingly, Chinese companies led the way.

An example is the purchase of the HNA Group—a Chinese conglomerate that focuses on aviation and other related services—of Odebrecht's stakes in Brazil's second-busiest international airport (South China Morning Post, 2017a). Another case is CNPC's (China National Petroleum Corporation) purchase of Odebrecht's main share at Gasoducto del Sur Project in Peru—a natural gas pipeline project in southern Peru. Sinohydro-Power China is yet one more company interested in buying the Brazilian firm's stock in the Rio Magdalena waterworks project in Colombia. In all of these cases, the participating Chinese companies operate in diverse fields and have some experience in mature markets (Lu *et al.* 2013). They also employ leading technology (Zhang and London, 2012) along with innovative procurement systems (Lu *et al.*, 2013). Their long-term success in the region remains unknown as well as any significant impact given their short time in the Latin American infrastructure market. What is clear, however, is their accessibility and capacity to obtain capital and financial resources in the obtaining of significant projects.

When local waters were beginning to calm, and local construction and engineering companies were getting back to normal, the notebook case came into light. The so-called bribery notebook scandal centered on bribes allegedly paid by businesses to secure contracts during the former administration of Cristina Fernández de Kirchner (FT, 2018). Companies that were named in the probe included power

to include procurement duties in their services, a move that would provide them with more significant involvement with local authorities.

generators Albanesi SA and MSU Energy SA, the construction companies IECSA SA and Grupo Roggio, and Grupo Techint, which owns the oil exploration company Tecpetrol SA (Bloomberg, 2018). If those implicated in the bribery scandal are indicted, this could become deleterious for the value of the firm but even more harmful for the long-term sustainability of the PPP scheme (FT, 2018). Until now, and even though an important group of CEOs and executives of the local construction sector remain imprisoned, a smaller portion have recognized the facts. In this sense, the judge decided to charge Paolo Rocca (the historical owner of Techint and one of the richest persons in Latin America), which may represent a turning point for the industry¹⁶. The Argentinean Construction Chamber became one of the first institutional casualties, and Carlos Wagner (former President of the chamber) one of the most prominent prisoners¹⁷. Independently of the legal situation, for Argentinean firms, it might be very costly to remain in business as project financing is at great costs since importing materials is too high (Reuters, 2018).

To put it into perspective, local public works and infrastructure firms will remain weak as Chinese firms continue to gain support in government infrastructure projects, especially if they come with funding. In this sense, the vast infrastructure program designed by the Macri administration could be considered a “silver bullet” for any attempt to reactivate the local industrial base (as experienced by those working in the renewable energy sector). The perpetual urgency for short-term results pushes politicians to foster investments, but also to disregard the creation of long-term capabilities. The infrastructure gap grows further in that direction as China’s involvement permits authorities

16 “Techint CEO charged with graft in notebooks scandal - source” (Reuters, 2018).

17 In one or another situation they are Electroingenieria, Grupo Roggio, Albanesi, and Iecsa (renamed SACDE under new ownership in 2017).

to fill the gap sooner and superficially. China profits from Argentina's technical and financial constraints and political interests. Chinese firms keep entering the country, in sectors previously reserved for local groups.

Odebrecht or Techint were often portrayed as emblematic, multi-Latinas with global ambitions. Regardless of the judiciary situation each of them is facing; the message is clear: they lost political protection. Moreover, the news is spreading fast among local firms, as the claim for transparency rapidly expands. Henceforth, a once protected industry reserved for nationals, civil construction & engineering works is now open for competition. CCICs are among the welcome global players. Besides their technical capabilities, they also have needed resources.

3.3 Financial Schemes and Governance Issues

Despite the government enthusiasm, the fact that the local institutional financial market remains tiny and underdeveloped poses a significant challenge for Argentinean authorities. Some infrastructure projects could be (and have become) privately financed (corporate debt)¹⁸. Lower international interest rates were also pushing local governments (Provinces, Municipalities) towards the (global) (sub) sovereign market, to guarantee the funding of their public works¹⁹. A final case of new infrastructure funding is associated with the *RENOVAR* program of the Ministry of Energy and Mines. Shortly after taking office, the new administration enacted a new energy generation law (Law

18 Corporate debt has been issued by an essential number of firms participating in sectors like electricity and distribution (AES Argentina Generation; Pampa Energy; YPF; Genncia; Central Puerto; Grupo Albanesi); transport (Aeropuertos Argentina 2000); multi-sector (CLICSA) (World Bank, 2017).

19 Including Provinces (Buenos Aires, Chaco or Chubut, to name a few) but even local jurisdictions (for example, Municipality of Cordoba).

27191), aimed at increasing renewable energy participation in the Argentinean energy matrix. The first call for solar and wind generation projects was launched the following year, with firms financing themselves through a mix of private (corporate bonds and equity) and multilateral sources.

The Ministry of Transport also has a very ambitious infrastructure master plan (USD 33 billion)²⁰ but adopted a slightly different financial tool. In order to differentiate themselves from the CFK government (particularly in the infrastructure realm), the Macri administration decided to wager on the PPPs scheme as it aimed to foster competition, strengthen transparency and accountability in public construction²¹.

The PPP has a particular contractual basis: a long-term contract, based on the procurement of services (not assets) and the transfer of certain project risks to the private sector (notably in designing, building, operating and financing the project). Additionally, payments to the private sectors usually reflect the services delivered²². A new law was enacted by the Argentinean Congress in November 2016, based on the latest international practices but including some novelties (as the local content requirement, contract duration, and contract renegotiation). Despite being attractive from a governance system stance, it might entail essential challenges in the financial realm. Unfortunately, economic

20 50 per cent of the master plan relates to the improvement in the surface road network. Another 40 per cent goes to rail and bus transit along with freight rail projects. The remaining was directed to public works at airports and ports

21 For Luis Caputo, by the time Minister of Finance, the project represents “[t]he most transparent, efficient and affordable way to develop infrastructure”. To add credibility, he further commented that “studies conducted in England evidence that 30 per cent of public works were completed within the budget, compared to the 80 per cent of PPP projects” (Ministerio de Hacienda, 2018).

22 In other words, the company may be paid either by users through user charges (e.g., motorway tolls), by the Authority (e.g., availability payments, shadow tolls) or by a combination of both (e.g. low user charges together with public operating subsidies)

conditions are still unstable. Macroeconomic related risks are among the most important, as the projected financial architecture could be severely damaged in the presence of inflationary pressures and the foreign exchange risk (World Bank, 2017)²³. International banks are undoubtedly aware of this and also cognizant of the country's loan repayment records. So, and despite these comments, their involvement in infrastructure funding would remain limited (Euromoney, 2018)²⁴. Whereas theoretically, the scheme brings an efficient risk allocation, in practice, the private sector would refuse to assume financial risks beyond a (pre agreed-upon) threshold. In the Argentinean case, the project feasibility breaks down when interest rates are above 8.75 per cent²⁵. Therefore, the national government should guarantee (subsidize) the differential to keep the project alive- an impractical promise after the IMF rescue package. As a result, higher economic uncertainty does not only harm investor enthusiasm but makes the project unviable. The latest financial crisis clearly demonstrates the inadequacy of the scheme when the economy is under stress: Argentina might have the opportunity to use it later when the national economy bounces back to normalcy. Then, and before expanding the system it would be necessary to give more impetus to the local financial market. Only then, would it be (financially) safe and (economically) convenient to rely upon the PPP scheme.

23 Besides those cataloged as macro, projects are confronting a plethora of risks, including those originating from: the banking crisis, public sector, corporate sector, or from market and liquidity.

24 According to market sources, Argentina was not prepared [to introduce the scheme] and finance any of the projects. Those declarations were made in early 2018, long before the financial crisis (devaluation + hyperinflation) initiated.

25 All project engineering is calculated in US dollars, with the Argentine peso affected by huge volatility and a large depreciation during the current year. At the time the government made the call, Argentina had an exchange rate of 19,4608 (peso per dollar). By the time authorities were revealing the name of the winning consortium, the exchange rate was at \$ 37,4050 per US dollar.

Besides, the notebook scandal erupted and agitated the country politics²⁶. As observed in any long-term contractual relation, political risks plays an essential role in this type of arrangement (particularly in Argentina). Trust and confidence remain crucial for capital markets and, undoubtedly autonomous from politician declarations. The notebook scandal might put big Argentinean groups trading on American Depositary Receipts (ADRS) as US companies involved (if any), under the scrutiny of the US Department of Justice (DOJ) and the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC)²⁷. Particularly affected is Techint, one of the leading construction and engineering firms in Argentina²⁸, whose value keeps plummeting²⁹. Initially, the Argentinean government had allowed companies, whose officials were named in the notebook case, to continue - and even permitting them to bid for new ones³⁰. Local banks, however, still refuse to lend to them.. Finally, and despite the overt enthusiasm showed by Transport Ministry Guillermo Dietrich³¹, the success of the scheme remains to be seen.

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- 26 The Lava Jato operation / Odebrecht scandal had profound political consequences in Brazil, but also in the region. In all circumstances, and despite the public request for transparency, the case might have had an affect on the scheme.
- 27 They will determine whether there is any potential infringement of the Foreign Corrupt Practice Act 1977 (FCPA). A possible violation would face not only significant economic costs but also substantial reputation costs.
- 28 Techint was already involved in a money-laundering and bribery case, where the company allegedly used a web of offshore companies to shuffle money and pay bribes to Brazilian state companies (Wall Street Journal, 2018).
- 29 The disclosure of the mechanism for collecting money illegally by Kirchner was one of the factors that lowered the value of the Techint Group in August. The stock exchange value continues going down after judge Bonadio decided to charge the CEO, despite Paolo Rocca continuing to refuse any wrongdoing.
- 30 That was the message Guillermo Dietrich gave to leading banks in a meeting, past August "Argentina to Let Companies Named in Graft Probe Bid on Projects" (Bloomberg, 2018).
- 31 "Dietrich asegura que se mantienen los contratos PPP a pesar de la incertidumbre" Diario Perfil - Economía

At the end, and to advance the ambitious infrastructure project launched by the new administration, Argentina would finally go for Chinese firms and funding - as originally predicted by market participants (Reuters, 2018; Euromarket, 2018). Under the present macro and political scenario, and when all other competitors remain expectant, (big pockets), CCICs keep enthusiastic about the PPP scheme³². Chinese firms have also shown their interest in the government taking the place of those unable to initiate the works according to the proposed schedules. As a result, the closer the bilateral relation, the lower the incidence of the PPP scheme - at least, in its original form. The deal, however, is not absent of financial challenges: debt.

4. CONCLUSIONS

When the images of the G20 Buenos Aires Summit were appearing on the local newspaper press editions, the news coming from a bilateral meeting began to cloud their online version: Mauricio Macri and Xi Jinping bilateral meeting (CTGN, 2018). As a result of the session, both nations agreed to a Bilateral Quinquenal Action Plan (2019-2023), the signature of 35 agreements (including a group related to the infrastructure issue)³³ also, the commitment of China to finance PPP related infrastructure projects for US\$ 1.2 billion (Infobae, 2018; La Nación, 2018). By financially supporting CCA, the Chinese government has permitted Argentina to

32 "Exclusivo: El consorcio Chino, el único que está cerca de conseguir financiamiento para el PPP" (La Política Online, 2018).

33 Presidents Mauricio Macri of Argentina and Xi Jinping of China announced the more than 30 agriculture and investment deals during a state visit following the Group of 20 summit in Buenos Aires. Argentina's central bank has signed an agreement with its Chinese counterpart to expand a currency swap programme for eight billion dollars. "We are extending cooperation on economic, agricultural, financial and infrastructure issues," Xi told a press conference (source: NYT, Al Jazeera, ECC).

initiate the corridor B on schedule, an option not available for other competitors. The arrangement was part of the bilateral agenda Macri and Xi Jinping developed in Buenos Aires. China Construction's America arrival might be responding to economic logic but entering into the Argentina market is also politically valuable for the firm.

In recent years, China has emerged as Argentina's critical trading partner, investor, and financier (Reuters, 2018). The increasing role played by the Middle Kingdom in the Argentinean crisis-stricken economy might benefit the country, but it might also generate anxiety among its other partners but the US. The OPIC loan might be signaling for a Trump response and, eventually, the US interest in playing a more active role in funding infrastructure.

Regardless of the source, official bilateral sources came to fill the private space agents had left empty - at least in the Argentine case. Whatever the reasons, the ambitious plan once devised by the Argentinean authorities would now (and should) be postponed. The current situation made the government delay the government plan to launch some additional PPP projects in 2019. If the macro case returns to normalcy, the ability of PPP developers to access financing for projects might improve. Therefore, what is needed is to preserve the scheme, observe the shortcomings and reduce all risks. However, as the scheme (and any other infrastructure arrangement) involves funding, it becomes relevant not to be highly ambitious; as a sovereign debtor, Argentina lacks credibility.

Local construction companies, on the other hand, should demonstrate their capacity to compete with foreigners but (mainly) to become more open and transparent. As observed in the case being described, and despite the intentions, foreign firms and bilateral funds would be securing the success of the ambitious road project. As previously commented, public-private partnerships are highly dependent on private financing. If Argentina's economy normalizes

and investor confidence in financing infrastructure aligns with international construction companies, macro stability might be a necessary but insufficient condition for local construction companies to be financed; capital markets will first ask them for greater transparency, then trust might begin to be reconstructed.

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8. EL MERCOSUR EN LA BÚSQUEDA DE ASIA PACÍFICO

GUSTAVO CARDOZO

RESUMEN

La búsqueda de nuevas alianzas estratégicas por parte del Mercado Común del Sur (Mercosur), incluye un acercamiento a la región del Pacífico en la cual China juega un rol determinante en materia comercial y financiera. Los nuevos gobiernos argentino y brasilero priman lo comercial sobre lo ideológico, lo cual abre un prometedor esquema de negociación de cara al futuro. Este capítulo se propone presentar el estado de las relaciones entre China y la región para 2018. Resalta los efectos que la inversión china trae para la integración subregional. En este aspecto, se prioriza el desarrollo de un mayor vínculo con la Alianza del Pacífico (AP) asumiendo que este último bloque puede ser una plataforma logística de inserción dentro del proyecto propuesto por Beijing.

Palabras clave: China, Latinoamérica, corredores, comercio, inversiones, acuerdos.

ABSTRACT

The search for new strategic alliances by the Common Market of the South (Mercosur), includes an approach to the Pacific region in which China plays a decisive role in

commercial and financial matters. The new Argentine and Brazilian governments prioritize the commercial over the ideological, which opens a promising negotiation scheme for the future. This chapter aims to present the state of relations between China and the region by 2018. It highlights the effects that Chinese investment brings for subregional integration. In this regard, the author prioritizes the necessity to strengthen relations with the Pacific Alliance group, assuming that it is the only group with a logistic platform worth enough to be part of Beijing's proposal.

Key Words: China, Latin America, Economic, Corridors, Commerce, Investments, Agreements.

INTRODUCCIÓN

La búsqueda de nuevas alianzas estratégicas por parte del Mercado Común del Sur, Mercosur, incluye un acercamiento a la región del Pacífico en la cual China juega un rol determinante en materia comercial y financiera. Esto puede ser interpretado como un mecanismo de reestructuración del accionar externo del Bloque, producto del giro político en sus miembros más importantes como es el caso de Brasil y Argentina. La necesidad de primar lo comercial sobre lo ideológico abrió un prometedor esquema de negociación de cara al futuro.

La iniciativa de China en materia de integración, parte de la consolidación de valores de libre comercio como plataforma para la inserción económica internacional y para la atracción de inversión extranjera directa, IED. Las razones para tener una mayor presencia en los mercados asiáticos, es que estos constituyen más del 20% de la demanda global de bienes y se espera que superen al comercio Norte-Norte.

Es una realidad que los megaacuerdos comerciales están despertado la preocupación del Mercosur y de la Organización Mundial del Comercio, OMC, fundamentalmente, porque se constituyen, bajo la lógica de *building blocks*, con

efectos sobre el comercio agrícola. Además, está el hecho que estos acuerdos se orientan a la integración práctica y efectiva de sus aparatos productivos desde el *bottom up* y no desde el *top down*.

En este contexto, como alternativa del Mercosur para afrontar estos desafíos, está formar parte de las nuevas propuestas integracionistas como la planteada por China. En este aspecto, se prioriza el desarrollo de un mayor vínculo con la Alianza del Pacífico, AP, asumiendo que este último bloque puede ser una plataforma logística de inserción dentro del proyecto propuesto por Beijing. Igualmente, se destaca lograr un correcto aprovechamiento de los factores productivos, incorporando nuevas tecnologías que redunden en generación de mayor valor y empleo sostenible para la región.

Este trabajo tiene como objetivo presentar el estado actual de las relaciones entre China y la región, resaltando los efectos que el megaproyecto chino de inversión puede tener en las estrategias de integración subregional. Para ello, se tomaron en consideración las investigaciones llevadas adelante en diferentes instituciones de ambas partes, las afirmaciones conjuntas publicadas posteriores a reuniones bilaterales y multilaterales, así como las entrevistas a sus funcionarios y las opiniones de académicos y periodistas que han comentado la incidencia de esta iniciativa. Un problema que surgió durante la investigación es la escasez de recursos bibliográficos sobre el tema, dado que se anunció en 2013, y el intercambio de opiniones sobre sus características y su potencial ha comenzado recientemente.

Se desarrolló una investigación exploratoria, la cual se efectuó sobre un tema u objeto poco conocido o estudiado, por lo que sus resultados constituyen una visión aproximada del mismo. Se justifica la importancia de la investigación que culmina con la redacción de este trabajo y su publicación. Se examina el estado de la cuestión abordada, se explica la elección del período histórico acotado en el trabajo y se

exponen los límites y problemas encontrados en el proceso investigador, así como su originalidad, que constituye uno de los elementos más destacados.

1. LA NUEVA RUTA DE LA SEDA Y SU IMPACTO EN AMÉRICA LATINA Y EL CARIBE: PERSPECTIVAS DESDE EL CONO SUR

Los cambios en el sistema político y económico mundial han dado inicio a nuevos procesos de vinculación entre América Latina y el Caribe (LAC, por su sigla en inglés) a nivel transpacífico. Desde comienzos de siglo XXI, las perspectivas de consolidación de un sistema político y económico policéntrico abrió opciones poco exploradas para las economías regionales atadas, en gran medida, a socios comerciales y financieros tradicionales como Estados Unidos y Europa. Asimismo, si bien la presencia de inversores asiáticos en la región puede ser observada desde períodos anteriores, en particular Japón y luego Corea del Sur, la “ventana de oportunidades” que abrió la globalización económica y la caída de barreras comerciales, sumado a la búsqueda de alternativas políticas de inserción externa (Moneta, 2012), ha hecho que los países latinoamericanos recurran a explorar mercados hasta hace poco inexistentes para sus agendas económicas externas.

Durante los últimos años, el desarrollo económico y la mayor apertura de las perspectivas comerciales de LAC, han estado vinculadas al crecimiento de las economías asiáticas en general, en especial China. Este último país, gracias a un intenso proceso de apertura económica iniciada para responder a las asimetrías de desarrollo pudo lograr la ansiada –tanto como postergada– meta de superación de la pobreza estructural. Como resultado, junto a otras economías emergentes (India, Rusia, Brasil, etc.), se fue posicionando como alternativa comercial y financiera ante los países en desarrollo, PED, como son los latinoamericanos (Cesarin, 2004).

La reconfiguración de estas políticas y la reorientación de prioridades extra-regionales por parte de China en función de sus nuevos intereses, impulsó renovadas formas de cooperación en los planos político, comercial, tecnológico y de inversión. Esta economía asiática inició un proyecto transpacífico de infraestructura sin parangón en la historia. Lo que hace pocos años comenzó con un discurso del presidente Xi Jinping sobre revitalizar la Ruta de la Seda, se ha convertido en el mayor desafío chino a nivel mundial, una revolución total en las infraestructuras de tránsito de personas, mercaderías, hidrocarburos y alta tecnología (Li, 2015).

La activada política china de negociación en el marco de BRI, no se trata de ninguna manera de un evento aislado. Una prueba clave para cualquier economía que desea actuar como líder en el proceso de construcción de nuevas instituciones regionales, es su capacidad de ofrecer un modelo distintivo de integración. Beijing busca constituirse como una plataforma y centro para la coordinación de políticas de cooperación, y suministrar flujos financieros a las naciones más pequeñas (Liu, 2014).

BRI apunta a la construcción de un medio de transferencia de mercadería interconectada, la facilitación aduanera, el transporte multimodal –que unifique todas las carreteras de la región, la mejora de la infraestructura portuaria y aéreo civil, así como la conectividad de las redes energéticas transfronterizas y la densificación de redes de fibra óptica–. Además, la Comisión Nacional de Desarrollo y Reforma, el Ministerio de Comercio y el Ministerio de Asuntos Exteriores chinos emitieron conjuntamente un documento para respaldar este proyecto, sumado a la creación del Banco Asiático de Inversión en Infraestructura (AIIB, por su sigla en inglés) –institución que cuenta actualmente con 57 países, incluyendo economías latinoamericanas como las Brasil, Bolivia, Chile, Perú y Venezuela– (Rojas, 2015).

El proyecto BRI tiene la particularidad de realizarse bajo medios formales e informales con el fin de incrementar la

competitividad internacional. Los medios “formales” se basan en la búsqueda de una mayor cooperación y complementariedad sin un cuerpo supranacional institucionalizado. Esto posibilita agilizar el mecanismo de diálogo sin atar a los Estados miembros en un entramado normativo característico de espacios multilaterales. Los medios “informales”, por su parte, se refieren a la integración de territorios colindantes o próximos de diferentes países, conformando áreas económicas naturales que dan lugar al establecimiento de las llamadas “zonas o triángulos de crecimiento”, con el objeto de estimular el intercambio comercial entre países vecinos bajo la inversión china.

El *China effect* representa toda una oportunidad para bloques como el Mercosur y la Alianza del Pacífico¹, al proporcionar un mejor acceso a los mercados más grandes de Asia, en particular donde las economías sudamericanas tienen una ventaja comparativa en productos alimenticios y metales procesados. Es una realidad que Beijing es un socio económico mucho más relevante para América del Sur que para Centroamérica, el Caribe y el mismo México (Gallagher, 2014).

En Sudamérica se perciben más zonas aptas para el desarrollo de potenciales corredores bioceánicos que el resto de Latinoamérica. Uno de los aspectos más importantes está relacionado con el posicionamiento geográfico de ciudades como São Paulo, Río de Janeiro, Santiago de Chile, Montevideo y Buenos Aires las cuales conforman una especie de arco de crecimiento o “banana azul” regional (Soria, 2011).

1 La Alianza del Pacífico es una iniciativa de integración regional conformada por cuatro países miembros: Chile, Colombia, México y el Perú, y otros cuatro países candidatos oficiales a los Estados miembros Australia, Nueva Zelanda, Canadá y Singapur para continuar los diálogos sobre la entrada de los “Estados Asociados” al bloque de países. Ecuador y Corea del Sur buscan formar parte del bloque también como “Estados Asociados”.

Se destaca el eje Mercosur-Chile², el cual representa el 18% de la superficie sudamericana y el 35% de masa poblacional (141.453.273 habitantes), con un PIB del 48% (Banco Interamericano de Desarrollo (BID), 2016). Esta área dispone de una amplia infraestructura, ubicada estratégicamente sobre la cuenca del río de La Plata y los estados brasileños integrantes. El entramado vial pavimentado representa solo el 6% de un total de 1.973.802 km a diferencia de la red ferroviaria, la cual es operativa en un 90% de un total de 61.424 km.

El sistema portuario marítimo y fluvial del eje Mercosur-Chile lo constituyen 46 puertos principales, ubicados mayormente sobre las costas del océano Atlántico, el río de la Plata y los ríos Paraná, Paraguay y Uruguay, a los cuales se suman los puertos chilenos del litoral pacífico. El transporte fluvial en la región se concentra principalmente en los ríos Paraná y Paraguay y, en menor medida, en el río Uruguay. Existen, además, rutas de cabotaje marítimo consolidadas entre Brasil y Argentina, orientadas principalmente al comercio de vehículos y autopartes.

Se destaca en este esquema la conexión con el eje que incluye la región amazónica del nordeste, la cual incorpora los estados de Goias y Tocantins en Brasil; el área centro sur de Colombia; y gran parte del Ecuador y la zona centro norte del Perú. Esta línea incorpora una importante porción territorial cercana al 45% de la superficie del continente sudamericano, con importantes núcleos poblacionales que representan el 19% del Producto Interno Bruto, PIB, local.

El Cono Sur también es relevante por los llamados corredores transversales de carga, los cuales buscan la unión de los dos océanos, mayor comunicación interna, entre Paraguay, Bolivia, Argentina y parte de Brasil con el Pacífico.

2 Integrado por Argentina, Brasil y Paraguay, la totalidad de Uruguay y la zona central de Chile.

Estos corredores, al igual que las rutas convencionales, contribuirán a la integración subregional: mayor movilidad de personas, generación y desviación del comercio.

Es un hecho que la infraestructura existente y la proyectada está signada en el caso de este eje por la presencia de la cordillera de Los Andes y de la inmensa cuenca del río Amazonas, la más grande del mundo. Dispone de un sistema portuario constituido por más de 40 puertos principales, de los cuales 9 movilizan más de 10 millones de toneladas de *commodities* por año para los mercados asiáticos, entre ellos China. El transporte fluvial en la región se concentra en la cuenca del río Amazonas y sus afluentes de gran importancia, como son los ríos Negro, Putumayo, Ucayali, Madeira, Jurua, Purus y Madeira, entre otros.

El Mercosur conforma un espacio productivo en materia agropecuaria y agroindustrial de gran relevancia en el contexto global de los agronegocios. Sus exportaciones hacia las regiones emergentes, evidencian un componente destacado de productos obtenidos gracias a esa específica dotación de recursos naturales con que cuenta Sudamérica.

La irrupción de China estimuló el crecimiento de las exportaciones de los productos básicos, lo que benefició claramente la competitividad de estas economías. Sin embargo, la crisis económica que se inició en los EE.UU. (2009) fue acompañada de un cambio tecnológico en la distribución productiva, como en el consumo de bienes agropecuarios a nivel mundial. Además, comenzó a gestarse un proceso de eficiencia en materia de innovación que se tradujo en términos de expansión cuantitativa de la demanda, como de diversificación exportadora.

Es una realidad que el sector agropecuario regional no desarrolló un esquema simétrico de integración e inserción extra e intrarregional en consonancia con las tendencias mundiales. Si bien existe una arquitectura institucional del acuerdo, los mecanismos de cooperación que debieron completarse y sostenerse para adquirir un mayor impulso

estratégico dentro de la proyección competitiva global, no dieron los resultados esperados. A pesar del relevante posicionamiento competitivo mundial de estas economías en el sector agropecuario, la iniciativa de integración agraria bioceánica no ha desplegado esfuerzos especiales para potenciarla.

Dentro de las acciones que busca asumir el Mercosur, no solo está avanzar en una mayor coordinación en “política agrícola”, como lo expresa el Tratado de Asunción (artículo 1), sino incrementar los esfuerzos de libre circulación de bienes agropecuarios, aspecto fundamental para el desarrollo de cadenas de valor agropecuarias locales, con proyección global. En este contexto, y también a raíz de la creciente preocupación por el surgimiento de los mega acuerdos comerciales y su efecto en materia arancelaria, la posibilidad de potenciar la integración bioceánica vía BRI ayudaría a crear un mejor ambiente de negociación transpacífico.

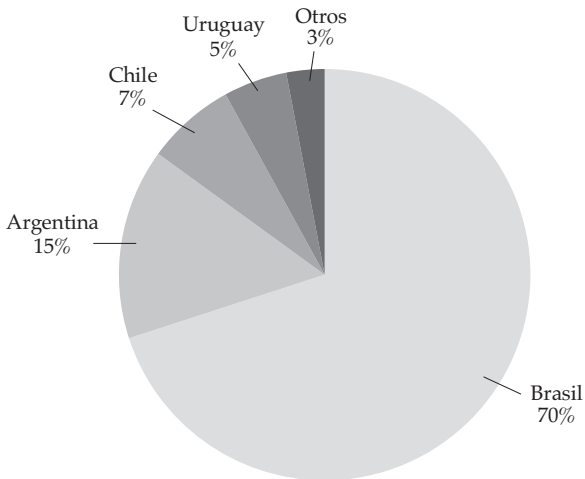
La región, además, puede reactivar el Consorcio del Corredor Atlántico del Mercosur (organización sin fines de lucro que pretende generar desarrollo económico), creado en el 2000 para intensificar el comercio de los corredores locales. Entre ellos, la red ferroviaria transcontinental directa entre el océano Atlántico, Puerto de Santos en Brasil y el océano Pacífico, Puertos de Mejillones y Arica en Chile.

Con todo, es apresurado tratar de medir el posible impacto de estas y otras acciones que conllevaría la participación de LAC en la iniciativa BRI. Al presente, Beijing no incluyó formalmente en el proyecto a la totalidad de países locales, aunque está dirigiendo grandes esfuerzos para ampliar la conexión de sus rutas a través del Pacífico vía Panamá y Sudamérica. Empero, el ministro de relaciones exteriores Wang Yi, durante el Foro Ministerial China-Celac (Comunidad de Estados Latinoamericanos y Caribeños), de 2018, calificó de *participante importante* a la región.

La realidad es que China mantiene una significativa presencia en los mercados latinoamericanos mediante un

comercio dinámico con economías como Brasil, Argentina y la suscripción de diversos tratados de libre comercio (TLC) con países como Chile, Perú y Costa Rica. Según datos de la Comisión Económica para América Latina y el Caribe, Cepal, en 2017 el valor del comercio de bienes entre la región y el gigante asiático creció un 16%, acercándose a los 266.000 millones de dólares. América del Sur tiene un saldo comercial global con China cercano al equilibrio, por el contrario, el Caribe, Centroamérica y México, dada su especialización exportadora distinta, registran en su conjunto un déficit (Cepal, 2015).

GRÁFICO 1. AMÉRICA LATINA Y EL CARIBE: COMPOSICIÓN DE LAS EXPORTACIONES AGROPECUARIAS A CHINA, POR PAÍS DE ORIGEN, 2017

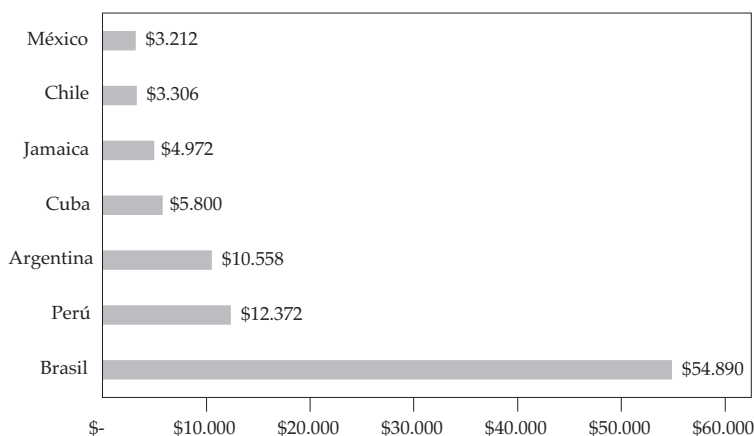


Fuente: Cepal (2017)

El comercio también está acompañado de grandes flujos de financiamiento y LAC ya ha recibido aproximadamente 140 mil millones de USD en desembolsos desde 2005, según el Banco Interamericano de Desarrollo (IDB, por su sigla en

inglés) (Sucre, Marchán & Espinasa, 2015). También los flujos de inversión se concentran en gran medida en las fusiones y adquisiciones de empresas de mayor valor con conocimientos tecnológicos, valor de marca y activos estratégicos, como semiconductores y otros fabricantes avanzados (Cepal, 2015).

CUADRO 1. INVERSIÓN EXTRANJERA DIRECTA DE CHINA
POR PAÍS EN LAC (2017) EN MILLONES DE USD



Fuente: Monitor de la OFDI de China en lac (2017)

Si bien hubo un fuerte dinamismo de la IED china durante estos años, poco se ha destinado en el desarrollo de infraestructura y la búsqueda de adaptación del transporte de mercaderías a Asia. Sudamérica específicamente es reconocida como un polo agropecuario, pero con una red de producción muy estrecha y compleja localmente (Instituto para la Integración de América Latina (Intal), 2017). La proporción geográfica de los países miembros de estos bienes y las características de la localización de los principales centros de producción fabril y extractiva, en especial colindantes a las costas, hace necesario una interconectividad dinámica con los mercados emergentes del Pacífico.

El crecimiento de esta nueva mundialización a manos de China tiene hoy como núcleo analítico y dinamizador el “desarrollo o la competitividad territorial”. Esta afirmación corresponde a una valorización teórica reciente, ampliamente aceptada, que reconoce al territorio como actor preponderante en el desarrollo junto a la innovación y la formación de capital social. Esta concepción considera que el territorio, en íntima convivencia con la innovación tecnológica, en especial con las técnicas de producción, con la generación de infraestructura de comunicación y el acopio y utilización de la información técnica y cultural, y con el desarrollo del transporte expedito, entre otros, forman parte de las condiciones imprescindibles para la obtención de ventajas competitivas a escala internacional, regional y subregional.

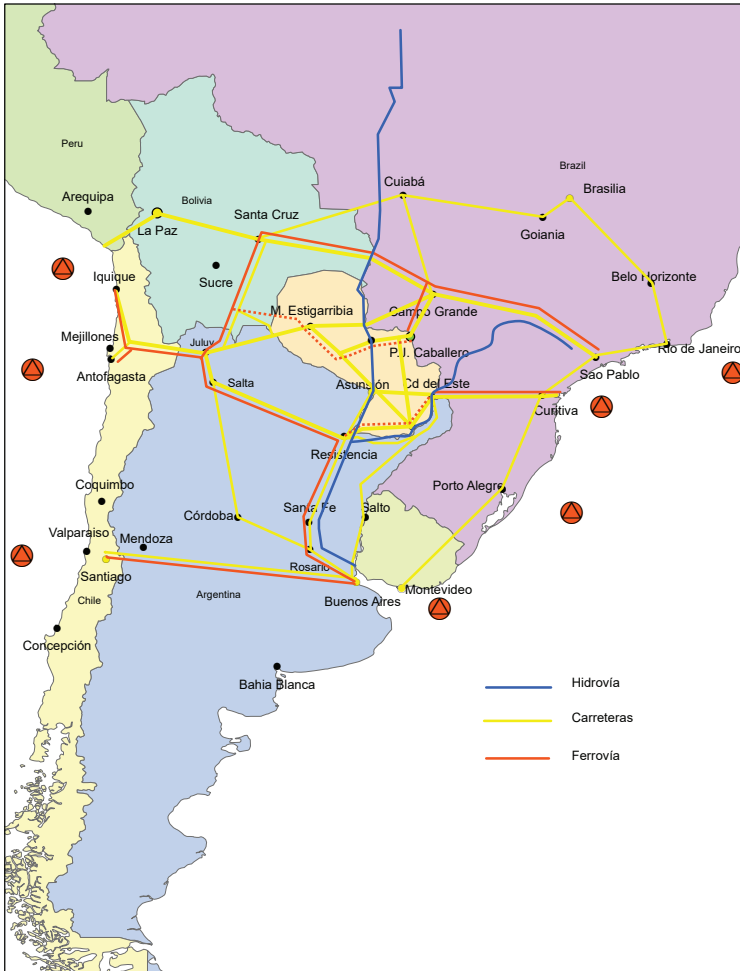
La estrategia de desarrollo de los corredores bioceánicos vía BRI es considerada prioridad por Beijing para la obtención de “puertos seguros”. Construir y consolidar nexos de salida y entrada sobre el Pacífico mediante la interacción con las denominadas “ciudades puerto”, es una necesidad -cada vez mayor- en búsqueda de beneficios en zonas de excepción tributaria (Montes, 2015).

Aquí es importante resaltar el rol que puede jugar Chile en estas rutas comerciales y su capacidad de transformarse en el principal “país puerto” del Cono Sur para las manufacturas de los mercados argentino, boliviano, paraguayo, uruguayo y brasileño. El posicionamiento del país trasandino en el acceso sur occidental de la cuenca del Pacífico, aviva el interés chino en desarrollar estos ejes bioceánicos, al constituirse en el “puente natural” del Mercosur.

Pero aún más importante es que la iniciativa BRI viabiliza que cada país pueda atraer IED independientemente del tamaño de su propio mercado. Aquí se podría concretar un mejor aprovechamiento hidroeconómico y de los ejes fluviales interrelacionados para maximizar el transporte, por aguas interiores, de materias primas para el mercado chino y asiático. Igualmente, se podría explotar la interconexión de

la red de oleoductos y gasoductos que cruzan las fronteras físicas entre Colombia o Bolivia y Argentina (Boscovich, 1999).

GRÁFICO 2. CORREDORES BIOCEÁNICOS EN SUDAMÉRICA (2019)



Fuente: www.antonioz.com.ar

Las empresas chinas, basadas en el concepto de elección y concentración, se están reorganizando y mejoran la eficiencia de estas redes para alinearlas con las propias estrategias gubernamentales. Proyectos de estas características se están generando conjuntamente en toda la zona mediante actividades de *joint ventures* con las firmas locales. Los prósperos lazos políticos y de amistad de Beijing con la región, en conjunto con las acciones extendidas por las comunidades de negocios chinos en las distintas economías locales, aseguran un atractivo horizonte empresarial.

Por las condiciones de complementariedad en sus respectivas etapas de desarrollo, las relaciones con LAC ofrecen una oportunidad única de materializar intereses económicos comunes sobre las tradicionales relaciones bilaterales con China. Sin embargo, para llevar adelante estos objetivos y concretarlos, será necesario para la región superar los numerosos obstáculos de orden burocrático que limitan estos espacios de cooperación transpacífico.

2. EL MERCOSUR EN LA BÚSQUEDA DE ASIA PACÍFICO

La integración económica se ha transformado en un ámbito para el desenvolvimiento de las economías globales frente a las nuevas instancias acaecidas en el contexto de la globalización. La principal mecánica de variabilidad se dio en la sociedad internacional, instando la inmersión de nuevos procesos de ensayos integracionistas que permitieron interactuar a comunidades geográficamente heterogéneas.

Respondiendo a estas tendencias, en LAC se han producido giros en las estrategias de inserción comercial desplegadas por las economías de la región, como así de los distintos bloques que estas integran. Parte de esta explicación está en la caída del comercio intrarregional en balance con otras regiones como Asia o la Unión Europea. Si bien Latinoamérica cuenta con más de sesenta acuerdos preferenciales y las economías locales gozan de preferencias arancelarias

en más del 80% de su comercio bilateral, es un área que no ha conseguido construir cadenas de valor que refuercen sus ventajas comparativas globales (Cepal, 2016).

CUADRO 2. BLOQUES COMERCIALES EN SUDAMÉRICA (2019)

<p>MERCOSUR Argentina Brasil Paraguay Uruguay Venezuela Bolivia</p>	<p>ALBA Venezuela Antigua y Barbuda Cuba Dominica Granada Nicaragua San Cristóbal y Nieves San Vicente y las Granadinas Ecuador (R) Bolivia (R)</p>
<p>AP Chile México Colombia Perú</p>	<p>CAN Bolivia Colombia Ecuador Perú</p>

Fuente: Elaboración Propia (2019).

Nota: R gobiernos que han anunciado su retiro

Sumado a los aspectos mencionados, está el hecho de que se están constituyendo acuerdos OMC-plus sobre el Pacífico sin participación de economías como Argentina o Brasil. Los más importantes son el Acuerdo Transpacífico (TPP por su sigla en inglés), que contiene a México, Perú, Chile, y otros ocho países del Asia-Pacífico, incluido Japón, Australia y Nueva Zelanda; y el Acuerdo Económico Comprensivo Regional (RCEP, por su sigla en inglés), que agrupa 16 países, incluyendo los diez de la Asociación de Naciones del Sureste Asiático (Asean por su sigla en inglés), además de China, India, Japón, Corea, Australia y Nueva Zelanda (León & García, 2018).

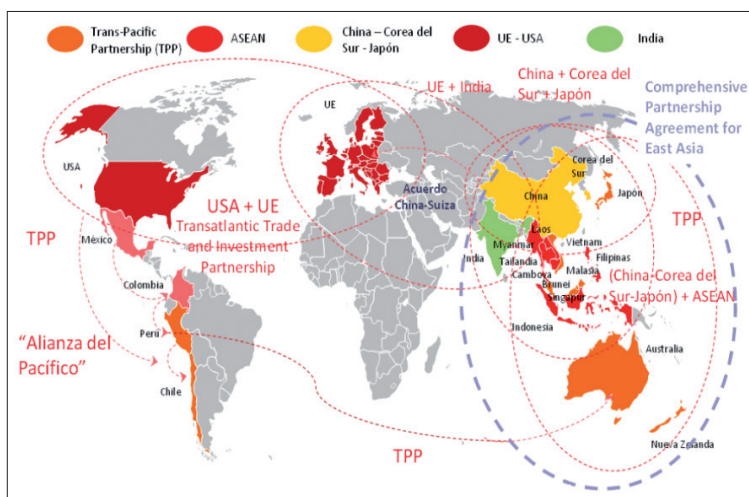
Está claro que la disputa comercial y económica en el siglo XXI será sobre el Pacífico, donde EE.UU. y China buscan consolidar sus esquemas de acuerdos transpacíficos. Del lado de Beijing, se percibe una postura comercial resaltando Asia y privilegiando una visión pragmática sobre los mercados regionales; por el lado norteamericano, se evidencia un camino más riguroso en términos normativos y cerrados en materia comercial, tanto por su retiro del Acuerdo Transpacífico de Cooperación Económica (TPP, Trans-Pacific Partnership, por su sigla en inglés) un acuerdo del tipo Norte-Sur, como las renegociaciones en el marco del Tratado Transatlántico de Comercio e Inversiones (TTIP, Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership, por su sigla en inglés), un acuerdo Norte-Norte que está llevando adelante la administración de Donald Trump. Ambos esquemas son considerados del tipo “estándar dorado” o “*goldstandard FTA*” (BBC News Mundo, 2018).

Estas alianzas de geometría variable han despertado la preocupación de la OMC, fundamentalmente porque sus negociaciones se gestan desde la óptica *building blocks* fuera del comercio libre impulsado después de las Rondas de Doha. En conjunto, sumado a los factores económicos, políticos y estratégicos que motivan a los países a incorporarse a estos procesos, está el hecho de que estos bloques están orientados a la integración práctica y efectiva de sus aparatos productivos desde el *bottom up* y no desde el *top down* (Simonit, 2016). Las economías del Mercosur se han mantenido al margen de estas nuevas “corrientes” de integración provenientes del Pacífico durante años. El ámbito multilateral no parece haber sido un espacio de éxito para la política del bloque, donde resalta la asimetría comercial entre los socios, la cual limita el accionar conjunto y coordinado en las nuevas negociaciones.

La ola de “mega acuerdos” también implica que en los próximos años se puedan reescribir las reglas del comercio internacional y con muy poca participación del Mercosur. El

impacto en estas economías podría ser desde la desviación del comercio e inversión, como la imposición de nuevos requerimientos normativos, hasta la acentuación del modelo primario exportador.

GRÁFICO 3. EL PROCESO DE INTEGRACIÓN MUNDIAL



Fuente: CERA

Con el giro ideológico regional Argentina, Paraguay, Uruguay y recientemente Brasil, se sumaron a la propuesta de rediseñar los dispositivos mercosureños de cooperación sobre el Pacífico. Entre los nuevos objetivos formulados se planteó la necesidad de equilibrar el comercio con la apertura de nuevos mercados, así como mejorar las perspectivas financieras en materia de inversiones en actividades extractivas, de exploración marítima e infraestructura (Gayá, 2015).

A su vez, se impulsaron cambios internos a los efectos de mejorar el clima financiero regional, como fue la liberación del mercado cambiario en Argentina (eliminando la regulación en la compra de divisas de la gestión anterior). Además, se tomaron medidas tendientes a flexibilizar las

retenciones agrícolas y mineras posibilitando el ingreso de divisas y así organizar la agenda comercial externa, buscando inducir cambios como quedó demostrado en la Cumbre en Asunción, Paraguay (Fundación INAI, 2014).

El Mercosur inició un acercamiento con la AP reconociendo en esta una plataforma logística necesaria para comercializar con Asia. Se dejaron en claro las intenciones de asumir una mayor “participación” en los mercados globales rompiendo las “preocupaciones ideológicas” del pasado (Makuc, Duhalde & Rozemberg, 2015). La facultad de participar en condiciones de igualdad en un contexto internacional abierto, interdependiente y progresivo tiene como equilibrio el establecimiento de bases firmes de funcionamiento económico y cierto nivel de reconocimiento de compromisos financieros.

Mientras la atención política y económica del Mercosur estos últimos años se centró en los gobiernos progresistas de la región, las economías de la AP se focalizaron en ampliar y profundizar sus vínculos transpacíficos (Sica, 2014). Dentro de las razones para tener una mayor presencia en los mercados asiáticos, es que estos constituyen más del 20% de la demanda global de bienes y se espera que para el 2017 superen al comercio Norte-Norte.

Países como Paraguay y Argentina ven en la AP un trampolín para acceder a los mercados de la cuenca del Pacífico. Para ello, estas economías se han propuesto conducir al estancado Mercosur en esa dirección, lo cual representa una compleja tarea motivo de la crisis política que vive Brasil y las diferencias comerciales existentes entre los socios del bloque. Simultáneamente, Brasilia y Buenos Aires deberán superar los cuellos de botella internos como la inflación y la oposición de ciertos sectores políticos y económicos, quienes ven en la AP un esquema análogo del Área de Libre Comercio de las Américas, Alca, impulsada por EE.UU. años atrás.

Las empresas locales han perdido parte o la totalidad de sus ventajas competitivas producto de medidas poco dinamizadoras como el atraso cambiario, la presión fiscal y la falta de financiamiento y medidas proteccionistas. Es una realidad que el bloque requiere desarrollar una nueva estrategia para maximizar los beneficios de un acceso preferencial estable a bienes y servicios. Por ello, existe la necesidad de atraer inversiones modificando las políticas financieras antes mencionadas, y lograr un correcto aprovechamiento de los factores productivos incorporando nuevas tecnologías que redunden en generación de mayor valor y empleo sostenible para la región.

La postura de la AP de ampliar sus vínculos comerciales, participando en los acuerdos *OMC plus* u *OMC minus*, plantea un mundo de posibilidades para el Mercosur. Es una realidad que México, Colombia, Chile y Perú, de forma colectiva, podrían constituirse en una bisagra entre el RCEP promovido por Beijing y las economías regionales. También considera que la AP jugará un papel estratégico en el desarrollo de nuevos Acuerdos de Promoción y Protección Recíproca de Inversiones, APPRI, y *memorándum* de entendimiento (o MOU, por su sigla en inglés de *Memorandum of Understanding*) sobre cooperación industrial, desarrollo de los negocios y defensa comercial.

La ausencia de acceso preferencial a los principales mercados del mundo y a las restricciones para insertarse en las cadenas globales de valores, CGV, ubicaron al Mercosur como destino poco atractivo para inversiones, limitando la absorción de divisas. Por otro lado, el bloque no dispone de un dinámico sistema de solución de controversias inversor-Estado (ISDS, por su sigla en inglés), similar al de los acuerdos para la promoción y protección recíproca de inversiones, APPRI, mediante el cual los inversores privados pueden demandar a los Estados ante tribunales internacionales por la adopción de medidas contrarias a los compromisos asumidos en los acuerdos.

El ingreso de la Argentina como miembro observador de la AP podría ayudar a abrir un nuevo camino de acercamiento del Mercosur con este bloque. Para ello, se requiere una negociación de “resolución rápida”, bajo un enfoque pragmático, gradual y flexible, algo dificultoso de consensuar en el seno del bloque. Tampoco cabe esperar que todos los miembros accedan a esta alternativa y ese parece ser el caso de Brasil, más focalizado en explotar su accionar en el marco de los BRIC.

Otros de los puntos álgidos son las diferencias ideológicas con Venezuela y Bolivia, las cuales quedaron expuestas en la Cumbre de Paraguay. A la Cláusula Democrática, se suma la prohibición normativa del Mercosur para que sus miembros cierren acuerdos bilaterales con terceros países, condición que la AP no contempla. Resaltan los debates al interior del bloque: qué rol jugará la Unión de Naciones Suramericanas, Unasur, en este escenario de nueva vinculación entre el Atlántico y el Pacífico.

CONCLUSIONES

Finalmente, se concluye que el acercamiento del Mercosur a este escenario plantea la necesidad de diagramar una efectiva política exterior para la región del Pacífico que arrastre a todos los socios mercosureños, algo sin precedentes en el accionar comercial del bloque. Dentro de los elementos centrales que se deberá afrontar, fuera de los aspectos internos, está la gran heterogeneidad económica; la intensidad del cambio tecnológico, fundamentalmente impulsado por los países asiáticos; las nuevas cadenas de valor transpacífico; y, por último, los mega acuerdos comerciales y sus posibles implicaciones de cara al futuro.

La AP podría transformarse en una nueva plataforma para que el Mercosur pueda expandir su red de negocios sobre los mercados del Pacífico, y ampliar sus flujos de comercio internacional mediante el acceso a mercados regionales

muy favorables para las exportaciones locales de bienes manufacturados. Todo hace pensar que la política exterior regional buscara ser parte de este nuevo entramado con el objetivo de fomentar nuevas oportunidades en este cambio del epicentro económico global.

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9. DEL FORTALECIMIENTO DE LAS FRONTERAS A LA CONECTIVIDAD: LECCIONES PARA EL SUR DE ASIA Y AMÉRICA DEL SUR

KELLY ARÉVALO

RESUMEN

Las fronteras tradicionales que separan los territorios hoy no son suficientes para interpretar las dinámicas de un mundo cambiante, donde cada vez hay más puntos de encuentro y redes de interdependencia. Esto no significa que los límites políticos pierdan su importancia, sino invita a repensar la forma en la cual el mundo interactúa hoy. En este contexto surgen los corredores económicos, como una alternativa al desarrollo y motor de la conectividad.

América del Sur y el Sur de Asia son regiones con un gran potencial de crecimiento económico y mayor protagonismo en el sistema internacional. No obstante, estos dos actores enfrentan una serie de factores que han obstaculizado su integración no solo a nivel regional, sino también a las dinámicas globales de hoy. En el caso de América del Sur, se evidencia como principal necesidad la inversión en infraestructura estratégica multimodal que conecte toda la zona, mientras que la experiencia del Sur de Asia da cuenta de un proceso más lento debido a la falta de confianza y cohesión entre los países de la región.

Palabras claves: corredores económicos, conectividad, interdependencia, geografía, América del Sur, Sur de Asia.

ABSTRACT

The traditional borders that separate the territories are not enough to interpret the dynamics of today's changing world, where there are more and more meeting points and networks of interdependence. This does not mean that political limits lose their importance but invite to rethink the way in which the world interacts today. In this context, economic corridors emerge, as an alternative to development and the motor of connectivity.

South America and South Asia are regions with great potential for economic growth and a stronger role in the international system. However, these two actors face a series of factors that have hindered their integration not only regionally, but also to the current dynamics. In the case of South America, the investment in multimodal strategic infrastructure that connects the entire area is evidenced as a major need, while South Asia's experience shows a slower process due to the lack of trust and cohesion among the countries of the region.

Key words: economic corridors, connectivity, interdependence, South America, South Asia.

INTRODUCCIÓN

El sistema internacional no es estático, hoy plantea el surgimiento de nuevos centros de poder y actores que ya no se relacionan exclusivamente a partir de variables tradicionales como el tamaño del territorio y el poder militar. El desafío actual está dado por el efecto transformador de la conectividad y las dinámicas que surgen alrededor del uso racional del espacio y la construcción de centros de interacción.

El comercio ha trascendido los límites geográficos, los países han encontrado nuevos socios con el desarrollo de infraestructura que facilita el flujo de capitales, bienes y servicios. Las fronteras y el control territorial ejercido por

el Estado-nación tienden a relacionarse con la geografía política del siglo xx. Sin embargo, el proceso de globalización ha permitido que los países ejerzan su poder a partir de su participación en las cadenas de producción y suministro, de la conectividad, dando paso a conceptos como la geografía funcional.

Asia ha sabido interpretar y unirse a las dinámicas que ofrece la conectividad a través del establecimiento de corredores económicos, en los que participan diferentes agentes con el fin de llegar a nodos o centros de interacción. El principal escenario en este contexto es *Belt and Road Initiative*—BRI—del gobierno chino, con un componente terrestre y otro marítimo, reduciendo barreras geográficas entre Europa y Asia, con cerca de 58 socios que garantizan el éxito del proyecto.

El Sur de Asia está parcialmente integrado, haciendo evidente su necesidad de mejorar la infraestructura, y de aumentar las redes de producción y economías de escala que saquen provecho de factores como su ubicación geográfica, el tamaño de la población y su creciente clase media. Según datos del Banco Mundial (2018), la baja integración regional del Sur de Asia se evidencia con tan solo un 5% de comercio intrarregional, comparado con el 25% del comercio con Asean.

En América del Sur la situación es similar en cuanto a la necesidad de un mejor aprovechamiento de su posición geográfica a partir del desarrollo de infraestructura que conecte todo el subcontinente de manera efectiva y que, por ende, le permita participar en las dinámicas actuales que trae la conectividad como patrón del nuevo siglo.

Esta investigación utiliza una metodología cualitativa, en tanto que describe en qué forma la conectividad está influyendo en la configuración actual del sistema internacional, principalmente en Asia como región geográfica, llegando al caso particular del Sur de Asia y su inserción en la dinámica de los corredores económicos.

Este capítulo inicia con un breve análisis sobre los desafíos que hoy enfrenta la geografía política para entender los cambios que han tenido lugar recientemente, seguido de un acercamiento a la conectividad que se materializa a través de los corredores económicos. La segunda parte comprende una revisión sobre el estado actual de la integración y conexión entre los países del Sur de Asia y América del Sur.

1. MÁS ALLÁ DE LA GEOGRAFÍA POLÍTICA

¿Qué sentido tiene seguir pensando en los límites tradicionales?, ¿es la geografía política una muestra real del mundo de hoy? Si se piensa en una costa cualquiera, las dinámicas de hace varias décadas son bastantes diferentes a las de hoy. En el pasado esa costa pudo estar desconectada física y administrativamente del centro del país, habitada por comunidades locales con una cultura y estilo de vida particulares, y dedicadas principalmente a la pesca como actividad económica. Si hoy se revisa nuevamente el mapa, la ubicación de este lugar no habrá cambiado, sus límites seguirán siendo los mismos y hasta el tamaño del territorio puede estar intacto. Sin embargo, la construcción de redes de transporte, que vinculan esta zona con grandes ciudades, ha hecho que hoy esta costa sea un puerto internacional, la comunidad local ha diversificado su actividad económica, participando en la prestación de servicios como hotelería y mantenimiento de maquinaria, con una reducción en actividades pesqueras, un notorio aumento en el tamaño de la población y, por consiguiente, nuevas lógicas socio culturales. Para esta costa el mapa no cambió, pero sí su interacción con otras unidades del territorio que, con seguridad, también experimentaron cambios de este tipo, generando relaciones de interdependencia y una perspectiva nueva para entender ese mapa de líneas fijas a través de líneas conectantes.

La aproximación a las diferentes dinámicas que surgen en un territorio depende del enfoque particular que se establezca y de los factores que se consideren. En el caso de la geografía política, esta indaga por la relación que tiene lugar entre la organización política de la sociedad y el espacio geográfico. La primera se asienta sobre el conjunto de normas y valores impuestos socialmente según ciertos modelos; en tanto que el espacio geográfico, al ser heterogéneo, debe ser adaptado siguiendo también las pautas de alguno de los modelos sociales básicos (Laurín, 2002). Para Friedrich Ratzel, el fundador de la geografía política moderna, los conflictos interestatales son consecuencia de la conducta de los Estados, ya que estos no tienen realidades estáticas “muertas”, sino que se encuentran en continua evolución, esto es “tienen vida” (Cairo Carou & Lois, 2014, p. 47).

En el mundo de hoy, donde proliferan proyectos de infraestructura para conectar diferentes puntos geográficos, los obstáculos de la geografía política y sus líneas divisorias pierden relevancia. El espacio adopta una organización conforme a su funcionalidad. En este sentido, como lo sugiere Khanna (2017, p. 36) el mundo *de jure* de las fronteras políticas está dando lugar al mundo *de facto* de las conexiones funcionales. Es decir, las fronteras indican quién está separado de quién por la geografía política, pero la infraestructura dice quién está conectado con quién mediante la geografía funcional.

En este sentido, desde diferentes escenarios internacionales se empieza a hacer un reconocimiento de las nuevas dinámicas. Por ejemplo, Luis Carranza, presidente del Banco de Desarrollo de América Latina (CAF), ha hecho un llamado a pasar de un ‘paradigma unidimensional’ centrado en la integración física, hacia un ‘paradigma multidimensional’ de integración física y funcional, lo cual incluye infraestructura, servicios, gobernanza sobre corredores logísticos que articulen diversos ámbitos de desarrollo como clústeres

productivos, ejes de interconexión, pasos fronterizos, áreas metropolitanas o puertos (Carranza, 2018).

Por su parte, la Oede también ha identificado regiones funcionales, definiéndolas como unidades territoriales resultantes de la organización de las relaciones sociales y económicas en la medida en que sus límites no reflejan particularidades geográficas o eventos históricos (OECD, 2002, p. 11). Este tipo de unidades territoriales se logran a través de la articulación de la infraestructura funcional que sobrepasa los límites establecidos por la geografía misma.

La geografía funcional se establece a partir de la identificación de nodos o puntos centrales, y a partir de allí se empiezan a instrumentalizar componentes geográficos que dan fuerza a una forma de relacionamiento que no se limita por las divisiones territoriales, sino que toma ventaja de las diferencias del territorio mismo, tejiendo vínculos de interdependencia entre diferentes unidades territoriales. La geografía funcional presenta el espacio físico en términos de los procesos activos y funcionales que tienen lugar en él.

Esto no quiere decir que la geografía política pierda su validez, sino que entra en una nueva dinámica donde las relaciones no se limitan a las líneas que dividen y que han creado lugares particulares con características propias. Es hora de una mayor interacción entre esos espacios preestablecidos, de jugar sobre los mapas e identificar aquellos factores que han restringido un flujo constante entre países de un mismo continente, por ejemplo. Este nuevo escenario ofrece nuevas regiones o formas de organización que antes eran impensables, complementando las unidades administrativas tradicionales basadas en elementos físicos, políticos, sociales y económicos; a través de nuevas relaciones de interdependencia.

Al hablar de ir más allá de la geografía política tampoco se pretende desestimar la geografía, por el contrario, es un llamado a su reinterpretación a reconocer que esta disciplina es la herramienta más importante para interpretar cómo se

organiza el territorio, qué recursos tiene y cómo se conecta. La aplicación de tecnología en este campo ha permitido el desarrollo de sistemas como *Geographic Information System* (GIS) y *Global Positioning System* (GPS), que facilitan el acceso a este tipo de información.

Tradicionalmente el poder de un Estado se determina en cuanto al tamaño de su territorio, el comportamiento económico, el gasto militar y su capacidad de influencia en el sistema internacional. Pero si se piensa en los países que hoy son poderosos, con seguridad el común denominador será su conectividad no solo física, sino también económica y digital. Una muestra de ello es Singapur, que pese a contar con un territorio reducido ha sabido interpretar los desafíos de la conectividad, a través de su vinculación a la Asociación de Naciones del Sureste Asiático (Asean), al Acuerdo Transpacífico de Cooperación Económica, el establecimiento de numerosos acuerdos regionales y bilaterales, creación de un ambiente amable para inversionistas extranjeros, la construcción del Aeropuerto Internacional Changi funcionando con aproximadamente 100 aerolíneas, más del 80% de su población con acceso a internet y dispositivos móviles; entre otros factores que han contribuido a su éxito económico actual (Marshall, 2016).

El proceso de globalización, el desarrollo de nuevos sistemas de comunicación, el establecimiento de alianzas entre países distantes, la facilidad y agilidad para hacer cualquier tipo de transacción de un lugar a otro, y el aumento de migración; deben ser entendidos como un llamado a reinterpretar el mundo y la forma en que se vive en él. Por consiguiente, es pertinente considerar la afirmación de Khanna (2017, p. 39): cuanto más comercian y se comunican las sociedades y cuanto más dependan unas de otras para conseguir alimentos, agua y energía, menos podemos pretender que las fronteras sean las líneas más importantes del mapa.

Resulta pertinente la propuesta de Alexander B. Murphy (2018, p. 54) sobre el desarrollo de un pensamiento geográfico

crítico de los patrones representados en los mapas políticos, que ignoran desconexiones importantes entre lo político y lo geográfico, recordando que el patrón político no es estático. Muestra de esto son eventos como la caída de la Unión Soviética, la desintegración de la antigua Yugoslavia o el éxito de los movimientos separatistas, que no solo han tenido un impacto político sino geográfico. En contraste, Murphy plantea que al pensar geográficamente se pueden traer preguntas reveladoras a primer plano. ¿Por qué normalmente se muestra a Somalia como un país en los mapas mundiales, cuando el norte y el sureste funcionan de manera totalmente independiente el uno del otro? ¿Cuáles son las consecuencias de que Nepal se ubique entre India y China, con un acceso mucho más fácil a la primera que a la segunda? Las preguntas geográficas pueden fomentar el tipo de pensamiento que es esencial para dar sentido a la escena geopolítica contemporánea.

2. CONECTIVIDAD HOY: CORREDORES ECONÓMICOS

El interés en el establecimiento de corredores económicos pareciera ser un tema nuevo, más aún con el aumento de ambiciosos planes promovidos principalmente por China. Sin embargo, el tema no es reciente, en las últimas décadas ha estado en la agenda de distintos países, concebido como herramienta de desarrollo regional. Este enfoque parte de la premisa de que el crecimiento económico de un país o región puede tener efectos positivos en aquellos vecinos con los cuales comparte fronteras. En este sentido, la propuesta de los corredores económicos hace énfasis en una combinación estratégica entre mejora de la infraestructura y oportunidades económicas en términos de comercio e inversiones, sin dejar de lado su impacto social. En este sentido, Prabir De (2014, p. 1) identifica las siguientes características de los corredores económicos:

a. Cubre un pequeño espacio geográfico que es atravesado por una red de transporte como carreteras, ferrocarriles o canales.

b. Se establece principalmente a través de iniciativas bilaterales, y no multilaterales, que se concentran en los nodos estratégicos de los cruces fronterizos entre dos países.

c. Busca la planificación responsable para que el desarrollo de la infraestructura tenga un impacto positivo. En un contexto nacional, el concepto se usa cada vez más para los programas de desarrollo.

Con seguridad el principal elemento por considerar al hablar de los corredores económicos es la disposición para desarrollar infraestructura que articule diferentes redes de transporte, siendo este el eje central a partir del cual se vinculan los demás elementos. Resulta curioso que algunos de los corredores que están en fase de planeación o construcción, incluyan vías que históricamente fueron utilizadas para el flujo de personas o buscan conectar los mismos puntos, como el caso de la Ruta de la Seda del siglo xv y la actual.

En consecuencia, los corredores económicos no deberían interpretarse solo como un conjunto de líneas transversales que se superponen a las fronteras establecidas, sino que deben entenderse como áreas geográficas con fronteras amorfas que contienen recursos naturales, infraestructura económica-social y poblaciones establecidas (Blender, 2000, p. 1). Estos corredores adquieren propiedades especiales, se convierten en servicios públicos comunes dirigidos de manera conjunta a través de las fronteras (Khanna, 2017, p. 39).

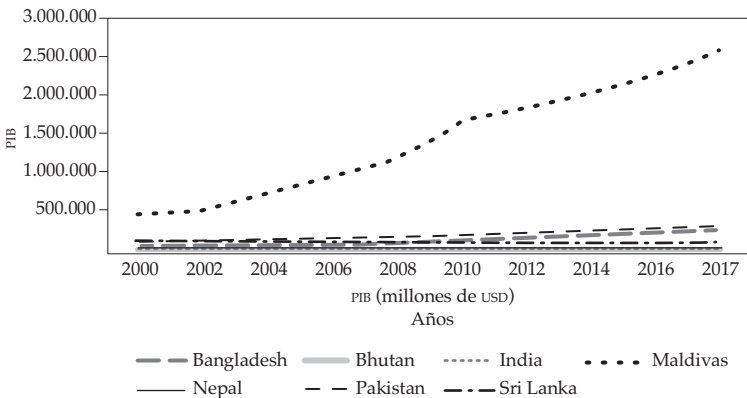
Es preciso mencionar que la conectividad pretende integrar ciudades a redes más amplias que los límites del país al que pertenece. Cada ciudad tiene una motivación particular para participar, un rol que jugar en las cadenas de suministro.

3. CONECTIVIDAD EN EL SUR DE ASIA

El Sur de Asia es una de las regiones con mayor diversidad geográfica. Está bañada por las aguas de la bahía de Bengala, el océano Índico y el mar Arábigo, la rodean sistemas montañosos como el Hindu Kush, Karakórum y, por supuesto, los Himalayas, sin dejar de lado la meseta del desierto de Baluchistán.

La región del Asia Meridional está compuesta por Bangladesh, Bután, India, Maldivas, Nepal, Pakistán y Sri Lanka, siendo una de las zonas más diversas del mundo no solo en términos culturales sino también en cuanto a desarrollo económico. De acuerdo con estimaciones del Banco Mundial, para el 2017 esta región contaba con cerca de 1.700 millones de habitantes, de los cuales hay una gran proporción en las zonas rurales, que podrían interpretarse como una oportunidad de desarrollo y crecimiento económico, si se acompañan con políticas industriales.

GRÁFICA 1. PIB SUR DE ASIA 2000-2017



Nota: cifras presentadas en miles de millones de dólares.

Fuente: Banco Mundial (2018). Construcción propia.

India es el país más grande de la región, aporta aproximadamente 1.339 millones de habitantes y en los últimos años se ha posicionado como potencia emergente, considerando factores como el tamaño de su territorio, su comportamiento económico que para 2017 la ubica como la sexta economía mundial (Chakrabarti, 2018), el desarrollo en sectores como tecnología y defensa, y su protagonismo en escenarios multilaterales como Brics.

No obstante, pese a un aumento de la inversión india en el extranjero, sus inversiones en la región se han reducido notoriamente. En este sentido, Athukorala (2013, p. 22) afirma que en la última década India se convirtió en el tercer inversionista en el mundo en desarrollo¹, antecedido por China y Brasil, y en el principal inversionista regional en el Sur de Asia, a pesar de haber pasado de un 4,5% en 2003-04 a un 0,1% en 2006-2007. El principal receptor de este flujo de inversiones es Sri Lanka (85.0% en 2006), seguido por Bangladesh (11,1%).

La región no goza del mismo comportamiento económico de India (Gráfica 1). Para que el Sur de Asia logre un crecimiento constante, debe pensar en políticas de desarrollo industrial, que incentiven procesos de agregación de valor, inserción en cadenas globales y aprovechamiento de las nuevas rutas comerciales que se están estableciendo, facilitando su salida a nuevos escenarios internacionales. La experiencia india demuestra que los servicios son un estímulo para el crecimiento económico, pero los países más desarrollados se convirtieron en economías avanzadas en gran parte debido al desarrollo industrial y de manufactura (Ill-Kim, 2015).

La materialización de este tipo de medidas depende de la voluntad política de los gobernantes, que no solo se traduce

1 En el capítulo 2 de esta publicación se profundiza en los proyectos que en conjunto está desarrollando la India con los países del sudeste asiático. En concreto, se hace mención al *Mekong India Economic Corridor* (MIEC, por su sigla en inglés).

en la disposición para identificar objetivos y tareas comunes, trabajar por mayor integración regional y una proyección internacional, sino también en la solución de tensiones entre vecinos, principalmente por cuestiones limítrofes. Como ya se ha expuesto, es muy probable que este proceso sea liderado por India, actor que tendrá que asumir su rol de hegemón natural, no solo por su crecimiento, sino por compartir fronteras con todos los países del subcontinente.

Por otra parte, para que el Sur de Asia logre una participación más activa en las cadenas globales de valor, debe empezar por el aumento del comercio intrarregional, que hoy la cataloga como la región menos integrada del mundo, no solo comercialmente sino también respecto a infraestructura y cooperación. En este escenario la importancia de la conectividad cobra sentido, siendo esta la clave para impulsar un cambio estructural en la región, más allá de las fronteras y resaltando aquellos puntos geográficos que tienen el potencial de cambiar los patrones actuales.

Si bien se han hecho algunos acercamientos en este sentido a través de la Asociación Regional para la Cooperación Regional del Sur de Asia (Saarc) y el Área de Libre Comercio del Sur de Asia (Safta), estos se han visto nublados por su principal cuello de botella: la disputa por Cachemira entre India y Pakistán. Si bien puede catalogarse como un asunto bilateral, en realidad tiene grandes implicaciones para la conectividad no solo de la región, sino también del continente en general y particular de China. Por ejemplo, el control de India sobre el territorio en disputa le abriría paso directo a Asia central, garantizaría una frontera con Afganistán y separaría geográficamente a Pakistán y China, imposibilitando el acceso de este último al océano Índico.

Autores como Paramjit S. Sahai y Vijay Laxmi (De, 2014, p. 54) han analizado el efecto de los corredores económicos en el Sur de Asia, y en el caso específico de la ruta terrestre Wagah-Attari que conecta a las ciudades de Amritsar en la India y Lahore en Pakistán, y sugieren que el problema entre

estos dos países es el de superar las políticas comerciales que incentivan solo el comercio de un número limitado de productos, buscando mecanismos que dinamicen el intercambio de mercancías. En este sentido, Khan *et al.* (2007, p. 24) afirman que Pakistán podría importar desde India productos farmacéuticos, textiles, maquinaria, artículos de la industria de la ingeniería ligera, azúcar, cemento, productos químicos orgánicos e inorgánicos, papel y pulpa; sin incurrir en los altos costos que debe pagar en la actualidad por importar desde regiones distantes. Recíprocamente, Pakistán podría exportar a India algodón, productos quirúrgicos, productos de cuero y frutas frescas y secas.

Otro de los cuellos de botella que enfrenta un proyecto regionalizador en el Sur de Asia, está dado por la inseguridad, producto de grupos independentistas e inestabilidad política a lo largo de la región. Un escenario seguro es tanto o más importante que el constante flujo comercial, reconociendo que cualquier amenaza no solo se traduce en incremento de los costos sino también en cierre de rutas de transporte. Es indispensable un compromiso conjunto para implementar medidas de seguridad mediante la inversión en tecnología, fortalecimiento de las comunicaciones y el intercambio de información entre autoridades.

Mayor conectividad también beneficiará a países como Bután y Nepal que no solo están en medio de dos gigantes, China e India, sino que también se enfrentan al desafío de no tener salida al mar, quedando encerrados entre cadenas montañosas. En consecuencia, estos países enfrentan altos costos de transporte y la baja conectividad, constituyendo barreras para el desarrollo. Los corredores económicos configuran una estrategia para llenar vacíos de infraestructura regional y para promover el desarrollo socioeconómico a través del aumento de flujos comerciales intra y extra regionales, la generación de empleo y la reducción de la pobreza.

Así mismo, la promoción de corredores y acuerdos regionales es clave para superar los obstáculos a la competitividad,

reduciendo los costos comerciales, lo que conducirá a un aumento del comercio y la inversión, haciendo del Sur de Asia una región atractiva para la IED, por ejemplo, a través de la integración vertical que explote las ventajas comparativas de cada país de la región.

Al reconocer la importancia de la integración de la red de transporte en el Sur de Asia, en la cumbre Saarc de 2004 se decidió fortalecer los vínculos de transporte, tránsito y comunicaciones a través de la región. Con el apoyo financiero y técnico del Banco Asiático de Desarrollo, en 2006 se completó el estudio regional de transporte multimodal de Saarc, que identificó 10 corredores terrestres, cinco corredores ferroviarios, dos corredores fluviales, 10 plataformas marítimas y 16 centros aéreos para ser implementados en una primera fase. La construcción de infraestructura regional a través de corredores económicos también se planea para ayudar a facilitar el transporte internacional y nacional, y promover la industrialización en el interior del país (De, 2014, p. 23).

Además de este plan de construcción de infraestructura, el actual primer ministro de India, Narendra Modi, viene trabajando desde 2014 en la política industrial *Make in India* que incluye la construcción de seis corredores económicos: Delhi-Mumbai, Amritsar-Kolkata, Bengaluru-Mumbai, Chennai-Bengaluru y Vizag-Chennai. Esta iniciativa busca la conexión de puntos estratégicos de su geografía, pero al mismo tiempo del fortalecimiento del comercio con sus vecinos.

El éxito de las iniciativas de desarrollo industrial regional depende, en gran medida, de la articulación de una red intermodal de transporte que garantice que todos los países logren conectarse. La conectividad terrestre brindaría beneficios a Bután y Nepal al darles acceso a los mercados globales a un costo menor. El Sur de Asia debe no solo priorizar la integración regional, sino también la interacción con proyectos de corredores asiáticos en desarrollo. Lo anterior,

de la mano de esfuerzos nacionales de coordinación y armonización institucional para la implementación efectiva de las regulaciones que acompañan este tipo de iniciativas.

En palabras de Parag Khanna (2017, p. 107) si Lahore y Karachi (Pakistán), Delhi y Calcuta (India), Daca y Chittagong (Bangladesh) unieran sus cosechas a través de la llanura Indogangética, crearían el granero más grande del mundo. La resurrección de la Gran Carretera Principal parece una inversión más rentable que la eterna defensa de las arbitrarias fronteras coloniales.

El mejoramiento de la conectividad en el Sur de Asia llevará a profundizar la complementariedad entre los miembros de la región, con el incremento de eficiencia técnica, mejora en la asignación de recursos y la creación de *hubs* industriales. La ausencia de un proyecto integrador ha llevado a un proceso de auto-debilitamiento. La necesidad de una identidad común ha llevado al desarrollo de respuestas paralelas a situaciones de interés general. Los beneficios de su posición geográfica hacen que diferentes iniciativas de desarrollo de corredores económicos deseen incluir en sus planes a los países de la región, pero al no existir una postura regional, los países están asumiendo estrategias que pueden representar beneficios particulares, a costa de un mayor fraccionamiento y desaprovechamiento del potencial regional. En resumen, los países del Sur de Asia tienen el deseo de crear infraestructura, generar un mejor ambiente comercial y ser parte de las cadenas globales de valor, su acercamiento a China lo demuestra, no obstante, su debilidad se evidencia en la falta de voluntad política para actuar estratégicamente como región.

4. CONECTIVIDAD EN AMÉRICA DEL SUR

América del Sur está compuesta por Argentina, Bolivia, Brasil, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Guyana, Paraguay, Perú, Surinam, Uruguay y Venezuela. Estos doce países tienen

una historia común y la mayoría de ellos pertenecieron a un mismo gobierno durante el período de la colonia, comparten el mismo idioma a excepción de Brasil y Surinam; y en términos culturales también existen bastantes similitudes.

En el subcontinente suramericano el deseo de crear un marco de integración regional siempre ha estado presente. Han sido varios los proyectos multilaterales y bilaterales que se han planteado en cabeza de la CAN y el Mercosur, por ejemplo. No obstante, estas estructuras han presentado deficiencias para completar el proceso de manera exitosa, y los obstáculos desembocaron en crisis institucionales. En la década de los 80 se presentaron importantes iniciativas hacia una mayor integración suramericana; en este sentido, entre 1985 y 1987 se dieron las primeras negociaciones de la Asociación Latinoamericana de Integración, Aladi, buscando apertura mutua que llevara a la consolidación de una zona de libre comercio, influenciadas por teorías neoliberales de la época. Como consecuencia se han consolidado estrategias como el Programa de Integración y Cooperación Económica, el Tratado de Integración, Cooperación y Desarrollo entre Argentina y Brasil, y acuerdos de reducción de tarifas entre Chile y Argentina.

En este contexto se estructuró el Mercosur, que inicialmente respondía a un programa de aproximación entre Brasil y Argentina, buscando apertura económica y reformas internas de liberalización en los respectivos países. No obstante, Mercosur hoy podría definirse como una unión aduanera incompleta de carácter intergubernamental, lo cual deja una sensación de que las expectativas planteadas en la firma del Tratado de Asunción no se materializaron (Gomes Saraiva, 2012, p. 93), pese a que en su primera década se caracterizó por incentivar el comercio intrabloque, aun cuando contaba con un bajo perfil institucional.

En la historia económica de la región es indispensable mencionar el paquete de recomendaciones formuladas por

el Consenso de Washington, con el fin de alcanzar la estabilización monetaria y el funcionamiento del mercado. Con el auge de estas ideas, en 1994 Estados Unidos sugirió el establecimiento de una zona de libre comercio en todo el continente americano, conocida como el Área de Libre Comercio de América, Alca. Esta propuesta abordaba aspectos como el acceso a mercados, servicios, inversiones, solución de controversias, propiedad intelectual, subsidios, políticas compensatorias y de competencia. Es preciso mencionar que, al configurarse como una zona de libre comercio, no implicaba libre circulación de personas, moneda común o instituciones intergubernamentales. No se llegó a materializar, pese a que las negociaciones se extendieron hasta 2005.

La revisión de los procesos de integración llevados a cabo en América del Sur da cuenta de la necesidad de pensar no solo en términos de mercados, sino también de abrir el espectro hacia la articulación económica y política, para garantizar mayor cohesión y consistencia a través del tiempo. De esta forma, se crearán redes de interdependencia en la región, cooperación y fortalecimiento regional frente a escenarios internacionales.

Una de las justificaciones que puede atribuirse a la debilidad de los procesos de integración regional en Suramérica, es la falta de conectividad que ha imposibilitado que el territorio suramericano esté realmente integrado físicamente para, al menos, facilitar el flujo comercial. En este sentido, Marshall (2016, p. 240) sugiere que las limitaciones de la geografía de América Latina han estado presentes desde la colonia y la posterior formación de los Estados-nación, como consecuencia de la imposición de una cultura colonizadora de poderosos terratenientes y siervos que llevó a la desigualdad. Además de esto, los colonos europeos introdujeron otro problema geográfico que impide que algunos países de la región desarrollen su potencial, al permanecer cerca de las costas, donde fueron construidas la mayoría

de las ciudades principales y capitales, de forma tal que las carreteras del interior se desarrollaron para conectarse a las capitales, pero no entre sí.

Aunado a lo anterior, de acuerdo con Iirsa (2004) la geografía misma de la zona presenta como obstáculos naturales a la conectividad la cordillera de los Andes, la selva amazónica, el Istmo centroamericano, el río Amazonas y la zona Pantanal, creando así cinco "islas" la Plataforma Caribe (norte), Cornisa Andina (oeste), Plataforma Atlántica (este), Enclave Amazónico y Enclave Amazónico Sur.

Pese a las limitaciones geográficas, la región ha considerado el establecimiento de corredores de comercio, como un componente de las políticas de desarrollo, al ser percibidos como la oportunidad para que muchas ciudades acaben con los modelos tradicionales de desarrollo, aprovechando las ventajas de la descentralización, fortificando instituciones democráticas y la participación pública, apoyando inversiones del sector privado ligadas a la participación en los corredores de comercio. Las ciudades son los actores principales que crean y desarrollan los corredores de comercio (Blender, 2000).

De esta forma, al identificar los diferentes corredores de transporte disponibles en la región (Tabla 1) se puede observar que no hay una continuidad a lo largo de todo el territorio. En cuanto a corredores viales, pareciera que casi todo el subcontinente estuviera conectado por carreteras, no obstante, la infraestructura disponible no ha sido suficiente para reducir costos en transporte por la ausencia de parámetros comunes respecto a las dimensiones de los vehículos de carga. La construcción de la carretera Marginal de la Selva entre Venezuela, Colombia y Ecuador, sería un gran avance en materia de conectividad al reducir notoriamente tiempos de viaje al localizarse en un terreno principalmente plano, sin embargo, ha generado polémica por los daños ambientales que se causarían al Amazonas por la deforestación que implicaría su construcción.

Por otra parte, los corredores ferroviarios se concentran principalmente en el llamado Cono Sur (Argentina, Chile, Uruguay y Paraguay) y Bolivia, lo cual configura un obstáculo para la conexión con centros de comercio en los puertos del norte de la región, sin restar importancia a las restricciones dadas por el tamaño de los túneles existentes y la necesidad de hacer transbordos en algunos tramos (Organización de los Estados Americanos, 1995). No obstante, es importante mencionar que el eje ferroviario La Paz-Arica, garantiza los flujos de transporte de Bolivia desde o hacia la zona costera de Chile.

La infraestructura de transporte fluvial en la región no es suficiente para cubrir la totalidad de la red, llevando a un desaprovechamiento de este recurso para la movilidad de carga y personas, aun cuando existe un importante movimiento fluvial. Por ejemplo, en la cuenca del Amazonas con 21 millones de toneladas anuales, en la Hidrovía Paraguay Paraná con 14 millones de toneladas, Araguaí-Tocantins con 4 millones de toneladas, y Magdalena y Paraná-Tietê ambos con 2 millones de toneladas respectivamente (Comisión Económica para América Latina y el Caribe, 2017).

TABLA 1: CORREDORES DE TRANSPORTE
EN AMÉRICA DEL SUR

Corredores viales	Corredores ferroviarios	Corredores intermodales e hidroviarios
– San Pablo-Montevideo-Buenos Aires-Puerto Montt (Santiago de Chile o Valparaíso).	– Mataraní (Arica) (Antofagasta)-La Paz-Cochabamba-Santa Cruz-San Pablo o Santos	– Paita-Sarameriza-Iquitos-Manaus-Belem.
– San Pablo-Urugayana-Buenos Aires (Córdoba)-Mendoza-Santiago de Chile o Valparaíso.	– La Paz (Santa Cruz)-Salta-Buenos Aires.	– Río Putumayo-Manaus-Belem.

Corredores viales	Corredores ferroviarios	Corredores intermodales e hidroviarios
– San Pablo-Encarnación (Asunción)-Corrientes-Salta-Antofagasta.	– Asunción-Buenos Aires (Montevideo) (Río Grande).	– Mataraní (Ilo)-Assis Brasil-Río Branco-Porto Velho-Manaus-Belem.
– Lima-La Paz-Salta-Buenos Aires.	– San Pablo-Buenos Aires (Montevideo).	– Caracas-Ciudad Bolívar-Boa Vista-Manaus-Belem.
– Arica (Ilo)-La Paz-Santa Cruz-Corumbá-San Pablo o Santos	–	– La Paz-Porto Velho-Manaus-Belem.
– La Paz-Santa Cruz-Asunción-Foz do Iguaçu-Paraguá- (San Pablo o Santos).	–	– Hidrovía Paraguay-Paraná (Puerto de Cáceres-Puerto de Nueva Palmira)
– Caracas-San Cristóbal -Bogotá-Quito-Lima-Santiago-Puerto Montt.	–	– Puerto Páez, Puerto Ayacucho, Puerto Novo, Puerto Carreño.

Fuentes: Elaboración propia con base en: Organización de los Estados Americanos (1995), Comisión Económica para América Latina y el Caribe (2017).

Resulta paradójico que Brasil, país que podría liderar el proceso de integración y conectividad al ser reconocido como una potencia emergente y ocupar un tercio del total de la región, posea uno de los territorios con mayores problemas de infraestructura que lo conecte no solo internamente, sino también con sus vecinos². Muestra de ello es la alta proporción de selvas, zonas del río Amazonas sin navegabilidad por alta presencia de lodo, el interior del país desarrollado, pero poco conectado con las zonas costeras, deficiente sistema

2 En el capítulo 8 se profundiza en los proyectos en infraestructura y corredores que Brasil ha planteado para conectarse con sus vecinos.

ferroviario y falta de acceso a la región del río de la Plata (océano Atlántico) (Marshall, 2016, p. 256).

Como lección no solo para Brasil sino para toda la región, debe considerarse que para que los países se incorporen al mapa económico global como núcleos productivos no existe inversión más importante que las infraestructuras básicas. Las infraestructuras no son una simple carretera; son un trampolín (Khanna, 2017, p. 316).

En suma, a pesar de que América del Sur todavía tiene diferendos limítrofes por resolver y tensiones políticas entre algunos países de la región, la mayor limitante para consolidar una zona conectada está dada por la baja inversión en el desarrollo de infraestructura, la estandarización de procesos de transporte y un andamiaje institucional que facilite cualquier flujo a través de las fronteras. Una región que da prioridad a la conectividad logrará una mejor inserción en las cadenas globales de valor, un aprovechamiento de los recursos naturales, de la posición geográfica y del capital humano, llevando a un mejor comportamiento económico y a una interacción efectiva con otras regiones del mundo.

Una América del Sur que prioriza la conectividad y el fortalecimiento de la infraestructura, más allá de lo regional, tendrá el potencial de jugar un rol más activo y dinámico en el sistema internacional, en particular si se considera el surgimiento de nuevos poderes y la inserción de temas en la agenda internacional, donde las experiencias de los diferentes países de la región son de especial relevancia.

5. CONCLUSIONES

Dos siglos atrás con la invención del transporte ferroviario, se abrió el camino para una transformación geográfica masiva que afectaba el lugar donde vivían las personas, dónde y cómo se producía, cómo los gobiernos controlaban el territorio e incluso cómo los individuos pensaban en la

distancia. Similares transformaciones ocurrieron a raíz del desarrollo del automóvil y el avión, y a medida que avanza el siglo XXI se materializa otra revolución en la movilidad y la conectividad, impulsada no por un solo invento transformador sino por un conjunto de innovaciones tecnológicas. Comprender las implicaciones y aprovechar estos cambios no será posible sin un análisis geográfico sostenido y reflexivo, se necesita entender cómo y por qué están cambiando los patrones de movilidad y conectividad y los impactos variables de esos cambios en diferentes lugares y comunidades (Murphy, 2018, p. 58).

En este sentido, ningún país puede ser indiferente a los cambios actuales en cuanto a conectividad y sus distintas manifestaciones. Entender la importancia de los corredores económicos, trabajar en procesos de integración, participar en corredores económicos y potencializar los flujos físicos y digitales, son las condiciones básicas para crecer en el sistema actual.

En las regiones conformadas por países en desarrollo, la ausencia de corredores económicos configura una importante limitación para el crecimiento. Por ejemplo, en términos de transporte a través de una región con inadecuada infraestructura, causará congestión, aumento en los costos de transporte, disminución de los rendimientos del capital en la industria y, por ende, una baja tasa de retorno, que desincentiva la inversión, generando un aumento del desempleo. Un corredor económico no es solo una carretera, es un canal para el desarrollo y crecimiento económico.

Los desafíos a la conectividad y a la integración que enfrentan el Sur de Asia y América del Sur, en sus respectivos contextos, pueden entenderse desde dos perspectivas diferentes. Por un lado, están los temas materiales en términos de infraestructura física, sistemas de comunicación, logística y capital humano que garantice su funcionamiento eficiente;

por otro lado, están aquellos aspectos que no solo dependen de la disposición de infraestructura, sino que también se relacionan con la voluntad política y los compromisos que se asumen por las partes. En este grupo encajan variables como instituciones, gobernanza, régimen de aduanas y sistemas de resolución de controversias, entre otros.

Estos desafíos son igual de relevantes, si no hay coordinación y armonización no se puede garantizar el correcto funcionamiento de estos corredores. Es en este punto donde debe existir un fuerte compromiso por parte de los diferentes países que participan, dejando de lado conflictos históricos que han profundizado el rezago regional. Los tomadores de decisiones deben estar en la capacidad de hacer intervenciones apropiadas, construir alianzas de desarrollo y fortalecer la integración.

América del Sur tiene una posición geográfica que resulta atractiva para el flujo comercial mundial, importantes recursos naturales, su tierra es cultivable, tiene una población joven y capacitada, y relativa estabilidad política. No obstante, pareciera necesitar un actor líder capaz de dirigir un proceso integrador, que no se quede solo en la negociación de reducción de barreras comerciales para un listado particular de productos, sino que requiere un programa más ambicioso. Se necesita un trabajo conjunto que lleve a la identificación de socios estratégicos, políticas industriales para la consolidación de clústeres de producción, inserción en las cadenas globales de valor que reduzcan la exportación de productos sin valor agregado y, por supuesto, inversión en infraestructura, que no solo se refiere a la construcción de vías y puentes, sino también en términos digitales.

No se desconocen los diferentes escenarios que se han creado en la región, pero tampoco se niega su insuficiencia para responder a las actuales dinámicas. Si América del Sur no es consciente de estos desafíos, terminará siendo un territorio atravesado por líneas que conectan puntos

productivos, y no una fuente de productos y servicios capaz de posicionarse como una región vital del comercio internacional.

Si bien el panorama del Sur de Asia no es óptimo debido a los aún latentes conflictos fronterizos de estos jóvenes Estados, la desconfianza mutua y la influencia china en la región, puede considerarse que hay un mejor entendimiento del desarrollo de estructura estratégica. De esta forma, es destacable el esfuerzo de India por establecer diferentes corredores estratégicos en su territorio y el establecimiento de alianzas con países asiáticos, como Japón y Myanmar, para diversificar las rutas actuales, lo cual también puede tener un impacto positivo para la región en caso de que se diera un proceso de integración exitoso.

Ahora bien, es importante que la región considere responder como un solo actor frente a los proyectos de conectividad que está llevando a cabo China, quien ya ha tenido fructíferas negociaciones con Pakistán y Sri Lanka, por ejemplo, para garantizar su acceso al océano Índico. Lo anterior ha sido percibido con desconfianza por parte de India, profundizando las diferencias entre los países de la región.

Pese a que Asia Meridional pareciera enfrentar un proceso de integración más lento que el suramericano, existe un gran potencial si empieza por incentivar el comercio intrarregional, que no solo tendrá beneficios económicos, sino que puede ayudar a reducir tensiones entre vecinos, como ha sucedido en otros escenarios.

En resumen, puede afirmarse que pese a que son muchos los desafíos a la conectividad y a la integración que enfrentan estas dos regiones, América del Sur debe sobrepasar principalmente obstáculos en cuanto a temas materiales en términos de infraestructura física, sistemas de comunicación, logística y capital humano, mientras que el caso del Sur de Asia evidencia mayores dificultades en cuanto

a las relaciones entre los países, la voluntad política y la falta de consenso.

No solo los líderes o tomadores de decisiones deben ser conscientes de lo acá expuesto, es un llamado para que también los ciudadanos repiensen el mundo. Si se toma un mapamundi, se borran todas las fronteras políticas y se dibujan allí los corredores, no solo se evidenciará que el mundo está más interconectado de lo que se puede imaginar, sino que también surgen muchos lugares de los cuales no se conocía, pero que son estratégicos en la construcción de un mundo más integrado.

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10. EL SUDESTE ASIÁTICO EN LAS NUEVAS RUTAS TRANSCONTINENTALES ASEAN

PÍO GARCÍA

RESUMEN

Durante miles de años, la esquina sudeste de Asia fue epicentro de intercambios humanos, culturales y comerciales. En la era global actual esa función tiende a ser expandida. En efecto, su capacidad de concertación en medio de la gran diversidad social y cultural, la convierte en uno de los pilares de la integración continental asiática y de la densificación del sistema mundial. El papel determinante en esta proyección subregional lo protagoniza Asean, en la medida que la permanencia de su institucionalidad sentó las bases sobre las cuales se consolidan las iniciativas de provisión de infraestructura y medios técnicos que apuntalan las conexiones dentro del continente asiático y más allá, con Europa y África. De este modo, en vez de marginar al sudeste, los programas para modernizar la red física asiática liderados por China, India y Japón, aprovechan la posición conectora de la subregión, abriéndole grandes ventajas económicas, pero, imprimiéndole, al mismo tiempo, desafíos de carácter político y estratégico.

Palabras clave: corredores transasiáticos, sudeste asiático, integración regional, América Latina y el Caribe.

ABSTRACT

The southeast corner of Asia was for a thousand years the epicenter of human, cultural and commercial exchanges. In the current global era that function tends to be expanded. Indeed, its ability to coordinate in the midst of great social and cultural diversity, makes it one of the pillars of Asian continental integration and the densification of the world system. The determining role in this sub-regional rebirth is Asean. Its institutional structure laid the foundations on which the initiatives of infrastructure provision and technical means consolidate connections within the Asian continent and beyond-Europe and Africa. Therefore, instead of marginalizing the Southeast, the programs to modernize the Asian physical network led by China, India and Japan, take advantage of the sub-region's connecting position, opening great economic advantages, but, at the same time, giving it the challenges of political and strategic nature.

Key Words: Trans-Asian corridors, South East Asia, regional integration, Latin America and the Caribbean.

INTRODUCCIÓN

El sudeste asiático constituye un escenario singular en la historia económica, social, cultural y política asiática. Las penínsulas de Malaca e Indochina, junto al mayor complejo de islas del mundo, dieron lugar durante milenios a una red de intercambios de bienes, ideas, instituciones y grupos sociales, que puso en contacto mutuo los grandes centros civilizatorios de India, China y Asia Occidental, extendiendo su influencia hasta Europa y África. Su posición se volvió más estratégica y de alcance global, a partir del siglo XVI, cuando las nuevas potencias comerciales ibéricas erigieron el comercio mundial e iniciaron la colonización de sus periferias, con el efecto directo sobre la ruta terrestre de la seda, que terminó opacada. Hoy en día, en la recomposición

de la red asiática, a través de los planes de conectividad liderados por China, Japón e India, la subregión sudeste cobra un significativo realce, dada la función articuladora de la integración continental, a través de la experiencia de negociación y la plataforma institucional de la Asociación de Naciones del Sudeste Asiático-Asean.

Estatuida en 1967, por Filipinas, Indonesia, Malasia, Tailandia y Singapur, tres décadas después, con el ingreso de Cambodia, en 1999, la Asociación terminó de forjar la plataforma institucional de la integración y el desarrollo económico y social del sudeste de Asia. Las paupérrimas condiciones de partida en estos países, en las que cayeron por efecto de las guerras de liberación y posteriores conflictos por el poder doméstico, fueron superadas de manera paulatina. Con 650 millones de habitantes, en 2017, el PIB colectivo se acercó a los tres billones de dólares, equivalentes a una cuarta parte del PIB de China y a un 70% del PIB japonés. En el movimiento internacional de capitales, el grupo atrajo ese año inversiones extranjeras por 135 mil millones de dólares, que en parte robustecieron los 2.5 billones de dólares en exportaciones. Gracias a la coordinación de las políticas económicas, el grupo de Estados participantes en Asean sostiene un crecimiento anual del producto por encima del 5%, el desempleo se mantiene en un nivel de 6% y el ingreso per cápita supera los 5000 dólares (Lee, 2018). Así, el sudeste asiático es una de las regiones con mayor estabilidad económica en la actualidad.

En el quincuagésimo aniversario de Asean, la Asociación se vio comprometida con dos macro proyectos de integración transcontinental, presentados y financiados por las tres mayores economías asiáticas. De un lado, China avanzó en la implementación del *Belt and Road Initiative*, BRI, en mayo de 2017, tras lo cual Japón e India oficializaron su propuesta alternativa, denominada *Asia-Africa Growth Corridor*, AAGC, presentada en público ese mismo mes, en Gujarat. Los diez países miembros de Asean tienen participación directa en

dichos proyectos de conexión física. Así, a los programas de modernización en infraestructura de origen endógeno y algunos provenientes de instancias externas vienen a sumarse en este momento los proyectos transasiáticos.

Ahora bien, en relación con este extenso plan de adecuación y modernización de las conexiones que imponen las rutas transcontinentales, se suscitan ciertas preguntas, tales como, ¿qué posición ha tomado Asean en el diseño e implementación de tales programas, y cuál será el impacto sobre esta organización subregional? ¿Qué retos les presentan dichos planes a actores externos, como es el caso de América Latina y el Caribe?

Respecto a la primera pregunta, analistas como Bruno Jetin (2017) consideran que las oportunidades para que los países de Asean avancen en su Plan Maestro de Conectividad -AMPC¹- son evidentes, en razón del monto de los recursos y la colaboración de diversas instituciones en el proyecto. Advierte, no obstante, que pondrá a prueba la capacidad de Asean de preservar su centralidad y el consenso en el momento de tomar decisiones respecto a las inversiones chinas, en el caso de BRI. El riesgo consiste en ahondar la fisura que separa los socios continentales de los marítimos al interior de Asean, lo cual se ha buscado remediar por medio de una mejor conexión física.

En una aproximación semejante, Anushka Kapahi (2017) encuentra en la complementariedad entre el AMPC y BRI los objetivos comunes de acercar los países por medio de mejores vías y conectividad, con el fin de beneficiar el comercio, el turismo y los intercambios personales. Ello implica un sistema completo de vías, puertos y ferrovías que conecten a los países de Asean entre sí. Afirma el autor que China procura medios que faciliten la adquisición de insumos para su industria y la llegada de sus productos elaborados

1 Asean Master Plan for Connectivity.

impulsando un comercio robusto. Desde 2009, China es el principal socio comercial de Asean y esta es el tercer proveedor en importancia en las importaciones chinas. Ello lo convierte en un conjunto de países con valor económico para China, que en vez de disociar la integración subregional, la refuerza, en cuanto la Comunidad Económica de Asean -AEC²- fue aprobada en 2005, mucho antes de aparecer BRI. El riesgo estaría en el ofrecimiento chino de mayores incentivos a unos países sobre otros, lo cual resquebrajaría la unidad de la Asociación. Por otra parte, desde el Banco Asiático de Desarrollo, como hemos de explicar más adelante, se levantan voces de alerta respecto a la trampa financiera en que podrían caer las economías pequeñas de Asean con la banca china.

A este lado del Pacífico, surgen, asimismo, previsiones contradictorias sobre el efecto de los macro proyectos asiáticos. Numerosos analistas económicos y culturales suelen anticipar que las inversiones masivas chinas ensancharían el comercio transpacífico, alentarían la productividad de estos países, al permitirles incrustarse mejor en las cadenas globales de valor, y fortalecerían sus sectores financieros. A ello, cabría agregar los beneficios del intercambio social y cultural transpacífico (Deorukhkar, 2018; Zotelle y Wei, 2017). Sin embargo, este no es el concepto de ciertos investigadores de la geopolítica quienes, afines a los intereses estratégicos estadounidenses, advierten el riesgo creciente de las inversiones y los vínculos políticos de China con América Latina y el Caribe (Ellis, 2018; Rogers, 2018). Estas observaciones hacen eco de las alarmas por parte de oficiales de la defensa en Washington, como el jefe del Comando Sur, Kurt Tidd, quien sostuvo que “el cortejo creciente de China a los estudiantes de la región busca reclutarlos, por medio de becas y salarios” (RT News, 2018).

2 Asean Economic Community.

En medio de esta discusión, la hipótesis de trabajo de este capítulo postula que después de cumplir la función histórica de sostener el proceso de concertación e integración subregional durante cincuenta años, en la tercera década del siglo XXI, por encima de su dialéctica interna, Asean tiende a proyectarse y justificarse como la entidad conciliadora en la competencia por el poder en Asia. De manera expresa, el ejercicio balanceador se nutre de la polaridad que develan los proyectos de conexión transcontinental, guiados por los intereses geopolíticos antagónicos de sus promotores.

El objetivo del capítulo es presentar la capacidad de concertación al interior de Asean frente a las oportunidades que les presentan las iniciativas de nueva conexión continental lideradas por China, Japón e India, para determinar los alcances y las modalidades de negociación por parte de Asean en las iniciativas de las mayores economías asiáticas, dirigidas a afianzar la conectividad intercontinental en las próximas décadas. De manera complementaria, se pone en consideración un primer balance del impacto que la transformación física de Asia tiene sobre América Latina y el Caribe.

De acuerdo con ello, el análisis empieza con la valoración de Asean, luego la participación en los macro proyectos de infraestructura, para revisar después su impacto y las perspectivas del sudeste asiático. Al final, se presentan las consideraciones sobre América Latina y el Caribe respecto a la nueva ruta de la seda.

1. ASEAN EN EL NÚCLEO DE LA INTEGRACIÓN ASIÁTICA

Desde su creación, el devenir de Asean ha estado signado por el desafío de representar a un grupo de economías pequeñas frente a las presiones de los grandes actores cercanos y lejanos. Las motivaciones iniciales obedecieron a imposiciones

geopolíticas, a través de Seato³, en los años cincuenta del siglo xx; pero, la Asociación migró con el paso del tiempo hacia una agenda mucho más maleable, en medio de las grandes pretensiones económicas, políticas y estratégicas externas y la propia dialéctica interna. La metodología flexible y el consenso en la toma de decisiones es algo representativo del grupo, en un procedimiento reconocido como *Asean Way*, o la vía pragmática de Asean.

Durante sus primeros treinta años, Asean se caracterizó por preservar el diálogo, sin hacer grandes apuestas a la integración efectiva del grupo ni a fijar posiciones críticas respecto al entorno global. En términos amplios, se prefirió un bajo perfil frente a un entorno condicionado por el choque económico e ideológico de la guerra fría, que podía conmocionar los arreglos internos. Este ambiente de reposo resultó perturbado por las crisis económicas del sistema internacional. La primera de ellas fue la crisis financiera de 1997, iniciada en Tailandia, cuando el país sufrió la insolvencia para el pago a sus acreedores, que de inmediato contagió a sus vecinos, como consecuencia de la estampida de los llamados “capitales golondrina” (Mahathir, 2001). Como consecuencia, la zona este-asiática, incluidos países como Corea y Japón, sufrió un retroceso industrial de grandes proporciones. La segunda crisis se destapó en Estados Unidos, en 2007, y se propagó por Europa y el mundo en desarrollo. Por fortuna, los países del Sudeste Asiático habían asimilado la lección de la prueba anterior y soportaron mejor el nuevo trastorno financiero global.

Aprender a sortear la influencia externa ha sido una constante en Asean. El acuerdo subregional atrajo en sus primeros años de existencia el llamado a una relación especial

3 South East Asia Treaty Organization, un acuerdo de defensa colectivo entre 1955 y 1977. Estuvo conformado por Filipinas y Tailandia, junto con Australia, Francia, Nueva Zelanda, Pakistán, Gran Bretaña y Estados Unidos.

por parte de Japón, que cumplió desde esa época un liderazgo notable en el proceso de integración asiática. Dadas sus limitaciones militares, por la ocupación de hecho que le impuso Estados Unidos al término de la segunda guerra mundial, con medidas drásticas tomadas por los mismos japoneses como las de no participar en acciones de guerra en el exterior o no sobrepasar el 1% del PIB en gasto de defensa, su dirigencia volcó el país hacia la diplomacia económica, con fuerte énfasis en el Pacífico. Dos grandes iniciativas patentizan esta proyección: de una parte, la conformación del Consejo Económico de la Cuenca del Pacífico -PBEC⁴-, un programa de origen empresarial, en 1967, que contó con el sostenimiento gubernamental, y que, por cierto, sirvió de pivote para el plan posterior de cooperación en el Pacífico con PECC⁵, en 1980 y el foro Apec⁶, en 1989.

De otro lado, ocurrió el despliegue económico y diplomático hacia el sudeste, estructurado alrededor de la Doctrina Sato, en la forma de un extenso programa de cooperación económica presentado a Asean en el mismo año de creación de la Asociación. Japón se presentó no solo como el promotor de la integración económica horizontal en Asia oriental, sino como un verdadero modelo de desarrollo industrial, sobre la base del trabajo conjunto del gobierno, los empresarios y los partidos políticos (Johnson, 1982).

La iniciativa japonesa nutrió ambos procesos hasta la década de los noventa del siglo pasado, cuando el país entró en recesión. La pérdida de poder económico despejó la vía a otras iniciativas de integración, en las cuales ya no hubo protagonismo japonés. En 2012, se iniciaron las negociaciones de la Asociación Económica Amplia -RCEP⁷-, con el objetivo de incluir a seis vecinos en el área de libre

4 Pacific Basin Economic Council.

5 Pacific Economic Cooperation Council.

6 Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation.

7 Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership.

comercio de Asean. Esos países son China, Japón, Corea del Sur, India, Australia y Nueva Zelanda. El acuerdo de integración vino a materializar un viejo sueño del primer ministro de Malasia, Mohammad Mahathir, quien en eco de la crisis financiera de 1997 se propuso reunir las economías del Pacífico occidental en el Caucus de Asia Oriental⁸. La gran influencia china en este esquema de integración intensificó las negociaciones en la contraparte, que condujeron a la aprobación de la Asociación Transpacífica, TPP⁹, mecanismo que sobre la base el acuerdo P4 de 2005 entre Brunei, Chile, Nueva Zelanda y Singapur, vinculó ocho países más de Asia, Oceanía y América. Ellos son Australia, Canadá, Japón, Malasia, Vietnam, México, Perú y Estados Unidos. El acuerdo fue firmado en 2016; sin embargo, con el retiro de Estados Unidos, ordenado por Donald Trump al año siguiente, entró en crisis. Tras el traspie, Japón tomó las banderas de la integración transpacífica, mediante el CPATPP¹⁰, una versión renovada del TPP, suscrita por los once países restantes, en 2018.

El hecho de haber podido jugar como grupo unido para conjurar el embate de la crisis financiera le dio a Asean suficiente credibilidad y legitimidad como para actuar en calidad de eje de RCEP y, más adelante, como interlocutor válido en los proyectos transcontinentales. El resultado de las negociaciones en 2010, encaminadas a estabilizar el sistema monetario y las relaciones económicas fue la creación de un fondo de 120.000 millones de dólares para solventar las insolvencias de los miembros de Asean. Los recursos fueron aportados por Japón y China en un 32% cada uno, 20% por Asean y 16% por Corea del Sur (Ciorciari, 2011). Gracias a ese volumen de recursos, no solo se pudo contrarrestar una

8 East Asia Economic Caucus.

9 Trans-Pacific Partnership.

10 Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership.

nueva crisis financiera regional sino que puso de relieve la capacidad de negociación de Asean y de cooperación con sus vecinos.

En términos prácticos, los países del sudeste asiático, coordinados por Asean, se convirtieron en el meollo del bloque económico del este asiático en la figura de RCEP. No es un acuerdo desdeñable, ya que reúne el 40% de la economía global; una producción cuantiosa de la cual India y China aportan la mitad. Es el mayor bloque comercial en este momento. Es probable que su PIB conjunto se acerque a los 250 billones de dólares hacia el año 2050, o a la mitad de la producción global para esa fecha. Asean llegó a ser clave, por esa misma función medular de la integración, en los macro proyectos de conexión física BRI y AAGC. La ola expansiva de la economía asiática ha de vincular, de manera más estrecha, a Europa y África, con el resultado esperado del rédito económico para los países y zonas vinculadas. Ahora bien, ¿cómo opera Asean respecto a estas dos últimas iniciativas de conectividad transcontinental?

2. ASEAN EN LOS PROYECTOS TRANSCONTINENTALES ASIÁTICOS

A través de los dos macro proyectos de modernización en la red asiática de transporte, dotación logística y telecomunicaciones, el sudeste asiático halla una doble inmersión en la integración continental, en la medida que una parte significativa de las obras se lleva a cabo en ese espacio subregional.

Desde el lado chino, Asean se beneficia de las cinco áreas de cooperación que comprende BRI, cuales son la construcción de la infraestructura, las inversiones directas en proyectos productivos, la cooperación comercial, la cooperación financiera y la asociación público-privada. En consecuencia, además de las obras, China extiende las relaciones

económicas con Asean, en este caso, mediante la firma de nuevos TLC, rescates financieros, emisión de bonos e inversiones conjuntas en múltiples sectores de la cultura, la salud o el deporte.

El primer paquete de inversiones en el sudeste asiático, por un monto de US\$1000 millones, provino del fondo China Investment Corp, CIC, y del International Finance Corporation, IFC, adscrita al Banco Mundial. Los recursos son administrados por el China-Asean Fund, CAF. Este fondo fue autorizado por el Consejo de Estado de China o gabinete chino. CAF tiene la misión de ampliar su capital con recursos públicos y privados.

Medio siglo después de la ofensiva japonesa hacia el sudeste de Asia, para granjearse el apoyo a sus aspiraciones políticas y diplomáticas globales, China tomó un rumbo similar, con la creación del CAF. Este Fondo fue ideado en 2010, con el fin de canalizar recursos para financiar proyectos de infraestructura, energía y recursos naturales en los países del sudeste asiático, según lo convenido entre el primer ministro Wen Jiabao y la Asociación subregional. Entre los proyectos financiados por CAF se hallan la alianza con la naviera filipina Aboitiz y la construcción del puerto de aguas profundas en Laem Chabang y el generador de biomasa en Tailandia (Zhu, 2018).

La presencia china ha sido continua desde entonces. Sus inversiones directas previas al BRI alcanzaron 14.500 millones de dólares, en 2016, que correspondieron al 8.5% de la inversión externa directa del país ese año. El sector privilegiado fue el de la construcción de infraestructura de carreteras, vías férreas, puertos y medios para el transporte de energía. Las obras son ejecutadas por empresas estatales chinas, tales como China Gezhouba Group. Hacia 2017, China canalizó hacia el CAF unos 3000 millones de dólares desde el Export-Import Bank of China, que reúne inversiones de otras entidades chinas públicas y privadas

(Zhu, 2018)¹¹. CAF también capta recursos financieros del AIIB (véase la nota 11).

Más allá de la cooperación financiera y de activar el comercio, la cooperación en el marco de BRI busca elevar la competitividad del sudeste asiático. En abril de 2018, China y Asean establecieron un programa conjunto de innovación. El ministro de ciencia y tecnología, Wang Zhigang, confirmó que China ha construido una serie de excelentes laboratorios conjuntos y ha promovido la apertura de laboratorios nacionales chinos en países de la Asean. Se encuentran, entre ellos, el laboratorio China-Indonesia para reactores enfriadores de gas de alta temperatura, el centro de investigación conjunto del sistema ferroviario China-Tailandia, el laboratorio de nuevas energías y energías renovables China-Laos y el laboratorio para radar y comunicaciones vía satélite China-Myanmar (Xinhuanet, 2018).

Desde el punto de vista del beneficio para cada país, en 2015, el gobierno indonesio aceptó la propuesta china para construir la vía férrea para trenes de alta velocidad entre Yakarta y Bandung, cuyas obras se iniciaron en enero de 2016. El gobierno de Laos dividió en seis porciones la sección Boten-Vientiane del ferrocarril China-Laos. Cada sección, a partir de 2016, tuvo su licitación independiente, las cuales fueron asignadas a empresas chinas. El tren entrará en operación en 2020. En Tailandia, en 2016, los gobiernos tailandés y chino iniciaron la negociación para construir el tren rápido entre Bangkok y Nakhon Ratchasima, según el Departamento de Transporte Terrestre de Tailandia.

11 Al Fondo de la Ruta de la Seda lo nutren el Banco de Desarrollo de China y el Banco de Exportaciones e Importaciones de China, instituciones financieras de vieja data, y los nuevos bancos establecidos por China: el Banco Asiático para la Inversión en Infraestructura AIIB (Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank) y el Banco de Brics, el Banco para el Nuevo Desarrollo. Estos últimos empezaron a operar con recursos por 100.000 millones de dólares cada uno (Dove, 2016).

Respecto a Malasia, en 2016, la empresa China Communications Construction Company Ltd. y la Malayan Railways Limited firmaron el acuerdo para la construcción del tren oriental entre el Puerto Klang y Tumpat. En Myanmar, en 2015, empezó la construcción del oleoducto y gasoducto entre el puerto Kyaukpyu, en Myanmar, y la ciudad de Kunming, en la provincia china de Yunnan. Myanmar es, de igual modo, uno de los eslabones del corredor económico BCIM-EC¹², que une por auto y ferrovías al país con China, Bangladesh e India¹³.

Dada la competencia regional, la participación india y japonesa en BRI careció de entusiasmo. Por ello, en el Foro BRI de 2017, en medio de decenas de mandatarios de Asia, África, Europa y América Latina, la presencia japonesa estuvo a cargo del secretario del Partido Liberal Democrático y no hubo delegación india. En cambio, ambos países sí se pusieron de acuerdo para conformar su propio proyecto de conexión alternativa, el AAGC, presentado en la quincuagésima segunda reunión del Banco Africano de Desarrollo, una semana después del Foro BRI, en Beijing. De esta forma, la alianza indojaponesa se propone incidir en los asuntos del océano Índico, en la integración asiática y en la proyección conjunta hacia África.

El documento constitutivo del AAGC fue preparado por el Sistema de Investigación e Información para los Países en Desarrollo, en Nueva Delhi, el Instituto de Investigaciones Económicas para Asean y Asia del Este, en Yakarta, y el Instituto de Economías en Desarrollo, en Tokio. El plan previó complementar las facilidades en infraestructura con

12 Bangladesh-China-India-Myanmar Economic Corridor. Otras secciones de BRI son el Corredor China-Pakistán y el Corredor de Transportes Norte-Sur, que conecta a Irán con Rusia e India.

13 Este país ha propuesto el *India Mekong Economic Corridor*, que pretende mejorar los lazos en cadenas de valor entre el sudeste asiático e India. Ampliar en el capítulo 2 de este libro.

la conectividad digital, con miras a activar el intercambio económico a través del océano Índico. Además del comercio, propuso aplicar proyectos conjuntos entre los países asiáticos y los africanos en la agricultura, la farmacia, el control de los desastres y el perfeccionamiento de las habilidades técnicas (ERI, 2017).

En su verdadero significado del programa indojaponés AAGC, este le hace contrapeso a BRI en su ruta y en su filosofía. Es por ello que sus diseñadores subrayan el carácter *humano* de su programa, en cuanto fórmula de desarrollo centrada en la sociedad y la sostenibilidad ambiental. Además, busca incluir numerosos participantes de la sociedad civil y las empresas, los centros de pensamiento y las universidades, por lo cual se habla de un programa *inclusivo* (Vora, 2017).

Las inversiones indojaponesas no son menos desestimables que las chinas en BRI. Los cálculos del Banco Asiático de Desarrollo estiman que el plan requiere recursos anuales por 750.000 millones de dólares. Y se habla de medidas estrictas para controlar los riesgos de pérdida de la inversión. De entrada, Japón dispuso de 272 mil millones de dólares para la construcción de puertos y otra infraestructura de “calidad”, capital que ha de aumentar con los préstamos de los bancos africano y asiático de desarrollo, que han de sufragar los costos de las obras en un lapso hasta de 25 años (Kumar, 2017).

En el sector de la conectividad digital, esta ha de servir de soporte del crecimiento en innovación tecnológica y los servicios entre Asia y África, en cinco secciones relevantes, cuales son: i) la movilización efectiva de los recursos financieros, ii) el alineamiento de las estrategias socioeconómicas y de desarrollo de los países y las regiones, iii) la aplicación de altos estándares de calidad respecto a las normas para mitigar los impactos ambientales y sociales de los proyectos, iv) la provisión de infraestructura de alta calidad y v) la eficiencia económica, la durabilidad, la inclusión, la seguridad, la resiliencia a los desastres, la sustentabilidad y

la conveniencia para las sociedades y las economías locales (ERI, 2017).

En contraposición a BRI, AAGC detectó rutas y puertos alternos. Están, entre otros, los puertos de Jamnagar, en Gujarat, asociado con Djibouti, en el golfo de Adén, el puerto de Madurai conectado con los de Mombasa y Zanzíbar; asimismo, el tren de alta velocidad que unirá a Sittwe, en Myanmar, con Calcuta. El plan contempla un corredor marítimo que desde la costa oriental asiática ha de bordear el sur y prologarse hasta las costas africanas, a través de numerosas obras de infraestructura y accesos portuarios. Entre otras obras de gran escala, se hallan la expansión del puerto de Chabahar, en Irán. Este puerto compite con el de Gwadar, en Paquistán, modernizado con capital chino. A través de Chabahar, ambos países -Japón e India- ansían el acceso a la región central asiática. En Sri Lanka, se prevé la expansión del puerto Trincomalee, que ha de competir con el puerto de Hambantota, reformado también con capital chino, para servir a BRI. De igual manera, el esfuerzo combinado nipo-indio desarrollaría el puerto Dawei de aguas profundas, ubicado en la frontera entre Tailandia y Myanmar (Silk Road Briefing, 2017).

Si bien los chinos reaccionaron de inmediato para descalificar el corredor transcontinental indojaponés¹⁴, para el sudeste asiático conlleva la ventaja de ver movilizados recursos que, de otra forma, no hubieran llegado con la prontitud y magnitud que están llegando. Pero, ¿qué incidencias adicionales pueden albergar los corredores transcontinentales para Asean?

14 El gobierno chino criticó enseguida esta duplicación de esfuerzos que supone el "corredor de la libertad", como fue anticipado por Shinzo Abe, en 2016, en Tokio, durante el encuentro con el premier indio Modi.

3. ASEAN FRENTE A LOS PROYECTOS TRANSCONTINENTALES: IMPACTO Y PERSPECTIVAS

Sobre la base de la flexibilidad y el consenso propios del *Asean Way*, los países del sudeste asiático sortean las propuestas de grandes obras de infraestructura por una vía doble de la negociación colectiva y los arreglos bilaterales. La relativa cohesión de la Asociación viene a ser puesta a prueba una vez más, después de los embates que le significaron las crisis financieras de 1997 y 2008. En el pasado, el reto primordial fue recomponer la base productiva y el tejido social, deshechos por la estampida del capital extranjero; justo ahora, la dinámica es contraria, y tiene que ver con la forma de hacer el mejor uso posible de las inversiones externas. Seis son los principales desafíos que le significan los macro proyectos continentales a la subregión, a saber: el vigor institucional, la administración de los recursos, la trampa de la deuda, el beneficio social de las inversiones, el deterioro ambiental y el desenvolvimiento geopolítico.

En primer lugar, Asean preserva la función nuclear de la integración de Asia oriental desde su base subregional. El ejemplo de la Unión Europea ha calado hondo hasta llegar a influir en el establecimiento de AEC, en implementación desde el 2015. Bajo el lema de alcanzar la “prosperidad regional con un pensamiento global”, la Asociación aguarda preservar las políticas de respeto y evitar los conflictos por motivos ideológicos, con el fin de construir la comunidad económica en el 2020, elevando el ingreso medio de sus habitantes, hasta llegar a un nivel de sociedad rica, en el 2030. Los cuatro pilares de AEC son una base productiva abierta a un mercado único consolidado, con la libre circulación de los bienes, los servicios, las inversiones, el capital y el trabajo calificado¹⁵;

15 Para ese propósito, los grupos de trabajo sobre comercio de bienes y servicios negocian todavía las soluciones de mutua aceptación, lo mismo que los

la competitividad de la región, elevada por el lado productivo y de la capacidad exportadora; el desarrollo equitativo tanto para el beneficio de los empresarios, como de la sociedad en conjunto, y la integración armónica con la economía global (Asean Up, 2018).

De forma paralela, la consolidación de la Comunidad Asean ha de asegurar la integración económica del sur y el este asiático, a través de RCEP. Esta superestructura mantiene el meollo de Asean desde el punto de vista de la experiencia institucional, la mística de la integración y la historia, con sus acopios de éxitos y traumatismos. Sostenerse como el pilar de la integración asiática tiene ante sí la dificultad del poderío económico de los socios grandes, con capacidad de imponer condiciones inequitativas sobre los socios pequeños, incluida Asean misma. De hecho, el grupo Asean en conjunto representa la mitad de la economía japonesa y una cuarta parte de la china. Y si bien, la tendencia es a disminuir esa distancia, las asimetrías todavía son notables.

Los contrastes son notables. Las empresas de Asean representan el 3% de las empresas de alcance mundial, mientras que en RCEP son más del 25%. RCEP da cuenta de cerca de la mitad de la población mundial y la tercera parte del producto global. Más allá de las diferencias, los prospectos de crecimiento productivo de Asean le permiten postularse a ocupar la cuarta posición entre las grandes economías para el 2050 (Asean, 2016).

Sin duda, los avances en RCEP hacia la institucionalización y el establecimiento de una comunidad económica puede debilitar la estructura administrativa de Asean hasta llegar a diluirla. Es un desarrollo cuyos efectos saldrán a la luz en el mediano plazo. En el plazo más inmediato, los corredores transasiáticos también desafían la cohesión de la Asociación.

subgrupos sobre inversiones, propiedad intelectual, comercio electrónico, asuntos legales e institucionales y adquisiciones gubernamentales.

Al respecto, los reportes del Foro Económico Mundial advierten que la dimensión de algunos de estos proyectos puede exacerbar las tensiones regionales, debido a la dependencia estratégica que puedan crear, tanto por la presencia física del personal extranjero como por las inversiones y las deudas que contraigan los países, que hacen más vulnerables aún a los países de menor ingreso. Los corredores euroasiáticos tienen un potencial desestabilizador si los países llegan a perder su soberanía (World Economic Forum, 2018).

En segundo lugar, el ingreso masivo de recursos presenta interrogantes técnicos sobre su administración y rentabilidad. BRI y AAGC son macro proyectos en ejecución. La implementación de la primera parte de las obras tomará alrededor de una década, de modo que sus resultados serán progresivos. Es fácil de prever el retorno de las inversiones por su efecto en la producción y la activación comercial. Son proyectos de impacto global, semejantes a las inversiones masivas estadounidenses del Plan Marshall que contribuyeron, de manera esencial, a la recuperación europea del desastre provocado por la segunda guerra mundial. Las solas inversiones de BRI superan los ocho billones de dólares, equivalentes al 50% del PIB de China en 2017. Se trata de cifras exorbitantes frente a necesidades igualmente descomunales. Se considera que para sostener el ritmo actual de crecimiento, los requerimientos de la renovación y mantenimiento de la infraestructura por parte de los países en desarrollo en Asia suman 1.7 billones de dólares anuales hasta el 2030, para un total de 26 billones desde 2016 hasta esa fecha (ADB, 2017).

En cambio, los montos totales que acarreará el programa AAGC aún no están definidos. Las cifras más precisas serán establecidas una vez los diversos proyectos terminen su fase de diseño. No obstante, la extensión del corredor, que copia la ruta de la seda marítima china, permite calcular un colchón financiero similar o mayor de esta, es decir, una cuantía de varios billones de dólares.

En tercer lugar, es preciso tener en cuenta que las inversiones en los corredores tienen un componente crediticio. No obstante el hecho que los gobiernos de Asean mantienen un nivel bajo de endeudamiento de solo 47% del PIB, que es menor a los niveles de deuda oficial del Reino Unido o Estados Unidos, el monto de los recursos a contratar parece excesivo para algunos países, cuya capacidad de pago está en juego. Por ello, el Banco Asiático de Desarrollo llama la atención sobre el riesgo para algunos países de caer en “la trampa de la deuda”. Afirmar, en el caso de BRI, que “si los países se endeudan demasiado para realizar ciertas obras sin atenerse a su viabilidad y factibilidad, habrá problemas de pago” (Flores, 2018). Entre los países vistos en riesgo dentro de Asean, se cuenta Laos.

En cuarto lugar, encontramos el reto del desarrollo social. Sin lugar a dudas, el dinamismo económico que han de imprimir los corredores transcontinentales en toda Asia ha de marcar un efecto directo sobre la populosa subregión del sudeste. Allí, Asean se ha propuesto la meta de triplicar al año 2030 el ingreso per cápita, hasta alcanzar para ese momento el nivel promedio de los países de la OECD hacia el 2015. El objetivo de contar con una “Asean rica” en el mediano plazo fue estructurado sobre los cuatro pilares siguientes: estabilidad macroeconómica y financiera, crecimiento sostenido, competitividad e innovación y protección ambiental. Acerca del examen del rédito económico, James Millward (2017) asegura que, si bien, una parte de los recursos de BRI se perderá, la otra rendirá frutos y servirá para aliviar la pobreza. Aconseja, por ello, revisar los proyectos uno a uno cuando de evaluar resultados se trate.

En quinto lugar, hemos de inspeccionar el impacto ambiental. Juntos BRI y AAGC conforman el mayor diseño de transformación de espacios naturales jamás acometido hasta ahora. Solo BRI comprende más de siete mil proyectos de infraestructura, en carreteras, oleoductos, puentes, túneles, ferrocarriles y puertos a ser construidos y los cuales

requieren mantenimiento. Se calcula que esa compleja red de obras fragmenta o destruye ecosistemas frágiles y corredores de vida salvaje de los antílopes, los tigres y hasta los osos pandas, entre otros. En concreto, se ponen en riesgo alrededor de 1700 lugares críticos para el sostenimiento de la biodiversidad, por lo cual el BRI podría ser el plan con el más alto riesgo ambiental de la historia (Sullivan, 2018).

Es corriente advertir que dentro de China empiezan a operar normas ambientales más estrictas, pero ello contrasta con las laxas políticas ambientales de sus empresas en los países en desarrollo. Hay una luz de esperanza acerca del cuidado ambiental en BRI, derivada del compromiso chino con los acuerdos multilaterales ambientales, empezando por el COP-21, el Acuerdo de París, suscrito en 2015. En contraste, el cuidado ambiental es mucho más manifiesto en AAGC, si se toma en cuenta la consigna del proyecto de ser un corredor de “bajo costo, con menos emisiones de carbono” que BRI (ERI, 2017). Además, cuenta con el respaldo de la trayectoria japonesa en la promoción de la normatividad multilateral a favor de la preservación de la biodiversidad y la contención del cambio climático, desde el Protocolo de Kioto, en 1997.

En sexto lugar, hallamos las proyecciones estratégicas detrás de los macro proyectos asiáticos. Uno de los tópicos más trajinados por el periodismo y ciertos analistas tiene que ver con las ambiciones estratégicas chinas detrás de BRI, calificado como la apuesta al control del comercio internacional y la excusa para instalar bases militares en los tres continentes, en antesala a la contención global de Estados Unidos. Sobre el particular, lo primero profundiza un circuito comercial y de transacciones financieras que recorre la periferia china de manera creciente. La facilidad de tránsito de los bienes europeos y africanos y la energía del mar Caspio y el golfo Pérsico redundará en aumento exponencial del tráfico terrestre y marítimo teniendo a China en el centro de las transacciones.

En cuanto lo segundo, es del caso registrar las decisiones de la dirigencia china. Su activa política de defensa está asociada a una clara opción por el amparo de las instituciones multilaterales y las soluciones negociadas de los conflictos. Es parte de su auto proclamación de “potencia mundial responsable”. Así, frente a la posición hostil y de insistente regreso a las medidas unilaterales por parte de Estados Unidos desde 2017, China aboga cada vez más por preservar las reglas comerciales abiertas promovidas por la OMC, por la búsqueda concertada de los problemas de la seguridad internacional en el Consejo de Seguridad y por la acción conjunta a favor del desarrollo económico, la equidad social y las acciones para contrarrestar el cambio climático. De modo que, al retiro estadounidense del Acuerdo de París, China responde con compromisos acentuados en pro de las energías limpias. En su política de baja emisión, la generación eléctrica eólica y solar ascendió al 5.3% del total producido. Esa es la mayor producción limpia en el mundo (Boqiang, 2018).

En relación con el sudeste asiático, el impulso que China dio a sus relaciones con Asean en los años noventa tuvo una nueva ofensiva a partir del 2001, cuando aceleró los vínculos económicos. Hay dos proyectos relevantes en la subregión asiática: el Greater Mekong Subregion Scheme -GMS y Caexpo, que corresponde a la feria de China y Asean. El primero fue iniciado en 1992, con el fin de hacer el uso concertado de la cuenca del río Mekong; la segunda, con su sede central en Nanning, fue inaugurada en 2004 y ha sido determinante en el crecimiento del comercio entre ambas partes en un 10% anual. Ambas iniciativas contribuyen al desarrollo de la periferia china y responden a sus intereses estratégicos. Con esos mecanismos, China busca tener más influencia al interior de Asean, como parte de su mejor proyección internacional. Beijing ha procurado otorgarle una base institucional a las relaciones con los países ubicados al sur, con énfasis en los países limítrofes, por lo que

se prestan a ser catalogadas de “sinicización”, en los casos de Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, Vietnam y Tailandia, en particular (Suehiro, 2017).

Sin embargo, de acuerdo con Cau (2018), hay una ganancia clara en términos geopolíticos, dado que BRI comporta el aspecto positivo de cuestionar un orden hegemónico y abrir las posibilidades de transformarlo en un sistema multipolar, que garantice más estabilidad al interior de los países. Los diversos desafíos externos del sistema multipolar favorecen la cohesión interna frente a esas amenazas; a cambio de un sistema unipolar, toma ascendencia la pluralidad política y cultural y el peso de las regiones en el sistema global. En las tres últimas décadas, el período posguerra fría, puso en evidencia las limitaciones de la universalidad euro-estadounidense, que genera tantas resistencias, dado que las libertades que pregona se imponen sin aceptar oposiciones. Esta ambición ahora resulta cuestionada, y por ello, BRI y el ascenso chino, el resurgimiento ruso y los sistemas alternativos que aparecen en varias partes deben ser tomados de manera positiva. Se afirma de igual manera que, así no sea la respuesta a los problemas mundiales, BRI no es un proyecto horrendo de control global por parte de China (Millward, 2017).

Respecto a AAGC, el programa conjunto indo-japonés es justificado como alternativa ideológica al BRI, al poner énfasis en el liberalismo económico y político. Sobre el particular, Jagannath Panda (2017) argumenta que hay una convergencia creciente de tipo económico y estratégico de India y Japón para cooperar en la región, bajo el lema de su corredor: “la región Indo-Pacífico libre y abierta”, en una competencia de influencias intensificada por el plan BRI de China.

En síntesis, tomando en consideración el espacio subregional Asean, parece vislumbrarse un beneficio neto derivado de la competencia económica y estratégica de las grandes potencias asiáticas. Desde el resurgimiento chino a finales del siglo pasado, la contienda estuvo accionada por

los intereses contrapuestos de China y Japón. En las primeras décadas del presente siglo, de manera progresiva, India entra en el juego. Los dos proyectos superpuestos de integración física continental dan clara muestra de la rivalidad y los beneficios que el sudeste asiático tiende a granjear, en la medida que la regulación de la competencia sea acertada.

4. ASEAN, LAS RUTAS TRANSASIÁTICAS Y AMÉRICA LATINA Y EL CARIBE

Según lo expuesto hasta ahora, los proyectos de conexión transasiática comportan intereses económicos y políticos, que ponen de relieve la competencia por el poder regional asiático y global en la primera parte del siglo XXI. En razón directa del movimiento estratégico mundial, América Latina y el Caribe incide en el juego de fuerzas al atraer la competencia externa o expresarse acerca de ella. Desde su independencia de España y Portugal, el resto del continente ha configurado una relación de dependencia respecto a los intereses económicos y la geopolítica de Estados Unidos. Dicha posición supeditada provino de la advertencia consignada en la Doctrina Monroe, promulgada en 1823, bajo el lema “América para los americanos”, ideada con el propósito de aislar el continente de la lucha europea por dominios coloniales.

Bajo el tutelaje estadounidense, desde fines del siglo XIX se empezó a forjar la institucionalidad panamericana. En la mitad del siglo pasado, el espectro del comunismo soviético aceleró esa dependencia militar y económica. En la segunda década del siglo XXI ciertas voces civiles y gubernamentales, como la secretaría de defensa estadounidense, se levantan para reclamar una posición unificada contra un nuevo elemento disociador, cual es la “amenaza” China en esta parte del mundo (HispanTV, 2018).

La proyección china sobre América Latina y el Caribe es inocultable. Su presencia es creciente y multifacética.

Las imágenes más visibles de la relación son del orden económico, expresado en el comercio robusto, inversiones directas y cooperación técnica y financiera. Brasil, Argentina, Chile y Perú tienen al gigante asiático como el primer socio comercial y el primer destino de sus exportaciones, en un intercambio superavitario para los suramericanos. Otros países con nexos profundos son Venezuela, Panamá y Costa Rica.

El despliegue económico y diplomático chino en América Latina y el Caribe se impone con mucho más arrojo que sus grandes rivales asiáticos, como lo son Japón e India. Incluso, de una forma más sostenida que la proyección rusa sobre la región, cuyo intercambio ha sido intermitente y condicionado a los momentos favorables para la dotación militar a ciertos países, entre ellos Venezuela y Bolivia. La política china para la región fue presentada de manera oficial en 2008 y renovada en 2017. Como parte de ese programa, se realizan encuentros con la Comunidad de Estados de América Latina y el Caribe, Celac, el organismo que procuró concertar las relaciones con grandes socios, desde 2012. Extender una rama del BRI a este lado del Pacífico forma parte del propósito chino de salvaguardar una conexión transpacífica fluida.

Desde el 2017, cuando los presidentes de Argentina y Chile formaron parte del grupo de 29 jefes de Estado y de Gobierno que estuvieron presentes en el Foro BRI, América Latina y el Caribe empezaron a contar dentro de los planes de construcción y modernización global de infraestructura liderada por China. Para ese entonces, Chile ya había oficializado su participación en el IIAB. Al final de ese año, Panamá oficializó su ingreso a BRI. A mediados del 2018, cuatro de los setenta países de la Iniciativa eran latinoamericanos y caribeños: Panamá, Antigua y Barbuda, Trinidad y Tobago y Bolivia.

Para el gobierno chino, los nuevos proyectos de infraestructura en América Latina y el Caribe forman parte de la

“extensión natural” de la Iniciativa, en una región cuya participación es “indispensable” (Barrios, 2018). En consecuencia, esta ramificación extra continental marca una diferencia adicional con AAGC, cuyo propósito se concentra en las zonas periféricas del sur de Asia, donde convergen los planes de Japón e India. De todos modos, Japón no renuncia a su inveterada vocación pampacífica, materializada en los organismos de cooperación PBEC, Pecc y Apec, antecedentes del deslustrado TPP, transmutado en manos japonesas en CPATPP.

Hay advertencias sobre el costo para la región por las obras inconclusas que BRI puede conllevar, como se vio en el pasado con el fracaso del ferrocarril Tinaco-Anaco, en Venezuela, encargado a empresas chinas. Adicional a ello, el costo ambiental de los proyectos transandinos no ha sido calculado de manera suficiente y el riesgo de caer en la trampa del crédito es acuciante (Barrios, 2018). Sin embargo, la faceta que despierta más recelos, en particular por parte del Pentágono, se encuentra en el trato político y diplomático chino en América Latina y el Caribe. Entre 2016 y 2018, tres países más cambiaron el reconocimiento político de Taiwán por el establecimiento de relaciones con China. Fueron, en su orden República Dominicana, Panamá y Salvador. A esa mayor presencia diplomática se suma su sostenida relación con regímenes de abierta hostilidad hacia Washington, como lo son Venezuela y Nicaragua, aun a pesar del hecho de no contar con el reconocimiento político por parte de este último país.

Más allá de las especulaciones, lo cierto es que hasta ahora la presencia china se ha movido por una senda pragmática. Han primado las acciones dirigidas a apuntalar el intercambio comercial sobre la base de una división abierta del trabajo, en donde la región se caracteriza por ser uno de los proveedores de insumos industriales y alimentos. El intercambio que deja el margen mayor de ganancia para los proveedores, cuyas exportaciones superan el costo de

los bienes adquiridos en China. Esos países son Brasil, Argentina, Chile y Perú. Las ventas de la región a China por 104.000 millones de dólares dejan un déficit de 40 mil millones, causados por el desbalance mexicano por 67 mil millones de dólares con la potencia asiática (Global Development Policy Center, 2018).

Cultivar las relaciones políticas con América Latina y el Caribe, para garantizar el suministro constante de insumos industriales, petróleo y alimentos, se hace prioritario en la gama de intereses chinos. Los principios de ese relacionamiento están consignados en el *Policy Paper* de 2008, renovado en 2016. Al amparo de tal direccionamiento se han realizado la Cumbre China-Celac, en 2015, y las reuniones ministeriales, a través de las cuales se prevé aplicar el esquema 1+3+6, relativo a la cooperación entre ambas partes, para facilitar el comercio, las inversiones y la cooperación financiera, en seis áreas prioritarias: energía y recursos naturales, infraestructura, agricultura, manufactura, innovación científica y tecnológica, y las TIC. La cooperación ha de favorecerse mediante la conjunción de fuerzas en la fórmula 3x3: tres áreas de enlace (logística, electricidad e información), tres actores (gobierno, sociedad y empresas) y tres fuentes de financiamiento (fondos, créditos y seguros) (Xinhua, 2016).

Ahora bien, a diferencia de la capacidad de negociación de Asean, con base en la experiencia de concertación, el perfil negociador de Celac es exiguo. La idea de un mecanismo de concertación política de los 33 países para actuar, de manera compacta frente a los problemas internacionales y los grandes actores geopolíticos, se gestó en Costa do Sauípe, Brasil, en 2008. Tras encuentros posteriores, el organismo fue creado en Santiago de Chile, en 2012. La inestabilidad política en algunos de los países grandes, el desprestigio de algunos ensayos de renovación social y productiva -al modo del socialismo del siglo veintiuno-, y la manifiesta hostilidad entre ciertos países agotaron muy rápido el capital político de Celac. En razón de esta ausencia, se pierde

la interlocución entre actores colectivos y grandes poderes internacionales. Es probable, entonces, que la cooperación conducida por BRI fluya más por la vía bilateral que a través de arreglos convenidos entre China y Celac.

A falta de una negociación concertada de alcance completo por parte de América Latina y el Caribe, habría que dejar abierta la posibilidad de acuerdos con China respecto al BRI por parte de las instancias subregionales. Las más factibles son Mercosur y la Alianza del Pacífico. Para ambas organizaciones, los intereses transpacíficos son claros, en medio de las enormes dificultades para acordar una política unida. El primero de ellos no ha podido hallar los términos para un acuerdo comercial con la Unión Europea, lo cual indica la gran dificultad para establecer un mecanismo similar con algún país asiático. Por parte de la Alianza, la vocación hacia el Pacífico es expresa y está en la agenda. Cualquiera puede anticipar los escollos en acordar los términos de cooperación, dada la falta de experiencia en la negociación de acuerdos con actores externos que comporta el grupo.

Para ambas organizaciones, los diálogos intermitentes con Asean, como los realizados en el marco de la Asamblea de la ONU, son saludables. Además, Indonesia, Tailandia y Singapur son Estados observadores de la Alianza del Pacífico, mientras Singapur porta la distinción de Estado asociado. Cabe esperar que de estos encuentros resulten algunas fórmulas de Cooperación Sur-Sur; sin embargo, los retos más concretos e inmediatos provienen del plan de obras que el BRI pueda establecer en América Latina y el Caribe. Convenir arreglos sobre la base de la negociación colectiva presenta las dificultades anotadas sobre Mercosur y la Alianza del Pacífico. En el caso de los mecanismos de integración de Centroamérica y el Caribe, por razones diplomáticas, estos cuentan con menos opciones de consensuar posiciones frente a los proyectos financiados por China.

CONCLUSIONES

Las cinco décadas de concertación y permanencia institucional, mediante el Asean Way, le otorgaron a la Asociación de Naciones del Sudeste Asiático la función medular en el proceso de integración económica del sur y el este del continente. De paso, su capacidad de interlocución ha validado su papel para facilitar los macro proyectos de modernización de las conexiones transcontinentales asiáticas. El efecto en el mejoramiento de las condiciones sociales parece plausible, pero el costo ambiental de las obras aún no ha sido calculado.

Empero, es a nivel estratégico en donde Asean halla un nicho para legitimarse como entidad sobresaliente a nivel regional y global. En efecto, sobre la Asociación reposa la responsabilidad de amortiguar la competencia geopolítica en el sur y el oriente asiático, cuyos principales protagonistas son China, Japón, India, Rusia e Indonesia. Es probable que la integración económica asiática, derivada de la renovada conexión física, estimule la integración política y el progresivo desmonte de los conflictos en el resto del continente.

En el orden global, varios factores implicados en los macro proyectos de conexión transasiática sobresalen a favor de la recomposición del orden global bajo los principios de la equidad, el respeto a la soberanía nacional, la no intervención y la solución negociada de los conflictos. Esos ingredientes son la experiencia de la integración del sudeste asiático, respetando los principios de la coexistencia pacífica asumidos por Asean. Junto a ello, se halla la política multilateral china, decidida a fortalecer los acuerdos colectivos globales y a descalificar las tendencias de las soluciones unilaterales y hegemónicas a los problemas contemporáneos. Asimismo, la voluntad japonesa e india para asegurar la libertad o auto determinación de los pueblos marcha en una dirección semejante.

Los resultados de la integración en América Latina y el Caribe, de cara a la experiencia asiática, son modestos.

Abundaron acá hasta ahora las declaraciones políticas y los organismos diseñados para llegar a ese objetivo, sin embargo, en la práctica no hay integración económica. En realidad, la región opera en un esquema extravertido, en cuanto sus socios están afuera. En vez de atenuar, la globalización económica ahonda la reprimarización productiva y las ideologías conservadoras, con incidencia inmediata en el orden político, lo cual significa que estos países también pierden su capacidad de concertación y sostenimiento de la institucionalidad colectiva. Ello lleva a prever que el aprovechamiento de los intercambios ofrecidos por los macro proyectos asiáticos se lleve a cabo más por los canales bilaterales que a través de soluciones grupales.

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11. THE ROLE OF THE CENTRAL ASIAN REGION IN CHINA'S NEW SILK ROAD ECONOMIC BELT PROJECT

AZHAR SERIKKALIYEVA

ABSTRACT

The importance of Central Asian countries for China became evident in the announcement of the revival of the ancient Silk Road by the Chinese President Xi Jinping in the capital of Kazakhstan –Astana- in 2013. This Chapter seeks to analyze China's motives and intent in the Eurasian landmass with a special focus on Central Asia. It concludes that developing infrastructure projects within the Belt and Road Initiative in Central Asia provides logistical diversification for both Central Asia and China.

Key Words: Central Asia, Shanghai Cooperation Organization, Kazakhstan.

RESUMEN

La importancia que le da China a los países de Asia central se hizo evidente en el anuncio del renacimiento de la antigua Ruta de la Seda por parte del presidente chino Xi Jinping en la capital de Kazajstán -Astana- en 2013. Este capítulo busca analizar los motivos e intenciones de China en Eurasia con un enfoque especial en Asia central. Concluye que el desarrollo de proyectos de infraestructura dentro de la *Belt*

and Road Initiative en Asia central brinda diversificación logística tanto para Asia central como para China.

Palabras clave: Asia central, Organización de Cooperación de Shanghai, Kazajstán.

INTRODUCTION

In forty years of reform and implementation of open economy policies, great changes have taken place in China. With the country's high engagement with the world, it became obvious that China was not isolating itself from global developments. The rapid growth of China's economy and the country's growing ties with the rest of the world necessitates the development of new concepts and approaches in Chinese diplomacy. China's emerging role in the international arena has triggered a change in the current international political environment and is causing the further rebalancing of a multipolar system. Therefore, strengthening multilateral cooperation with the other regional powers and international organizations provides a suitable atmosphere for development.

Since China announced its reform and open-door policy, the country has adopted a low-profile foreign policy established by the late Deng Xiaoping. Under the leadership of Deng Xiaoping, China joined the world; through its continuous rise, the world community is expecting it to play a more important role in world affairs. Today, China's grand diplomacy is featured by the so-called 'two fronts and one circle' strategy. The "two fronts" include a new type of super power relations including countries such as the US, Russia, India and major European countries, and the BRI which mainly deals with developing countries; thus, the "one circle" refers to peripheral diplomacy that is mainly related to China's Asian neighbors.

Announcement of the revival of the ancient Silk Road by the Chinese President Xi Jinping in Astana, the capital of

Kazakhstan on September 7, 2013, signals the underlying importance of the Central Asian countries for China and the potentially significant role played by the Eurasian region in China's much-ambitious and much-talked-about One Belt, One Road initiative, officially known as the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). It was during President Xi Jinping's maiden visit to the Central Asian countries that he proposed working closely with the Central Asian republics for joint development on the New Silk Road Economic Belt (NSREB). President Xi said that China and Central Asia should work to improve rail and road connectivity through the development of strong networks of highways, airfields and bridges to establish the strategic regional thoroughfare from the Pacific Ocean to the Baltic Sea, and gradually move toward the establishment of a network of transportation that connects Eastern, Western and Southern Asia (Xinhua, 2013).

By reviving the Silk Road, President Xi Jinping has been working towards the rejuvenation of old cultural as well as trade ties with countries along the Silk Road. At Nazarbayev University in Kazakhstan, President Xi delivered a speech titled "Promote People-to-People Friendship and Create a Better Future". During the speech, he stated: "

In order to make the economic ties closer, mutual cooperation deeper and space of development broader between the Eurasian countries, we can innovate the mode of cooperation and jointly build the "Silk Road Economic Belt" step by step to gradually form overall regional cooperation. First, to strengthen policy communication, countries in the region can communicate with each other on economic development strategies and make plans and measures for regional cooperation through consultations. Second, to improve road connectivity, they can open the transportation channel from the Pacific to the Baltic Sea and gradually form a transportation network that connects East Asia, West Asia, and South Asia. Third, to promote trade facilitation, all the parties should discuss the issues concerning trade and investment facilitation and make

appropriate arrangements. Fourth, to enhance monetary circulation, all the parties should promote the realization of exchanges and settlement of local currency, increase the ability to fend off financial risks and make the region more economically competitive in the world. Fifth, to strengthen people-to-people exchanges (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, 2013).

According to President Xi, one of the major goals of BRI is to “break the bottleneck in Asian connectivity by building a financing platform” (Xinhua, 2014). To achieve this objective, President Xi has divided BRI into two components: land and maritime. While the maritime component of BRI is known as the 21st Maritime Silk Road (MSR), the land component is termed SREB, of which the Central Asian region is a key part. Aiming to bring sixty countries on board, the Chinese government has developed a blueprint of intent, which has laid out the future plans for China in terms of working towards the implementation of the NSREB. This chapter, focused on this important component of the NSREB, seeks to analyze China's motives and intent in the Eurasian landmass with a special focus on Central Asia. The chapter includes several parts: China's Interests in Central Asia; Situating Central Asia in BRI; Response from Central Asia: case of Kazakhstan; Conclusion.

1. CHINA'S INTERESTS IN CENTRAL ASIA

Central Asia lies at the heart of China's Eurasian diplomacy in general, and the NSREB in particular. Following the collapse of the Soviet Union, China has endeavored to build and strengthen its relations with the five Central Asian states of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan. China established diplomatic ties with the five newly independent Central Asian Republics in January 1992. Today, the cooperation established between China and

Central Asian states has reached the strategic partnership level. China is the fourth largest in the world in terms of size and biggest non-CIS neighbor of Central Asia. It shares a border of about 3,500 km with Kazakhstan, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan (Akiner, 1994). While originally the main focus of its political and diplomatic activities was to settle the Soviet legacy of disputed borders, its ties with Central Asia later started to reflect a growing desire to protect broader economic and security interests in the region. One of the major priorities of China is to maintain peace and stability in the region so that its own security at the border is safeguarded. Border security and the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (XUAR), which is the most restive region in China with a majority Muslim population, have always been at the helm of China's Central Asia Policy¹. According to estimates of Central Asian State leaders, almost complete understanding was reached in ensuring regional security.

In addition, the neighboring countries are partners in the international large-scale projects such as the New Silk Road Initiative. Most of the routes from China to Europe pass through Central Asian territory, located strategically at the crossroads between Europe and Asia. As China is expanding its economic outreach to Europe, Central Asian countries want to benefit beyond transit fees to develop its infrastructure possibilities. Therefore, the major role of China in Central Asia in terms of geopolitics and geo-economics is quite understandable.

According to American expert, Martha Brill Olcott, China seems to have decided to move ahead in time, mentioning that the country has surpassed the United States and Russia in terms of influence in Central Asia (Brill, 2013).

1 In addition, the author of chapter 13 mentions the "Go West" policy as a complementary strategy to ensure economic development in the east part of China.

The Kazakh expert, Adil Kaukenov, assesses the situation as follows. China is regarded as a reliable and generous lender in many Central Asian countries and it does not attach political or democratic strings. China has put forward a number of goals, aiming to

- (i) Become a regular participant in regional economic and political cooperation;
- (ii) Help Central Asian countries set up barriers against the influence from external players;
- (iii) Expand its cultural presence in Central Asia, which is a prerequisite for China to become a superpower.

1.1. The sco: Fighting three evils

China's security relationship with Central Asia has grown manifold since the foundation of the Shanghai Five Mechanism, encouraged by Beijing in 1996 in order to resolve border issues between China, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. Established in 2001, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) requires member states to develop state-to-state relationships based on partnerships rather than alliances. The SCO now has China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, India and Pakistan as its full members, with Afghanistan, Belarus, Iran, Mongolia as observers, and Armenia, Azerbaijan, Cambodia, Nepal, Sri Lanka and Turkey as dialogue partners. Nowadays, the SCO brings together 18 states, which are inhabited by over 3 billion people or over 45 percent of the world population (Ria Novosti, 2016). In 2015, the GDP of the SCO member states amounted to over \$21 trillion, accounting for 27.1 percent of the world's total (Yan, 2017). The SCO hints at a new regional cooperation model under which member states coordinate their actions but do not have treaty obligations on specific issues, particularly in the military field. After settling border disputes, the SCO members promoted cooperation fighting against security threats. The official founding declaration

asserted that the main objective of the organization was to combat the so-called three evil forces: international terrorism, ethnic separatism and religious extremism. Thusly, the SCO continues safeguarding regional security and promoting regional development. The organization has been interpreted in a variety of ways since its inception. One group of analysts agrees with the views of the governments of the SCO member states that the organization is primarily focused on regional security problems (Aris, 2009). Many Chinese analysts such as Yu Jianhua, Director of the Institute of Eurasian Studies of the Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences (SASS) express the same view: the SCO is a regional organization of non-traditional security (Yu, 2019, p. 21). Moreover, the Chinese Government does not consider the SCO as an alliance or bloc that could confront any third country, regional group, or organization. Therefore, Beijing insists that the SCO was not modeled as an anti-NATO bloc.

By initiating and developing the SCO, China started to focus on multilateral relations in its Central Asian policy rather than bilateral relations. China's main goal is the preservation of the stability, economic well-being, political order and security of the Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region (XUAR), which shares a long and common border with Russia, Mongolia and the three Central Asian States of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. The second aim is to create a friendly and secure belt of states around the Xinjiang region (Pradhan, 2018). The XUAR of China, sometimes known as East Turkestan or Chinese Turkestan, is home to approximately 21.6 million people of different ethnicities. The XUAR is one of the largest regions in China, it shares one-sixth of the country's territory. The XUAR is economically prosperous, but instability continues to persist for a number of reasons, such as the Uyghurs' desire for autonomy or independence, dissatisfaction with the government, Han migration, income disparity, employment discrimination, religious suppression and resistance

to assimilation (Wong-Tworek, 2015). Thus, China is more concerned with Uyghur separatism². As a means of solving border issues with the Central Asian countries, two treaties on border security were signed: The Treaty on Deepening Military Trust in Border Regions (1996) and the Treaty on Reduction of Military Forces in Border Regimes (1997).

The primary target of the Chinese anti-terrorism campaign is the East Turkestan Islamic Movement (ETIM), which advocates for the independence of Xinjiang. From the Chinese perspective, in the framework of the SCO, it is of particular importance for China to be able to count on the support of the other nine member and observer states in its campaign against the ETIM. Moreover, China has also been able to draw support from the SCO partners in its efforts to frustrate other conventional or non-conventional security threats and to eliminate or to ease the external factors of disruption to China's stability and development (Bailes, Guang, & Troitskiy, 2007). By 2001, when the Shanghai Cooperation Organization was formed, Chinese leaders were fully convinced that multilateral regional organizations were significant mechanisms for China to articulate its interests, strengthen its influence, cultivate its soft power, and promote multipolarity. In less than a decade, China was transformed from a passive, defensive participant to an active organizer with a well-defined agenda and strategy (Cheng, 2013). Through the SCO, China is keeping geopolitical balance in the "strategic hinterland" region as well as playing a key role in the legal establishment of a new structure of regional security processes. The program of cooperation on security issues began shortly after establishing the SCO. At that juncture, it was imperative for China

2 This particular issue has raised concerns in other peoples that share ancestral ties with the Uyghur's Muslims. An example of that is further described in chapter 12 of this book.

to prevent foreign intervention in the Central Asian State policy and security, as well to avoid other newly independent Central Asian Turk countries from supporting ETIM. In this light, the following documents were signed in the SCO framework: The Shanghai Convention on combating terrorism, extremism and separatism (2001); SCO Regional anti-terrorism structure (2002); Agreement on combating drug trafficking (2004); Agreement on joint anti-terrorist activities (2006); Treaty of the long-term good neighborly and friendly cooperation among member states of the SCO (2007); Agreement on combating trafficking in firearms, ammunition (2008); Agreement on cooperation in the field of ensuring international information security (2009); Joint declaration on cooperation between the SCO and UN secretariats (2010); Provision on the political, diplomatic measures and mechanisms for regulating the situations that endanger security and stability of the region (2012). Also, the Peaceful Mission—joint anti-terrorism military exercises were kicked off for the first time within the SCO framework in 2002. The member-state military units practiced a joint anti-terrorist operation in the SCO territory annually. Combat units have worked out actions to confront terrorists on land, at sea and in the air. All these agreements provided the legislative base for the SCO common security space and adopted political and military measures, building unpredictably cooperative and strong relationships within the regional community. Also, through the security cooperation, the SCO passed the institutionalization process.

1.2. Energy

China's interest in the region's resources serves the primary purpose of meeting its growing domestic energy needs. Economic reforms in the 1970s and 1980s in China resulted in rapid economic growth, boosting the demand for energy and turning the country into a net importer.

Although China has been importing crude oil since 1993, it has been unable to meet its gas needs on its own since 2006 and has been actively searching for alternative energy supplies. Counting on newly explored Central Asian resources, China attempted first to diversify its energy imports by sources and routes, and second to actively participate in the development of new gas fields (Aminjonov, 2018). International Energy Outlook 2016 estimates that in 2015, China's oil imports amounted to about 6.6 million barrels per day, which was 59 per cent of the country's total oil consumption (Sternberg, Ahearn, & McConnell, Central Asian 'Characteristics' on China's New Silk Road: The Role of Landscape and the Politics of Infrastructure, 2017). By 2035, the Energy Information Administration (EIA) projects China's oil imports will rise to about 9.7 million barrels per day, accounting for about 62 per cent of total oil consumption (Mariani, 2013). It is necessary to note, that in the context of the global financial crisis, China has become the largest creditor and investor for Central Asia, almost bypassing both Russia and the countries of the West. Thus, China and Central Asia share common interests in the economic and political fields. Central Asia supplies hydrocarbons which are so necessary for China and it is ready to become the trade bridge between China and Western Europe. China's elite have set their sights on Central Asia as an ultimate bridge linking the mainland with the main BRI land points, thus, positioning it as one of Eurasia's most promising centers and making it a prime location for great powers. It is clear that a key goal for Chinese investors in Central Asia is to secure overland deliveries of energy resources to China by inland routes as an alternative to maritime shipments, which means that Beijing also has a geopolitical interest in strengthening energy cooperation with Central Asia. Therefore, China has been keen on developing energy corridors in Central Asia. Presently, China is the second consumer of oil and gas in the world and may be importing

50 per cent of the regions oil by 2020. China's major energy partners in Central Asia are Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan with whom it shares a 1700-km land border. As of August 2016, China is in control of 20 per cent of the Kazakh oil production and has constructed one of the world's longest pipelines running about 2,300 km from the Caspian Sea to the Xinjiang province. The cooperation and economic foundations between China and Central Asia are extensive and sound, and urgency for policy cooperation in energy transit can be seen. At present, transit projects between China and Central Asia include the China-Kazakhstan oil pipelines, China-Kazakhstan gas pipelines (the second phase of the China-Central Asia gas pipelines), and the China-Central Asia gas pipelines. The China-Central Asia Gas Pipeline is the most important line for importing energy to China and falls into four sub-pipelines: lines A, B, C and D.

China already has arrangements with Central Asia through three operational China-Central Asia Gas pipelines. The pipeline starts at Turkmen-Uzbek border city of Gedaim and runs through Central Uzbekistan and southern Kazakhstan before reaching Horgos Special Economic Zone and Xinjiang. Lines A and B were inaugurated in 2009 and 2010. Line C was completed at the end of 2013 and was inaugurated in May 2014. It was constructed along the same route as lines A and B, with a total length of 1,830 km. The designed capacity is 25bcm annually, of which Turkmenistan will supply 10 bcm, Uzbekistan 10 bcm and Kazakhstan 5 bcm. In September 2013, an inter-governmental agreement was signed between China and three Central Asian states (Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan) to start construction of Line D. Line D follows a different route compared to lines A, B and C. It will pump gas from fields in eastern Turkmenistan through Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan to the Chinese border (Wang, 2016). Therefore, the reliability of energy supplies, along with interdependencies within diversified export routes, requires an effective

regional energy governance mechanism to be established either within the SCO or the BRI (Aminjonov, 2018).

1.3. China's Peaceful Co-development and Good Neighborly Policy

After the settlement of the boundary issue, China signed the good-neighborly treaties of friendship with three neighboring Central Asian countries. In 2002, China signed the China-Kyrgyzstan Good-Neighborly Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation with Kyrgyzstan and signed China-Kazakhstan Good-Neighborly Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation with Kazakhstan. China and Tajikistan signed the China-Tajikistan Good-neighborly Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation in 2007. The Treaty of Long-term good-neighborly Relations, Friendship and Cooperation among the then Member States of the SCO was approved in the 7th Summit of leaders of SCO members held in Kyrgyzstan in 2007. China's emerging role in the international arena triggers a change in the current international political environment and causes further rebalancing of the multipolar system. Therefore, strengthening multilateral cooperation with the other regional powers and international organizations provides suitable atmosphere for development of China's New Diplomacy. The basis of China's New Diplomacy is formed by the New Security Concept, the New Development Approach, and the New Civilization Outlook, which were introduced in the early 2000s. China's New Diplomacy has first been visible in China's diplomacy towards the Asian region because the neighboring countries have always been crucial for Beijing to create a favorable and stable international environment. The New Security Concept encourages nations to build trust through consultations and to seek national security by means of multilateral coordination. It emphasizes: (1) multilateral ties, which stress interdependence among nations in terms of security; (2) cooperation, which replaces confrontation

as the effective route to security; (3) comprehensiveness of security, which is not only confined to military and political fields alone, but also includes economic, technical, social and environmental fields; (4) institutional construction, as the legitimate road to security. The New Security Concept rejects power politics and Cold War thinking. Proposed at the forum of the Central Committee of China's Communist Party in March 2004, by President Hu Jintao, the New Development Approach stated that all countries should strive to achieve mutual benefit and "win-win" situations in their pursuit of development. Moreover, the New Civilization Outlook as a part of Hu Jintao's concept of the Harmonious World encourages inter-civilization dialogue and aims at building a harmonious world on the basis of equality (Antonescu, 2015, p. 2). The key idea of the Concept is that each civilization has the inalienable right to choose its own and independent development path, which is suitable for its own conditions. Since the 1990s, China sees its neighbors as partners and friends, not as adversaries and enemies; the purpose of the overall Chinese diplomacy towards its neighbors is to foster stability between the neighboring countries and reduce suspicion and fear.

2. SITUATING CENTRAL ASIA IN BRI

The construction of the BRI project is one of the major goals of the Chinese Government. Despite the creation of the Eurasian Economic Union (EEU), China remains the major trade partner of Kazakhstan. Within the BRI, the two countries are developing infrastructure facilities for bilateral trade. Consequently, the EEU, a regional organization, initially created with the aim of protecting itself from an excessive economic influence of China, has changed its direction toward the interface with the Chinese initiative. BRI's primary goal is to create a system to facilitate Chinese outbound investment, which is necessary in order to maintain the country's

economic growth as it transitions into a more mature and developed economy. As explained by Dr. Pang Zhongyin, currently the Dean of the School of International Studies at Sun Yat-Sen University, an ultimate impact of China is to be a “Renewed World Order”, where the real-sector trade would replace financial control over the world economy and where strength is returned to multilateral institutions such as the UN and sovereign states, just as it was supposed to be after World War II. Dr. Pang added more contextual clarity by describing BRI’s economic genesis as being the natural progression from interdependency to globalization and now to connectivity, which he forecasts will ultimately lead to next generational global economic governance through the creation of a worldwide free trade road map (Korybko, 25).

This project is a major initiative for China to carry out open economic policies under new geopolitical conditions and it is also the most important project that China expects to provide special benefits to the Eurasian region. Central Asia has been the historic core of the silk roads over time. Today, it is being presented as an economic corridor, a BRI of pipelines, bridges, roads, etc. and this is imagined for Central Asia as a way to enhance security and energy cooperation. The Chinese side could manage to set financial provision mechanisms within the framework of the BRI. Several institutions were established to finance the Chinese BRI initiative. The first institution is the Silk Road Fund with \$40 billion capital, which is planned to be increased up to \$100 billion. The second institution is the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB), established with a fund of \$100 billion. The third institution is the New Development Bank BRICS (NDP BRICS). The total amount of funds of these three institutions could reach \$240 billion. The AIIB started operations in January 2016, and the first group of projects financed by the Silk Road Fund has been officially launched. The Economist (2015) reports that China plans to spend a total of US\$1 trillion in government funds through AIIB and the

China Development Bank on the BRI. Nowadays, countries along the route are discussing the possibility of allocating these funds for the establishment or expansion of bilateral and multilateral cooperation. The BRI has gained wide international acceptance since the number of its participants has increased gradually. About 70 countries and organizations have expressed their support and contribution to the project. This global support has exceeded the scope of the traditional BRI project and helped to form an international cooperation framework with broad influence. Meanwhile, 34 countries and international organizations have already signed a number of inter-governmental cooperation agreements with China on jointly building the BRI project. Based on these intergovernmental cooperation agreements, specified cooperation programs will be additionally formulated. The Chinese Foreign Minister, Wang Yi, and the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP) Executive Secretary, Shamshad Akhtar, signed the letter of intent in Beijing on April 11, 2016. According to the document, the two sides will jointly promote regional cooperation and the implementation of the BRI initiative. The two sides will also make specific action plans and encourage relevant countries to synchronize their development strategies with the initiative. Currently the BRI initiative is at the stage of transforming from being discussed to being accepted at a certain level, both economically and politically. To date, the BRI countries have been able to avoid any direct conflict of interest by formally reaching an agreement on their participation in the project. However, with the transition to the implementation phase, there is an essential need for the approval of the Official BRI Action Plan, according to which the BRI funds will be allocated. Continental infrastructure development is one of the key goals of the NSREB, a transportation network which is gradually taking its final form within the framework of the initiative.

2.1. Why Central Asia is important for BRI?

China has been discussing the reviving of the Ancient Silk Road with Eurasia as a main direction since the collapse of the Soviet Union. Eventually, the Chinese government has been investing fundamentally in infrastructure development and logistics projects for the past two decades. The Chinese Premier at that time, Li Peng, stated the concept of the revival of the Ancient Silk Road during his maiden visit to Central Asian states. He said that “it is important to open up a modern version of the Silk Road”. Central Asia ranks highly in China’s priority with respect to BRI. Five Central Asian States share a long border with China. Given its strategic location, Central Asia is one of the most important regions for BRI, since BRI treats Asia and Europe as a single space. Most of the routes from China to Europe pass through Central Asian broad territory, located strategically at the crossroads between Europe and Asia. As China is expanding its economic outreach to Europe, Central Asia wants to benefit beyond transit fees as it is trying to break away from oil and gas dependence. Also, Central Asian States come under the category of countries that are (overtly) friendly towards China. Therefore, China’s influence in Central Asia has been on the rise albeit Russia is still the dominant power. BRI will allow China to increase its presence in Central Asia. Nowadays, Central Asia is one of those regions of the world where security issues are always on the agenda. In the international community, the Central Asian region is still associated with drug trafficking, danger of religious extremism and terrorism, and the underdevelopment of political and civil institutions. To this day, five countries in the region are still not in a position to regulate the problems that arise (Somzhurek, Yessengaliyeva, Medeubayeva, & Makangali, 2018). Thus, initiating the BRI, China is not only boosting cooperation with the Central Asian countries and strengthening the

political and economic links, but also contributing to the stability and security in the region. Otherwise, China needs to diversify its goods deliveries through developing the land-locked Central Asian connectivity with Europe and the outside world. Obviously, currently China and AIIB are the main investors in Central Asian infrastructure. Despite the growth of investments in the countries of Central Asia, joining the AIIB also leads to a certain increase in debt, which raises concerns for the local political elite and the population, and does not allow furthering its priorities and partnership plans. The scale of China's economy has long gone beyond the regional one, so large-scale infrastructure construction in Central Asia is beneficial for China, satisfying its long-term interests and profiting from interest rates and offers for Chinese equipment manufacturers and construction companies (Muratshina, 2017). For the countries of Central Asia, this is an opportunity to modernize the infrastructure and increase international relations. For China, it is also important for the implementation of the NSREB project.

2.2. Main BRI projects in Central Asia

The Central Asian route's popularity started with China's spectacular growth. According to the Observatory of Economic Complexity (2015), China began to re-emerge as an exporting power in the 1980s (Silva-Ruete, 2006), and now exports US\$2 trillion of products per year across all routes, with roughly US\$500 billion of that going to Europe and US\$15 billion to the five Central Asian countries.

A spokesman for the Chinese Ministry of Commerce noted in April 2017 that since 2013, US\$304.9 billion in contracts have been signed between China and the economies along the route (Jing, 2017). Following these are the two major land economic corridors proposed under the BRI for Central Asia.

2.3. The New Eurasian Land Bridge

China's rail system has long linked to the Trans-Siberian rail system through northeastern China and Mongolia. In 1990, China added a link between its rail system and the Trans-Siberian system via Kazakhstan. China calls its uninterrupted rail link between the port city of Lianyungang and Kazakhstan the New Eurasian Land Bridge or the Second Eurasian Continental Bridge. In addition to Kazakhstan, the railways connect with other countries in Central Asia and the Middle East, including Iran. Since the completion of the rail link across the Bosphorus under the Marmaray project in October 2013, the New Eurasian Land Bridge has been connecting to Europe via Central and South Asia. The new Eurasian Land Bridge is a transport route linking the Pacific Ocean to the Atlantic Ocean. Unlike the Trans-Siberian Railway starting from Vladivostok through Siberia to Moscow and further to Western Europe, this new bridge operates from the coastal city of China, Lianyungang to Rotterdam (Netherlands) and Antwerp (Belgium). The railway route with the length of 10,800 km will pass through Kazakhstan, Russia, Belarus, Poland and Germany and will operate in more than 30 countries and regions.

At the moment, several transcontinental railway routes already started operating, showing the potential of the BRI. Including the routes of Chongqing - Xinjiang - Europe / Duisburg, Germany /, Chengdu - Xinjiang - Europe / Poland / and Yiwu - Xinjiang - Europe / Madrid /. Now, the construction of appropriate roads, power lines and ports are steadily progressing.

The 8,000-mile route, from the city of Yiwu in Zhejiang province to Madrid, is the longest continuous train route ever. Many slightly different routes have been labeled under the term of the New Eurasian Land Bridge – some link Chongqing to Duisburg, while others link Beijing to

Hamburg, however it is the middle section of the route, from Kazakhstan to Poland, which seems to define it.

Rail freight from China to Europe is growing. Container traffic on the trans-Siberian railway grew by 15 per cent in 2013 and 22 per cent in 2014, with a total of 865,600 20-foot (6.1 meters) containers of freight in the first six months of 2014. The average container spent 14 days in transit, confirming industry claims on the speed of China-Europe rail freight transit (International Transport Journal, 2014). While Kazakhstan might have been overly optimistic in predicting a tripling of freight traffic through Kazakhstan every year from 2013 to 2020 (Bradsher, 2013), further growth does seem likely as the early movers solve logistical problems on the route, making newer entrants' issues less pronounced (Debreczeni, 2016, p. 45).

3. ECONOMIC CORRIDOR CHINA - CENTRAL ASIA - WESTERN ASIA

According to the Chinese Xinhua news agency, The China-Central Asia-West Asia Economic Corridor (CCWAEC) links China and the Arabian Peninsula. The vast region it covers generally follows the trajectory of the ancient Silk Road. The corridor starts from China's Xinjiang and traverses Central Asia before reaching the Persian Gulf, the Mediterranean Sea and the Arabian Peninsula. It crosses five Central Asian countries (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan) and 17 countries and regions in West Asia (including Iran, Saudi Arab and Turkey) (Xinhua, 2017).

Kazakhstan is one of the best examples of the BRI cooperation in Central Asia. The Lianyungang terminal, which is located at the Jiangsu Province in East China, is Kazakhstan's first exit to the Pacific Ocean. The Lianyungang joint terminal is aimed at increasing exports and imports, as well as transit potential of Kazakhstan by railways, providing

the shortest way to the Asia-Pacific region and South East Asia. The project contributes to the development of trade relations in the region and creates the possibility of transit from these countries to Central Asia, the Gulf States, Russia, the Caucasus region and Europe through the territory of Kazakhstan. About 60 per cent of Kazakhstan's trade with East and South-East Asia countries along the BRI is carried out through the port of Lianyungang, through the new Eurasian continental bridge. Lianyungang is a key hub for Kazakhstan's trade with the East. Chinese "Lianyungang Port" Group and "Kazakhstan Temir Zholy EXPRESS" LLC jointly participated in the construction of the logistics cooperation project, where Kazakhstan shares 49 per cent and China – 51 per cent. In total, US \$99.4 billion were invested in the project (Kapital, 2015). The construction of the first joint Kazakh-Chinese terminal was established on 21 hectares of territory in May 2014. A container terminal of 200 thousand square meters, 1763 Container Parks, warehouse-unpacking containers in the area of 23 thousand square meters and 3.8 km access road terminal were constructed. The average daily throughput is 10.2 trains. The highest annual truck capacity is 410 thousand standard containers. Moreover, it is expected that by 2020, the terminal will process over 550 thousand containers per year. The Lianyungang logistics cooperation project was created to implement a comprehensive international transportation, unpacking of the container orders, warehousing and other international cargo transportation. From January to November 2016, import and export volume of bilateral goods between Kazakhstan and China in the amount of US \$ 7.08 billion declined by 24.7 per cent. Thus, Kazakhstan's exports to China amounted to US \$ 3.82 billion, declining by 23.9 per cent, averaging 12.1% of its total export; Kazakhstan's imports from China amounted to US \$ 3.16 billion, down by 31.2 per cent, averaging 23.1 per cent of its total import. By November 2016, China has become Kazakhstan's second largest export market and

the largest source of imports (Ministry of Commerce, 2016). Kazakhstan mainly imports clothes, electrical and mechanical equipment, construction materials, furniture, steel, etc. from China. Kazakhstan primarily exports oil and gas, non-ferrous metals, alluvial ore, grains, live leather, cotton, etc. to China. From January to November 2016, Kazakhstan's cargo imports and exports reached US \$ 4.8 billion, and increased by 21.7 per cent. Among them, exports in the amount of US \$ 3.32 billion increased by 33.6 per cent; imports totaling US \$ 1.48 billion increased by 1.5 per cent. Trade surplus amounted to US \$ 1.84 billion, increasing by 78.7 per cent. Cargo trains have already begun running from China to Iran through the territory of Kazakhstan and Astana and they are hoping to modernize their own available locomotives and repair 460 miles of rails. The project's total cost is in the amount of \$2.7 billion; by making the upgrade, Kazakhstan aims to capture 10 per cent of the \$600 billion trade volume between China and Europe. The government of Kazakhstan has launched several programs including the "2050 strategy" and the "100 concrete steps" that incorporate the Chinese investments and goals for realignment with the BRI Initiative. In effect, trade turnover between the two nations has surpassed \$20 billion and keeps growing, turning China into Kazakhstan's major strategic partner. Beijing has also already invested nearly \$30 billion in the country's mining, oil, transport, and agricultural sectors. These investments add to Astana's own \$9 billion stimulus plan for the nation's modernization. Furthermore, Astana is also constructing "special economic zones" that include the Khorgos "dry port" on the Kazakh-Chinese border. On November 25, 2011, the Kazakh government decided to establish the Khorgos-East Gate logistics center near the Khorgos "special economic zone" (Frolovskiy, 2016). Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev and Chinese President Xi Jinping attended the opening ceremony of the first stage of the Kazakhstan logistics terminal in the Lianyungang port

on May 19, 2014. The first train carrying 720 tons of wheat from Kazakhstan arrived in the Lianyungang port on February 5, 2017. The first batch of wheat from Kazakhstan arrived in the Lianyungang port by cargo train and was then shipped to Southeastern Asia, opening a new trade route. Transit cost of Kazakhstan's trade with East Asia significantly reduced, saving about US \$72 million per year. Thus, the distance to Japan shortened by 2500 km and by 3900 km to Singapore, compared to the first Eurasian Continental Bridge route. Kazakhstan mainly imports vehicles and its parts, mechanical equipment, electrical appliances, plastic and rubber from East and Southeast Asia (Kulintsev, 2015). The Chinese side made proposals on joint construction of the "Integrated Bonded New Area in Suwei district of Lianyungang". The Bonded Suwei New Area is supposed to join Kazakhstani and Chinese producers. In particular, the processing and modification of copper products, food, household goods, electronics, second-hand goods and vehicles are exported from Kazakhstan to North-East Asia. The Bonded Suwei New Area will supply exporters with technical support. Therefore, construction of the "Business complex", the "Asia-Europe trade and exhibition center", the "trade and service street" and other projects are planned. Among them, the total area of the SCO Countries Logistics Zone terminal will cover 450 hectares, where joint "State trading complex" will be constructed. According to the "Integrated Bonded Area in the Suwei district of the Lianyungang" plan, Special-Customs-Control-Area will be established by 2030. The Lianyungang Customs is located in the harbor area of Lianyungang. Nowadays, it has set up 16 sectional offices, including a supervision office, technological office, and customs clearance office and so on, and one functional office, one anti-smuggling branch comprised of eight offices. At present, its jurisdiction covers the whole city of Lianyungang (Lianyungang Custom, n.d.). Since it is also anticipated to play a bimodal (land and sea)

role in linking the other regions of the extended supercontinent alongside its near limitless physical infrastructure development potential, Lianyungang is easily predicted to become the center of geo-economic gravity that holds the BRI together, and likewise, one of the world's most critical economic fulcrums in the coming decades. During the 12th meeting of Heads of Governments (Prime Ministers) of the SCO member states on November 29, 2013 in Tashkent, the Prime Minister of the State Council of China, Li Keqiang, stated that Lianyungang city, located in the eastern beginning of the new Eurasian Continental Bridge, would give the member states of the SCO an access to logistics services and warehousing (Региональная Антитеррористическая Структура Шанхайской Организации Сотрудничества, 2013).

3.1. Response from Central Asia: case of Kazakhstan

China is focused on how the BRI was perceived in Central Asia and other countries directly involved in the project and how these perceptions shaped responses to the initiative. It is obvious that China is aware of the spread around the whole world of the "China threat" thesis, which became visible after the growth of China's economic power and military capabilities. Currently, China set upon the task of neutralizing the negative reaction abroad to this grand integrative initiative – the BRI, through the formation of a positive international image of the country. One of the areas of impact of the "soft power" of China in the region is the education system. Chinese investments into the education sector (including scholarships) increase the student acceptance rate into Chinese colleges and universities, as well as the rate of sending students to study in universities of Central Asia, the opening of Confucius Institutes and the active promotion of the study of the Chinese language. As a result, over the past 10 years the number of students from

the Central Asian countries in China increased dramatically, and Kazakhstan is the leader among them. Chinese institutions and organizations in Central Asia are organizing and funding a variety of cultural (concerts, exhibitions, etc.) and scientific events (conferences, workshops, research projects), cooperating with local organizations and institutions aimed at discussing and clarifying the Chinese BRI initiative.

To set some context for how BRI is and will be received on the ground in Central Asia, it is important to note key socio-cultural dynamics in the region. Kyrgyz and Kazakhs are Turkic nationalities with shared linguistic, religious, and cultural roots from across what was once called Turkestan, a vast area stretching from the Tibetan Plateau and Himalayas to the Caspian Sea and Turkey. Identity, kinship, spiritual practices, and lifestyles remain vastly different from that of the Han Chinese. In the Soviet era, there was a massive influx of other ethnic groups into the region, including millions of Russians and significant numbers of Ukrainian, German, and Korean immigrants. More than 3.5 million Russians remain in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, further differentiating the people and orientation of the region from China. Today this contributes to separation and animosity between local residents and incoming Chinese with the fear of de facto economic appropriation expressed in major cities. Government to government relations are strong, but as 2016 protests of perceived Chinese land-grabs in Kazakhstan demonstrated, these may not be attuned to local sentiments. Thus, as BRI projects are initiated, citizen interest and acceptance need to be considered and addressed (Sternberg, Ahearn, & McConnell, 2017).

The public perception in Kazakhstan, which in turn, stems from the articles, analysis, and official statements presented in the state newspapers, media, and internet news sources, are in favor of the implementation of this project. Mainly, the positive view is focused on the economic benefits (in particular infrastructure construction and

increased trade volumes) and possible stabilizing effects of the BRI project in the realm of security. However, some observers doubted Kazakhstan's enthusiasm by arguing that Astana's commitment towards the EEU would not allow it to approve the project, let alone participate in its realization. Also, the analyzing of surveys on public perception of the Chinese activity in Kazakhstan shows a different attitude, from negative to neutral.

However, initial public perception dominating in Kazakhstan comes mainly from the public newspaper articles with wider circulation in the country. While the BRI is ostensibly aimed at promoting cross-border infrastructure connectivity and further economic connection between China, its neighbors and trading partners, its similarity with Kazakhstan's own "Nurly Zhol" program was a subject of many commentaries and analyses in the mainstream Kazakhstani media as "Kazakhstanslaya Pravda" and others. It should be noted that the majority of the aforementioned projects lately were included in the "Nurly Zhol" State Program of infrastructural development of Kazakhstan for 2015-2019, which were presented by the President of Kazakhstan on November 11, 2014. Therefore, the NSREB project could be considered as a first attempt of the Kazakh government to systematize and streamline the infrastructural projects in the country.

In one of the mainstream Kazakhstani newspapers "Egemen Kazakhstan" Kazakhstan is viewed as the bridge between the East and the West, and the BRI is viewed as an essential competitive advantage as the country aims to double the volume of transit along the East-West route by 2020. In this regard, the authors note that the NSREB project opens broad-ranging perspectives for developing trade, economic, and investment cooperation among states, in particular for Kazakhstan. Thus, to decrease the costs and the time spent on transportation of the goods from China to Europe, China can use the route through the territory of

Kazakhstan, which can reduce the transportation time from 45 days to 10-14 days (Salykzhanova, 2015). Therefore, it is “win-win” situation for both sides since it offers the construction of a multimodal transcontinental corridor which was a guarantee of high connectivity and high standard infrastructure facilities.

More importantly, the theme of the BRI’s similarity with Kazakhstan’s own “Nurly zhol” project is obviously a widely covered topic (Egemen Kazakhstan newspaper, 2015). And yet the Kazakhstani public opinion is still silent on this matter, except for the analysts of think-tanks, observers, students of Chinese studies or international relations, and journalists. One of the major reasons for this paradox might be the absence of a wider public awareness in Kazakhstan as Kazakhstani people do not possess enough detailed information about the BRI project, in particular, the NSREB. Such an outcome should be expected and is quite natural, taking into consideration the fact that it is one of the very recent initiatives and it, in turn, requires some time to process the information. Consequently, there are no major sociological studies such as opinion polls or questionnaires done in Kazakhstan to assess the public view on this matter.

Since the realization of the BRI project will allow for establishing a powerful economic corridor with an enormous potential for development, journalists echoed the analyses of the reinvigoration of the existing international institutions such as the SCO, the EEU and even the EU, thereby, stating that the creation of other international institutions in the future is inevitable (Konstantinov, 2015). An article in the Kazakhstani “Liter” newspaper highlights the stabilizing effect of the BRI project, in particular, the NSREB in Central Asia, as they argue that it presented a potential for hindering the dissemination of extremism, terrorism, and religious fundamentalism. Some think that such a scenario was possible because the implementation of NSREB project would

eliminate the social underpinnings that give rise to such destabilizing phenomena in the first place (Dosybai, 2015).

The public perception in Kazakhstan, which in turn, stem from the articles, analysis, and official statements, presented in the state newspapers, media, and internet news sources, are in favor of the implementation of this project. Mainly, the positive view is focused on the economic benefits (in particular infrastructure construction and increased trade volumes) and possible stabilizing effects of the BRI project in the realm of security. However, some observers doubted Kazakhstan's enthusiasm by arguing that Astana's commitment towards the EEU would not allow it to approve the project, let alone participate in its realization. Also, the analyzing of surveys on public perception of the Chinese activity in Kazakhstan shows different attitudes, from negative to neutral. However, Kazakhstan is likely to become the major contributing partner of China in its BRI project, in particular, its continental part – the “Silk Road Economic Belt”. In doing so, the two regional projects - the EEU and the BRI – can be complementary in organizing the new economic, infrastructural landscape of Eurasia. As many have noted the coexistence of the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) and the 21st century Maritime Silk Road in the Asia-Pacific Region, the coexistence of the EEU and the NSREB is quite possible. It might be the case, since both - the EEU and NSREB share a common goal of enhancing the free movement of goods, services, people and capital. In doing so, these two overlapping regional projects can comprise the software (EEU with its rules and regulations) and the hardware (NSREB with its highways, rail ways and bridges) of economic activities in the Eurasian continent. China alone cannot make the BRI a success, since it covers vast areas involving more than 60 countries. For China, it is a grand strategy, but to its partners, it is really a grand initiative. As an initiative, it needs an active participation and close co-operation of all related partners. Kazakhstan, as a developing economy, mostly

accepts the BRI as a mechanism of coordinating economic development strategies and policies with plans and measures on enhancing connectivity through building infrastructure networks and integrating construction plans and systems of technical standards.

CONCLUSION

Through BRI, China is and will certainly remain the largest investor in Central Asia. It is the only country that can mobilize huge investment in the region, far beyond what Western countries and Russia can offer. China's growing involvement in Central Asia is a long-term phenomenon and a turning point in Central Asia's post-Soviet history and economic development (Laruelle, 2018). According to Xi Jinping's statement delivered at the 19th National Congress of the Communist Party of China on October 18, 2017, the Chinese government assesses the situation as follows:

China adheres to the fundamental national policy of opening up and pursues development with its doors open wide. China will actively promote international cooperation through the BRI. In doing so, we hope to achieve policy, infrastructure, trade, financial, and people-to-people connectivity and thus build a new platform for international cooperation to create new drivers of shared development (Xi, 2017).

China's economic influence and soft power has been commendable considering the short span of time in which China has strengthened its relations with Central Asia. In conclusion, it may be argued that through BRI, China seeks to develop its western region and reap economic benefits. Also, China is concerned about ties with the Central Asian region and all Eurasia due to its global geopolitical ambitions. Developing of infrastructure projects within the BRI in Central Asia gives logistical diversification for both

Central Asia and China. Ongoing implementation shows that Central Asia figures as one of the key strategic partners of the project and holds a significant place in China's plan.

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12. TURKEY AND THE BELT AND ROAD INITIATIVE

GÖKHAN TEKİR

ABSTRACT

Turkey is an important link in the China-Central Asia-West Asia corridor with the completion of the Baku-Tbilisi-Kars railway being the strategic project. South Caucasus and Central Asian countries are connected to Europe through Turkey, bypassing Russian territories. Besides the new Eurasian Land Bridge, this route creates an alternative way for China to reach Europe. The participation of China in regional and Turkish infrastructure is compatible with Turkey's own domestic infrastructure development strategy which requires external financing.

In addition to providing a physical connection, Turkey's participation in the Belt and Road Initiative will enhance the prospect of the initiative in Central Asian countries, where the populations are comprised of Turkic people. Turkey, as the most developed Turkic country, can use its credibility to boost the development of the Belt and Road Initiative and allay the fears of the Central Asian population due to increasing Chinese influence. This paper, however, examines the potential hurdles that might affect Turkey's participation in the Belt and Road Initiative.

Key Words: China-Central Asia-West Asia corridor, infrastructure development; physical connection.

RESUMEN

Turquía es un enlace importante en el corredor China-Asia central-Asia occidental, ya que con la terminación del ferrocarril Baku-Tbilisi-Kars, los países del sur del Cáucaso y Asia central están conectados a Europa a través de Turquía, sin pasar por los territorios rusos. Además del nuevo Puente Terrestre Euroasiático, esta ruta crea una conexión alternativa para que China llegue a Europa. Por lo tanto, China, consciente de la importancia de Turquía, participó en los proyectos de infraestructura de ese país. Esto es compatible con la propia estrategia de desarrollo de infraestructura doméstica de Turquía, que requiere financiamiento externo.

Además de proporcionar conexión física, la participación de Turquía en la Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) mejorará la perspectiva del proyecto chino dentro de los países de Asia central, cuya población es mayoritariamente túrquica. Turquía, como el país túrquico más desarrollado, puede usar su credibilidad para impulsar el desarrollo del BRI y disipar los temores de la población de Asia Central debido al aumento de la influencia china. Sin embargo, este documento examina los posibles obstáculos que podrían afectar la participación de Turquía en BRI.

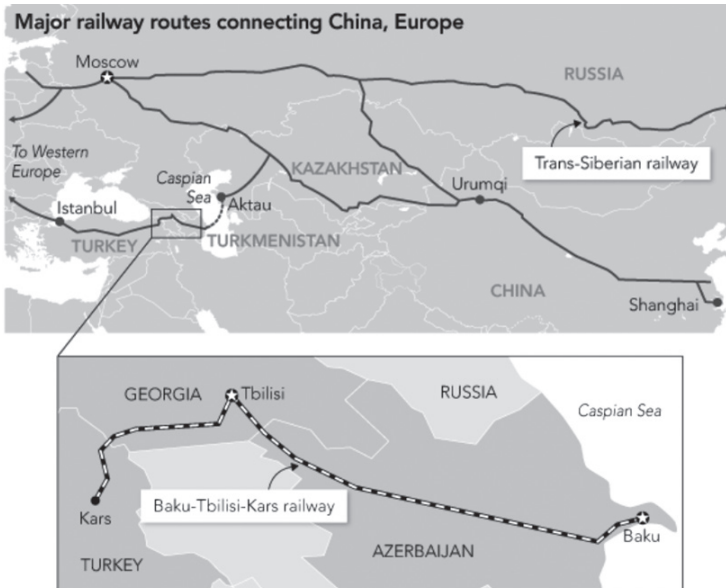
Palabras clave: corredor China-Asia Central-Asia Occidental, desarrollo de infraestructura; conexión física.

INTRODUCTION

China-Central Asia-West Asia links the Xinjiang region of China with Europe through Central Asia, bypassing Russia. The line going from Xinjiang's capital, Urumqi, goes to Kazakhstan's Khorgos dry port. Khorgos is connected to the Aktau port through the railway. From the Aktau port, it crosses the Caspian Sea to Alyat and Baku. Thus, this corridor bolsters the strategic position of South Caucasus as well as Central Asia. Through the Baku-Tbilisi-Kars railway,

the route is connected to Turkey. The map below demonstrates how this corridor sidelines Russia and the BTK links the South Caucasus to Turkey.

FIGURE 1: MAJOR RAILWAY ROUTES CONNECTING CHINA-EUROPE



Source: (Tavsan, 2017).

After passing Tbilisi, Kars, located in Eastern Anatolia, is the next city on the China-Central Asia-West Asia transportation network. Since Kars, located in the northeastern part of Turkey, is the destination of the BTK, it enables Turkey's participation in the Belt and Road Initiative. This line creates an informal axis between Azerbaijan, Georgia, and Turkey, further marginalizing the isolation of Armenia, which Azerbaijan and Turkey consider a regional rival (Lussac, 2008, p. 35). Through Kars, it is connected to Istanbul, the main city of Turkey, which is likewise Turkey's connection

point to Europe. Turkey uses China's financial investments in these projects. Turkey has also sought to promote mega infrastructure projects such as Marmaray and the Yavuz Sultan Bridge, which connect the Asian and European sides of Istanbul.

The joining of Turkey to the Belt and Road Initiative is also compatible with its own infrastructure development plans. Especially since the construction of high speed railways has been adopted as a main strategic aim by the Turkish Ministry of Transportation. The Ministry has prioritized increasing goods transported by railway by 100 per cent and passenger transport by 50 per cent ("Strategy" n.d.). The Turkish State Rail Company expressed that for state targets aimed at the 100th anniversary of the declaration of republic in 2023, the development of railways forms the backbone of transportation targets. In this respect, these goals are listed as the construction of new highspeed railways, the upgrading of the existing lines, linking railways to production centers, and being an active participant in the Modern Rail Silk Way, which connects the Far East to Europe (Stratejik Plan, 2015).

Besides land connections, Turkey has also developed its ports to provide alternatives to China in the Mediterranean Sea. In this respect, Turkey prepared projects which aim at developing *Çandarlı* in İzmir, Kumport Terminal in İstanbul, and Mersin ports. Chinese firms also participate in these projects. Nonetheless, Turkey is far from replacing Greece's Piraeus port as the main partner for China's maritime ambitions in the Mediterranean Sea.

In addition to logistic and transportation aspects, Turkey's participation in the BRI will facilitate civilizational connectivity, listed as one of the major goals in the Vision and Actions Paper on building the Belt and Road Initiative. The population of the Central Asian countries is comprised of Turkic people, which belong to the same Altaic language

family. Although the Central Asian countries belong to the Eastern Turkic sub-family and Turkish people, who live in Turkey, belong to the Western Turkic family, the kinship felt between these two groups is still strong. Given the presence of an overwhelmed Turkic population in Central Asian countries, the participation of Turkey, which is the most developed Turkic country, will build confidence among people living in those countries, who perceive China's increasing economic activities as intrusive and aggressive.

Nevertheless, Turkey's participation in the Belt and Road Initiative is not without hurdles. The rising political and economic instability in Turkey has a potential to affect the construction and the commitment of infrastructure companies to the project. Turkey implements a build-operate model in its infrastructure investments. In this model, the government and private sector come together to carry out infrastructure investments. It allows the governments to remove the public investment expenditures while enjoying the benefits. In return, the state guarantees that a number of vehicle and passengers will use this completed road or bridge (Çırakçı, 2018, p. 101). The disproportional guarantees made by the Turkish government to these companies under the build-operate model attract public criticism and disapproval in Turkey, discrediting infrastructure investments.

Another problem is the Xinjiang issue. Although Turkey toned down the criticism of Chinese treatment of Uyghurs for the sake of good relations with China, Turkish public opinion still favors Turkic Uyghur compatriots. The current wave of nationalism in Turkey propels political parties to touch upon this issue in order to gain votes from the nationalistic voter pool. If severe violent clashes occur in Xinjiang, China's reputation, which is already not very good amongst the Turkish population, may be further tarnished affecting the development of the Turkish leg of the Belt and Road Initiative.

1. BAKU-TBILISI-KARS RAILWAY

The Trans-Caspian connection between Kazakhstan's Aktau port with Azerbaijan's Alyat port is essential only if the connection with Europe is realized. The Baku-Tbilisi-Kars railway is an important milestone in the China-Central Asia-West Asia corridor. It connects Baku to Kars, located in Northeastern Turkey through Tbilisi, undergoing gauge-change procedures in Akhalkalaki. The total length of the railway amounts to 849 kilometers of which 504 kilometers pass through Azerbaijan, 263 kilometers through Georgia and 79 kilometers through Turkey (Öğütçü, 2017).

On September 30, 2017, the BTK railway line was inaugurated. The President of Turkey, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, the President of Azerbaijan, İlham Aliyev, the Prime Minister of Georgia, Giorgi Kvirikashvili, the Prime Minister of Kazakhstan, Bakytzhan Sagintayev, and the Prime Minister of Uzbekistan, Abdullah Aripov, participated in the opening ceremony. The railway's initial capacity is for 1 million passenger and 6.5 million tons of cargo but by 2023, its capacity is expected to increase three fold (Shahbazov, 2017a).

This railway offers landlocked Eurasian countries a physical connection with open seaports. In November 2017, the first train cargo carrying 600 tons of wheat from Kazakhstan arrived in the Turkish port of Mersin via the BTK route, completing the 1258-km journey from Kars to Mersin. The success of the transport of goods raised optimism and opportunity. Beybit Isayev, Kazakhstan's ambassador to Azerbaijan commented that from Kazakhstan's perspective, the BTK route is the best option in transporting Kazakh goods to Europe. Uzbekistan is also willing to join this route for the same reasons. Uzbekistan's participation in the BTK railway were discussed by the foreign ministers of Azerbaijan and Uzbekistan in Tashkent in October 2016. In March 2017, Azerbaijan's, Georgia's, and Uzbekistan's railway departments came together to evaluate prospects

of the BTK in Tashkent. Uzbekistan wants to use this line to transport its cotton to Europe. The President of Turkmenistan, Gurbanguly Berdimuhammedov, raised the issue of Turkmenistan's joining the BTK line during his recent visit to Baku. In Baku, Berdimuhammedov emphasized improving transport connectivity between South Caucasus and Central Asia so that Turkmen goods can be exported to Europe (Shahbazov, 2017b).

The BTK is a significant project in that it provides land connection to the Trans-Caspian line on the China-Central Asia-West Asia corridor. Besides, transporting containers from China has a potential to include other Central Asian countries which want to export their goods to European countries. This line improves the connectivity between Central Asian and South Caucasus countries as well as their connectivity with Europe. Thus, the BTK is a key segment of transportation network between China and Europe. The railway line, however, ends in Kars, located in northeastern Anatolia, Turkey. The internal railway connection within Turkey is important since the domestic railway will connect to Istanbul, then the Balkans.

2. TURKEY'S DOMESTIC RAILWAY LINES

The upgrade of the domestic railway network has been declared as state policy by the Ministry of Transport and Infrastructure. In 2017, Ahmet Arslan, the former Minister of Transportation, Maritime Affairs and Communications, said the investment in railway infrastructure has exceeded the investment in highways. The construction of a total of 1,213 kilometers of highspeed rail lines have been completed and a 3,000-kilometer-long line is underway. The project groundwork for an additional highspeed rail line of 5,277 kilometers have been prepared ("Network of Speed Railway Lines to Cover All Turkey," 2017). Turkey and China also launched another direct high speed railway line project from

Kars to Edirne in 2010. This project involves the construction of a 2,000 km high-speed railway line between Kars and Edirne. For the realization of this project, in January 2011, a framework agreement was signed between Turkish State Railways and Ministry of Transportation of China (“TCDD / MoT China – Edirne to Kars High Speed Rail Line – Turkey - Project Profile,” 2018).

FIGURE 2: HIGHSPEED RAILWAY LINES OF TURKEY



Source: (Uysal, 2015).

When the map is examined, it is observed that the link between Kars and Central Anatolia is underdeveloped. There is a planned highspeed project between the 414-km Erzincan-Erzurum-Kars. Its planning stage has been completed. Moreover, the construction of a 245 km high-speed railroad, which will connect Sivas to Erzincan, is planned to be finished by 2021 (Inan & Yayloyan, 2018, p. 48). Other new lines in the planning stage are: Ankara–Istanbul (533km), Ankara–Konya (202km), Ankara–Sivas (460km), Ankara–İzmir (606km), Bursa–Osmaneli (106km), Ankara–Kayseri (150km) and Halkalı-Kapikule (230km). İstanbul–Ankara–Sivas, Ankara–Afyonkarahisar–İzmir and Ankara–Konya (Pepe, 2016, p. 383). The Ankara-Istanbul and Ankara-Konya lines are already operational. The work on other lines continues.

These developments solidify the connectivity between the central and western parts of the country. However, most of these lines are still in the planning stage.

Some of the planned development projects involved China. In 2016, Turkey and China signed an agreement concerning Turkey's inclusion in the Belt and Road Initiative. In this agreement China promises to invest \$750 million annually for infrastructure development in Turkey (Esmer, 2017). The China Railway Construction Corporation and the China National Machinery Import and Export Corporation, in partnership with two Turkish companies, built a high-speed railway linking the Turkish capital Ankara with Istanbul. The former Transportation Minister Arslan said that: "Starting from Eskisehir and up to İzmit, Chinese and Turkish firms were working together. The Chinese brought experience and 1.7 billion-dollar Chinese-Turkish business partnership. Today, Turkey is currently operating highspeed lines of about 1,750 kilometers, while construction continues on 3,800 kilometers of highspeed rail line" (Xiang, 2017). Thus, China has not only invested money into Turkey's highspeed line development but is also sharing its technology. The transport of goods from China to Europe is going to be faster when the highspeed lines are completed.

3. MARMARAY AND YAVUZ SULTAN SELIM BRIDGE

Having completed the connection of Eastern and Central Anatolia to Istanbul, the subsequent step was to connect Istanbul's Asian and European sides. The most famous project which connects two sides of Istanbul is the Marmaray project. It is composed of a 13km-long rail link under the Bosphorus and 60km of railway on the European and Asian side of the Bosphorus. The Bosphorus Tunnel, which was completed and put into operation in 2013 after a 12-year construction period (Pepe, 2016, p. 385). Marmaray is the world's deepest infrastructure tunnel, built 55m below sea

level. It not only connects the European and Asian sides of Istanbul but also alleviates its transportation problem, providing smoother flow of people and goods. This important project was financed by the European Investment Bank and Japan Bank for International Cooperation ("Marmaray Railway Engineering Project," n.d.). Council of European Bank also invested €217 million in the construction of Marmaray (Council of Europe Development Bank, 2008).

The main motto expressed in the opening ceremony of Marmaray was that "The continuous rail connection from United Kingdom to China is now possible." It will enable a continuous run of trains between Europe and Asia via under Bosphorus, which would otherwise have to be transhipped by rail ferries running between Tekirdag and Derince. Usage of Marmaray would reduce costs, offer shorter transit times, and provide certainty (Çotur & Uysal, 2015, p. 10).

The Marmaray project is a railway line under the Bosphorus. The Eurasian tunnel, on the other hand, offers road connection under the Bosphorus. It involves the construction of a 14.6 km road link between the Kazlıcesme and Goztepe regions of Turkey, including a 5.4km tunnel. The tunnel was inaugurated in 2016, and a daily capacity of 120,000 vehicles run in both directions (Road Traffic Technology, n.d.).

Another project that connects two sides is Yavuz Sultan Selim Bridge. It is a third bridge, which connects two sides of the Bosphorus after the Bogazici Bridge, which began its operations in 1972, and the Fatih Sultan Mehmet Bridge, which was completed in 1988. Yavuz Sultan Selim Bridge consists of eight lanes of motorway and two lanes of railway. The rail system is going to be integrated with the Marmaray and the Istanbul Subway to link Atatürk Airport, Sabiha Gökçen Airport, and newly constructed Istanbul airport (ICA, 2013). Yavuz Sultan Bridge was also constructed based on a build-operate model. The consortium, composed of the Rome-based Astaldi, the Turkish-based ICA, and major investment banks of Turkey. ICA will operate the bridge for

10 years 2 months, and 20 days (ICA, 2013). This bridge offers alternatives for connection from Istanbul's Asian side to its European side. Especially important to note that the railway tracks on the bridge will allow Chinese and Central Asian goods to be exported to Europe in an uninterrupted manner.

China gives special emphasis to the operation of Yavuz Sultan Bridge and Marmaray. Due to economic difficulties experienced in Turkey in the summer of 2018, the Industrial and Commercial Bank of China (ICBC), a Chinese bank operating in Turkey, has offered a \$2.7 billion loan for Marmaray and the Yavuz Sultan Selim Bridge. Furthermore, Treasury and Finance Minister, Berat Albayrak, announced that the ICBC would provide a \$3.6 billion loan package for Turkey's energy and transportation sectors. (Daily Sabah Economy, 2018).

Rome-based Astaldi, one of the stakeholders of the Yavuz Sultan Bridge, shaken due to depreciation of its assets in Venezuela, has declared it may sell its shares of the bridge. A joint venture including the London-based fund Centricus Asset Management, a Chinese investor and Turkish investment group Global Yatırım A.Ş. set an equity valuation for the operator of the bridge at \$1.3 billion to \$1.4 billion (Ersoy, Albanese, & Casiraghi, 2018). Thus, China seeks to increase its hold on the Yavuz Sultan Bridge. The aid to the Turkish government and acquiring shares from Astaldi would strengthen Chinese financial influence over the operations of the Yavuz Sultan Bridge, which connects the Asian and European continents.

For the railway connection with the Balkans, Edirne's District Governor Günay Özdemir announced that a double-track railway for highspeed trains from Istanbul to Edirne, Plovdiv and Sofia will be built "as a continuation of the Silk Road" (Radio Bulgaria, 2018). Without this railway line, the European connection will be missing. With the completion of this line, the line from China to the Balkans will function continuously and faster.

4. THE TURKISH MARITIME LEG OF THE BELT AND ROAD

In addition to huge railway infrastructure projects, Turkey is developing its ports in an aim to become a logistical hub. Turkey has been interested in developing the ports of Filyos on the Black Sea, Çandarlı Port on the Aegean coast, and the Mersin New Container on the East Mediterranean (Inan & Yayloyan, 2018, p. 48). Yet, Turkish maritime development lagged behind its railway development within the Belt and Road Initiative.

Greece is China's main maritime partner in the Mediterranean and Turkey lacks competitive ports. The port of Piraeus, owned by the China Ocean Shipping Company (COSCO), is the largest container port in the Eastern Mediterranean. The port of Piraeus is the major entry point for Chinese products to European markets. It has the capacity of handling a container volume of 3.67 million TEU (planned to increase 5 million TEU in 2018). Its size is five times larger than the Turkish port just across the Aegean, the port of Alsancak in İzmir (Atli, 2017).

Furthermore, the new ports planned to be developed either lack inland connection or are inappropriate for transit trade. For instance, the Çandarlı port on the Aegean coast, whose breakwater structure was built, lacks hinterland connection. The estimate of the capacity of the port is also exaggerated with a target of 12 million TEU. This is unrealistic considering İzmir, the biggest port in that region, operates at only 800.000 TEU. Its capacity can only be extended to handle 2.5 million TEU. Mersin, Turkey's second largest port, on the other hand, located on the southern Mediterranean, has railway connections but it suffers from a coinciding city and port, which block the expansion of the port (Inan & Yayloyan, 2018, p. 49).

Nonetheless, Chinese companies have already started to invest in Turkey's port infrastructure. In 2015, a consortium of COSCO, China Merchants Holdings International

and China Investment Corporation bought a 65 per cent stake in the Kumport Terminal at the price of \$920 million. Thus, COSCO owns majority stakes of a port located on the shores of Istanbul (Atli, 2017). This investment shows that China might be interested in developing maritime ports in Turkey. This investment, however, may not meet the heightened expectations of Turkey concerning its role in the Maritime Silk Road. Still, Turkey can have a place in the Belt and Road Initiative with its ports; the objective is not to overtake the Greek ports or to compete with them, but to complement them.

5. TURKEY'S ROLE IN CIVILIZATIONAL CONNECTIVITY

Vision and Actions paper prepared by the National Development and Reform Commission emphasized dialogues among different civilizations on the principles of seeking common ground. One of the main aims of the Belt and Road Initiative is to promote civilizational connectivity by promoting mutual understanding among civilizations (National Development and Reform Commission, 2015).

Given that the New Eurasian Land Bridge and the China-Central Asia-West Asia corridors pass through areas where the Turkic population is substantial, Turkey's participation will facilitate civilizational contacts. When the Central Asian countries gained their independence from the Soviet Union, Turkey was the first country to recognize the independence declarations of all Central Asian countries. Turkey engaged in significant diplomatic efforts in assisting its Turkic brother republics in their integration into the international system. Turkey hoped that by building ties with these new states it could build a Turkic community under its leadership. This self-ascribed role was also an attempt to find new strategic value to its relationship with the US after the end of the Cold War (Wheeler, 2013, p. 3).

An important step in the institutionalization of Turkish foreign policy in Central Asia was the establishment of the Turkish International Cooperation and Development Agency (TIKA) in 1992. Its primary responsibility was to ensure Turkey's coordination with the Turkic Republics in economics, education, culture, art, history, research, language, literacy, ethnography, tourism, administration, justice, security, communication, environment, science, and technology. Over 500 treaties signed between Turkey and Central Asian States, demonstrate this close collaboration (Çaman & Akyurt, 2011, p. 47).

Turkey has institutionalized its religious and linguistic affiliations with Central Asian countries. The Eurasian Islamic Council, established in 1994, directly answerable to The Directorate of Religious Affairs, (*Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı*) has aimed at facilitating dialogue about the proper relationship between Islam and the state and the role of Islam in society in Eurasian countries. The Diyanet has built the largest mosques in Baku and Ashkhabad. It has aimed at educating new Islamic elites by establishing theology departments modeled on the prestigious faculty of theology at the University of Marmara. It has also admitted students from Central Asian countries to theology schools in Turkey (Balçı, 2014).

Linguistically, Turkey and Central Asian countries belong to Ural-Altai family of languages. In 2009, in the 9th Summit of Heads of State of Turkish Speaking Countries in Nakhchivan, the leaders set up the Council of Cooperation of Turkish Speaking States, also known as the Turkic Council. The headquarter of the Turkic Council is in Istanbul. Since 2009, the meetings have been held annually (Çaman & Akyurt, 2011, p. 49).

Hence, Turkey is important in the development of the Belt and Road Initiative not only because it is bridging the Central corridor from the South Caucasus to Europe, but also because it will help China to improve its civilizational

contact with Central Asian countries through which the two corridors pass. This contribution is invaluable for China, which experiences local dissatisfaction in Central Asian countries due to the development of the Belt and Road projects.

The tensest demonstrations have been held in Kazakhstan against increasing Chinese investments. In 2016, legal amendments which allowed foreign investors to rent agricultural land were protested in Aktobe. The anger was directed at Chinese investments. One protester's remark reflected this anger: "We can't give land to the Chinese. If they come then they won't leave" (BBC News, 2016). In February 2018, Kazakh protesters, compelled Xinjiang authorities to reverse their decision to cancel the pensions of its Kazakh and Uyghur residents who traveled outside of the country. They protested outside the Chinese consulate in Almaty and demanded the reinstatement of the payments (ChinaAid, 2018). These demonstrations, occurring in an authoritarian country like Kazakhstan, indicate a growing dissatisfaction with increasing Chinese presence. In fact, Burkhanov and Chen's study reveal that negative stereotypes of China and the Chinese, as well as Sinophobia, are pervasive in private Kazakh language newspapers. Although the majority of these voices do not affect Kazakhstan's policies directly, still, officials have to gauge social views to maintain stability and legitimacy of the regime (Burkhanov & Chen, 2016, p. 2129).

The Kazakhstan case demonstrates that China's increasing activities have been met with antagonism and fear. Fostering understanding of Turkic culture, religious customs, and language will enhance people-to-people connectivity, creating a favorable impression for Central Asian people. Turkey's participation on the Chinese side would help China to engage with the Turkic world, alleviating fears of Chinese visibility. It would help Chinese businesses to set up local friendly businesses as well as profitable ones.

This collaboration would also help Turkey to solidify its position in Central Asia by improving its cultural and trade relations with them.

6. CHALLENGES TO TURKEY'S PARTICIPATION IN THE BELT AND ROAD INITIATIVE

Although Turkey is a both transportation and civilizational bridge in the Belt and Road, Turkey's inclusion to this initiative is not seamless. There are obstacles to the development of Turkish-Chinese relations within the Belt and Road Initiative. One of the biggest obstacles is the volatility in Turkey's infrastructure sector. The infrastructure investments based on the build and operate model draw public criticism. The infrastructure sector, depending on political support, may not perform successfully when this political support diminishes. Another vulnerability of the infrastructure sector is the depreciation of Turkish lira. This decreases profit margins as most of materials are imported for the construction of infrastructure projects.

The second biggest problem is the uprising in Xinjiang. Although the Turkish government currently restricts the news concerning the Uyghurs in Xinjiang, the public resentment to Chinese actions against Uyghurs in Xinjiang is still high. It is actually a paradox given that one of the main pillars in the current political balance in Turkey resides in nationalism. Nationalistic sentiments, promoted in Turkey, may not be contained, regarding the Uyghur problem, thusly harming Turkey's relations with China.

6.1. Volatility in the Infrastructure Sector

In order to finance the infrastructure projects, Turkey implemented the public private partnership model. The benefits and harms of this model differ country to country. It was effective in Chile and Brazil whereas this model was

unsuccessful in Peru. Successful country examples showed that risk sharing is important in that the public deals with political and legal risks while the private sector deals with construction and operational risks (Çırakçı, 2018, p.102).

Turkey has implemented \$135 Billion worth of Public Private Partnership (PPP) projects in a variety of sectors since 2002. Turkey has adopted a favorable investment legislation for PPP investments that can be realized through various models in which the build-operate model is the most common form ("Investing Infrastructure And Public Private Partnership In Turkey," 2018). Thus, Turkey has completed a mega project with the involvement of the private sector within the build-operate model. The state usually offers state guarantees to private companies after the construction is completed.

This collaboration between state and private companies is, however, being criticized for ascribing a disproportionate burden at the expense of the public. For example, Yavuz Sultan Selim Bridge cost \$3 billion. A contract was made with the Ictas Construction Commerce Corporation-Astaldi Joint Venture Group for this project for 10 years, 2 months, and 20 days, with a guarantee of 135,000 vehicles per day. The Eurasian Land Tunnel has been built by Eurasian Tunnel Operation, Construction and Investment Corporation (ATAŞ). The state guarantees 25 million vehicles per year. Another project that raised outcry is Osman Gazi Bridge, a part of the Gebze-Orhangazi-Izmir connection, which cost \$6 billion with a guarantee of 40,000 passengers per day. The guarantees are given for these projects within the Build-Operate-Transfer Model in foreign currency, increasing the amounts that the Treasury has to compensate (Çırakçı, 2018, pp. 103–104). For Orhangazi and Yavuz Sultan Selim Bridge the government had to pay 803 million in Turkish lira, which is equivalent to \$150 million, to compensate the guarantees in June 2017. Although the official numbers were not released, the expected loss for the state budget exceeded

2 billion Turkish lira, equivalent to \$381 million (Sputnik, 2017). The repayment of these losses encourages the investment of infrastructure companies to enter into new projects. However, the political support may not be perpetual.

The example of Brazil might be illuminating for the future problems that the infrastructure sector will encounter when it loses government backing. Since 2014, the Operation Car Wash, which caused the impeachment of Dilma Rousseff, allowed the prosecutors to investigate small cliques of business and political elite over infrastructure investments. For example, the investigation revealed that the country's largest construction firms, Odebrecht and Sete Brasil had built what prosecutors called the "bribery department." These companies were accused of gaining hefty loans from the state development bank, BNDES, during the end of Lula's government and the beginning of the Rousseff era. Besides the internal dimension of corruption investigation, there are also external ramifications. Odebrecht has admitted to paying bribes to officials in 11 countries. In Peru, Odebrecht is accused of winning the Inter-Oceanic Highway project, which aims to link Brazil to the Pacific by bribing officials including Peru's former President Alejandro Toledo (Sampaio, 2017).

After Rousseff's impeachment, the ability of major infrastructure companies to pursue new infrastructure projects was crippled while the infrastructure need persisted. The World Economic Forum ranks Brazil 72nd out of 138 economies for the quality of its infrastructure, ahead of neighboring Argentina but well behind Mexico at 57th (Leahy, 2017). To rectify this gap, President Temer courted China. In September 2016, while attending G-20 summit he met with Chinese investors to discuss infrastructure opportunities in Brazil. The deals include \$3 billion for a steel plant in northern Brazil, \$450 million for a port terminal in Maranhoe state, \$1 billion agricultural development fund, and an agreement for future Chinese participation in infrastructure projects

("Brazil: President Hopes New Deals With China Will Jumpstart Economy," 2016). In June 2017, \$20 billion China-Brazil Cooperation Fund for the Expansion of Production Capacity opened for applications (Willis, 2017). Although this helps Brazil to follow its infrastructure projects, the danger of overreliance on Chinese money is imminent. Robert Muggah and Adriana Abdenur point out that the mishaps of Chinese investment in neighboring Ecuador, Peru and Chile, where some corporate practices led to environmental damages, social tensions, and popular backlash might be experienced in Brazil (Muggah & Abdenur, 2017).

This problem in Brazil is relevant for Turkey. Besides unreturned infrastructure investments, Turkish lira depreciated almost 25 per cent against the dollar and 22 per cent against the euro only in August (Yeniçeri, 2018). This has caused political and economic instability in Turkey which will invite scrutiny over the public guarantees for infrastructure projects. Furthermore, the impact of a plummeting Turkish lira is being felt by infrastructure companies which seek external financial credits for their investments. Ferhat Keten, chairman of the Board of Directors of the Keten group, one of the leading infrastructure companies, states that 80 per cent of infrastructure costs in Turkey depend on foreign currency due to credits sought for investment and the importation of required materials for construction (Keten, 2015). Therefore, the decrease in value of the Turkish lira devastates infrastructure companies. When the economic crisis deepens, their ability to complete and maintain the mega infrastructure projects would diminish. On the other hand, the increasing value of foreign currency, especially the US dollar limits the ability of the government to make guarantees for a determined number of vehicles in the build-operate model by making it increasingly unpopular. On September 13, 2018, President Erdoğan announced that projects whose bidding stage has been completed but whose construction stage has not started, will be halted

("Erdoğan Duyurdu, Başlamamış Bütün Projeler Askıya Alındı," 2018). Although Erdoğan did not specify the name of projects, it will include mega projects such as the canal project for Bosphorus and the highspeed railway projects that will connect Kars to Central Anatolia. Even middle scale infrastructure projects within the Belt and Road Initiative, Turkey may need huge amounts of investments for infrastructure projects. The Chinese loan in August for several infrastructure projects along with the Yavuz Sultan Bridge has already confirmed this assumption. However, increasing Chinese financial leverage in Turkey has a potential to cause a popular backlash in nationalist and religious circles due to Chinese measures in Xinjiang.

6.2. The Xinjiang Problem

Xinjiang is located in the northwestern part of China. Although it is comprised of thirteenth ethnic groups, the main ethnic group is Turkic Uyghurs, which resent Chinese rule. Uyghurs are ethnically Turkic and belong to the Muslim community. Thus, Turks living in Turkey feel a strong affinity with their ordeal.

There have been several uprisings against Chinese rule in Xinjiang. The latest uprising started in 2009. The actions of Chinese security forces against the riot in summer 2009 resulted in the loss of around 200 lives and injured 1600 people. Turkey was the only country, which openly criticized the military crackdown. The Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan vociferously condemned Chinese actions against Uyghurs, labeling Chinese actions as genocide. The Turkish Foreign Ministry issued a statement that expressed concerns over the Chinese actions. Bülent Arınç, deputy Prime Minister, expressed solidarity with Uyghurs. The Turkish Trade Minister Nihat Ergün called for boycotts on Chinese goods. The leader of the Nationalist Action Party Devlet Bahçeli criticized the government for not summoning

the Chinese ambassador. The leader of the Nationalist Great Union party, Yalçın Topçu, asked the government to review its relations with China. The pro-government Independent Industrialist and Businessmen's Associations (MÜSİAD) asked executives to stop doing business with Chinese companies. The Turkish media also harshly condemned Chinese actions. *Hürriyet*, the leading newspaper, accused Chinese security officials directly of murdering Uyghurs. *Sabah* stated that Turkish people cannot remain indifferent to their ancestral homelands (Debata, 2015). Thus, the events of 2009 in Xinjiang caused a public outcry in Turkey, affecting its relations with China. This public reaction demonstrates that even though there is a physical distance between Xinjiang and Turkey, it does not diminish the Turkish people from feeling solidarity due to their Turkic and religious affinity with the Uyghur people.

However, especially after the 2016 coup attempt, the lack of support from Western governments compelled Turkey to search for alternatives to Western alliance. Thus, Turkey has newly searched in the global arena. Russia and China offer international backing which Turkey mostly needed. Although China increased its pressure upon Uyghurs living in Xinjiang by setting up surveillance systems over the population, collecting DNA samples from Uyghur residents, (Zenz & Leibold, 2017) and establishing internment camps for the reeducation of Uyghurs, (Rian, 2018) the public reaction was kept under check by the Turkish government. In August 2017, the Turkish Foreign Minister, Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu, promised to eliminate an anti-China media report from Turkish media equating China's security with Turkish security at the meeting with its Chinese counterpart (Reuters, 2017). Uyghurs living in Turkey started to be repatriated to China, where they are considered terrorists. The most prominent one was Abdülkadir Yapçan, who was a prominent figure of the Uyghur diaspora in Turkey. He had been living in Turkey for 15 years before he was

handed over (Koçoğlu, 2016). These developments indicate a policy change in Turkey in favor of China at the expense of alienating the Uyghur community. This policy is justified in the name of *raison d'être*.

Still, nationalism is one of the main pillars of Turkish politics. Topçu, the former president of Nationalistic Unity Party is, now, the chief advisor of President Erdoğan. Moreover, although the Nationalistic Action Party supported Erdoğan in the presidential election, it is still a separate party that competes with the Justice and Development Party for parliamentary seats. Their voting base is nationalistic and religious. The Good Party separated from the Nationalistic Action Party also a target for nationalistic votes. In such a political atmosphere, nationalistic feelings cannot be ignored. In June 2017, NAP parliamentarian, Arzu Erdem, stated that NAP continues to protect the rights of the Uyghur and supports “East Turkistan” in an attempt to appease their grievances (The International Uyghur Human Rights and Democracy Foundation, 2017). The Good Party, which also has nationalistic ideology but in opposition, criticized NAP for not giving the Uyghur issue the attention that it deserves. Ahmet Kamil Erozan, a GP parliamentarian who is responsible for the Turkic world in the party, accused NAP of selling out Uyghurs in exchange for receiving financial credits from China (Gazete 2023, 2018). Thus, the Uyghur issue has also become a matter of domestic politics through which nationalistic political parties benefit. If the violence intensifies in the Xinjiang region, this issue is going to be mentioned in domestic politics to attract nationalist votes, plaguing Turkey’s relations with China.

CONCLUSION

This chapter has attempted to analyze Turkey’s participation in the Chinese-led Belt and Road Initiative. Turkey actively engaged in the China-Central Asia-West Asia corridor as

the final nod in the network to Europe. Its northeastern city is the final node of the Baku-Tbilisi-Kars railway which connects Baku's Alyat port to Turkey. As the BTK railway link ends in Kars, the distance between Kars and Istanbul must be overcome. Turkey, modeling its economic development strategy on infrastructural development, has started to build highspeed railways that would connect Kars and Istanbul. China, being aware of the importance of the domestic transportation connection of Turkey, has invested in these projects.

The most populous and developed city Istanbul, occupying two continents, is a gateway to Europe. Two main projects, the Marmaray and Yavuz Sultan Selim Bridge have been built to connect Asia and Europe. These projects have been made compatible with the needs of the Belt and Road Initiative. For instance, besides road connection, there are two railway lines on the Yavuz Sultan Selim Bridge. China has offered financial aid for the operation of the Yavuz Sultan Selim Bridge and offered to buy Astaldi's shares when this company experienced financial difficulties.

In addition to, being a transportation bridge, Turkey can be a civilizational bridge in the Belt and Road Initiative. The populations of Xinjiang, which is China's gateway to Central Asia and Central Asian countries, are mainly Turkic and Muslim. Turkey had already made close cultural and institutional contacts with Central Asian countries, which gained their independence after the dissolution of the Soviet Union. These economic and cultural ties between Turkey and Central Asian countries will be a desirable political capital, which China will need.

On the other hand, looming problems pose challenges to Turkey's participation in the Belt and Road Initiative. First is the economic instability. Due to the declining value of the Turkish lira against the US dollar, the construction and infrastructure companies, which depend on external financial credit and imported materials, have entered into

crisis. The completion of projects, thusly, might require external assistance. This external assistance source is likely to be China due to strains between Turkey and the European financial community. The recent \$3.6 billion worth of aid package signed in August between China and Turkey for infrastructure projects is compatible with this assessment. This, of course, means an increase of Chinese financial leverage over Turkey.

Turkish public opinion, however, concerning China is not very high due to its actions in Xinjiang. The Uyghur people are viewed as Turkic and Muslim compatriots. The 2009 events in Xinjiang caused a public outcry in Turkey, condemned by the highest officials of Turkey. Currently, due to lack of allies, some officials tried to suppress negative news concerning the Chinese treatment of Uyghurs. However, Erdoğan and the Nationalistic Action Party are being pressured by their constituencies to protest against China. The Good Party, nationalistic but separated from NAP due to NAP's support for Erdoğan, also presents itself as a champion of Uyghurs' rights in Turkey and China. If the violence breaks out and escalates in Xinjiang, which is not an unlikely possibility, it will not be easy for the government to suppress public nationalistic outcry. This would threaten the Chinese presence in Turkey and Turkey's active participation in the Belt and Road Initiative.

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13. *BELT & ROAD INITIATIVE* Y SU SIGNIFICADO GEOPOLÍTICO PARA CHINA Y ASIA CENTRAL

DIANA ANDREA GÓMEZ

RESUMEN

Este artículo se propone explicar, a partir de una perspectiva geopolítica, la estructura, dimensiones y alcances del *Belt and Road Initiative* (BRI). La importancia geopolítica del BRI radica en que, a partir del afianzamiento de las relaciones con el exterior, China fortalece su desarrollo hacia adentro, pero a la vez Asia central se erige como el eje axial a través del cual se despliega la iniciativa, donde la seguridad energética y la estabilidad política juegan un papel determinante. La iniciativa del BRI también genera desafíos en el orden global como la actitud defensiva de la alianza denominada Five Eyes, así como la creación de propuestas alternativas como el proyecto Indo-Pacífico. Pero el mayor desafío que genera el BRI es el rol protagónico que adquieren las ciudades en el orden mundial contemporáneo.

Palabras clave: BRI, China y Asia central, Belt & Road, ciudades y geopolítica.

ABSTRACT

This article aims to explain, from a geopolitical perspective, the structure, dimensions and scope of the *Belt and Road*

Initiative (BRI). BRI's geopolitical importance is that with the strengthening of relations with the outside, China strengthens its development inward, but at the same time Central Asia stands as the axial axis through which the initiative is deployed, where security energy and political stability play a decisive role. The BRI also generates challenges in the global order such as the defensive attitude of the alliance with the Five Eyes, as well as the creation of alternatives such as the Indo-Pacific project. But the biggest challenge generated by the BRI is the leading role that cities acquire in the contemporary world order.

Keywords: BRI, China and Central Asia, Belt & Road, cities and geopolitics

INTRODUCCIÓN

Este capítulo tiene como objeto de estudio la *Belt & Road Initiative* (BRI) a la luz de la geopolítica, para lo cual se abordará específicamente el rol del BRI para China y el Asia central. De ahí que la pregunta de investigación es: ¿Cuál es el significado geopolítico del BRI para China y Asia Central? La hipótesis en tal sentido es: el significado geopolítico del BRI radica en que a partir del afianzamiento de las relaciones con el exterior, China desde 2013 fortalece aún más su desarrollo hacia adentro, pero a la vez afianza sus vínculos con Asia central por ser el eje axial a través del cual se despliega la iniciativa, y donde las ciudades adquieren gran primacía por ser los pilares fundamentales del BRI.

La geopolítica desde su surgimiento como disciplina ha tenido en Eurasia un especial foco de interés y su consecuente inquietud por el rol que puede desempeñar en el orden mundial contemporáneo. En su formulación original, el geógrafo británico Halford Mackinder (1904) consideró la gran masa de Eurasia o Heartland -abarca las cuencas del Volga, Yenisey, Amu Darya, Syr Darya y el mar Caspio- como la zona Pivote o gran área de influencia situada en

zona central del planeta y con gran impacto en procesos históricos y realidades geopolíticas. El Pivote, de acuerdo con Mackinder, se constituía en un área de protección frente a los ataques de las potencias marítimas, podía a la vez sostener grandes masas de población y producir algún tipo de identidad y unidad colectiva. En 1919, Mackinder revisó su teoría adaptándose a las realidades geopolíticas de la época y amplió el área Pivote o Heartland para incluir las cuencas del mar Negro y el mar Báltico, y gran parte de Europa del este. La teoría de Heartland de Mackinder fue visionaria al proyectar una amplia red geográfica que captura gran parte del Asia central actual, la misma que hoy se está convirtiendo en un puente estratégico entre Europa y China a la luz de la denominada *Belt & Road Initiative* (BRI).

Nicholas Spykman, el célebre geógrafo holandés-estadounidense, reconoció parte de la premisa de Mackinder, pero ofreció otros puntos de vista que resultan complementarios. Spykman (1944) acuñó el término de Rimland para referirse a las tierras costeras europeas, las tierras árabes del desierto de Oriente medio y las tierras monzónicas asiáticas. Argumentó que el poder del denominado Corazón de la Tierra podría mantenerse bajo control por la periferia que representa el Rimland, dada la ventaja de esta última en cuanto a cantidad de población, los recursos y el acceso al mar. En otras palabras, le adjudicó al Heartland un *hinterland* o cinturón de seguridad que le permite resguardarse, apertrecharse y sobrevivir más fácilmente. Desde la perspectiva de Spykman, Estados del Rimland como Japón, Gran Bretaña y la República Popular China (RPCh) muy probablemente se convertirían en superpotencias debido a su acceso al mar y, por lo tanto, por su mayor contacto con el mundo exterior.

Historiadores como John Darwin aducen que la historia mundial de por lo menos los últimos 600 años está relacionada con el sueño del gran conquistador turco-musulmán Tamerlán, quien a través del imperio timúrida (1370–1405) buscó revivir el imperio mongol expandido por toda el Asia

central y en la medida en que este se constituye en cuna y puente de las más grandes civilizaciones, imperios y potencias de la historia mundial (Darwin, 2012). Peter Frankopan destaca el papel de Asia central y lo denomina el corazón del mundo desde el punto de vista tanto histórico como geográfico (Frankopan, 2016).

Jeremy Black (2015) desde la perspectiva geopolítica y teniendo en cuenta las complejas relaciones entre poder y espacialidad, considera que la percepción del poder es tan importante como la manera como este se ejerce. Desde este punto de vista, puede que no haya ningún poder real en Asia central hoy en día, sin embargo, los Estados nacientes pos soviéticos de esa región en medio de la debilidad de su entramado institucional han generado un vacío de poder que está posicionando a China como potencia, la cual presionando a través del BRI está forjando una conectividad directa y cercana con Europa a través de Asia central (Chen y Mardeusz, 2015). El ferrocarril euroasiático transcontinental liderado por China envía hoy mercancías por tierra a Europa a través de Asia central más rápidamente que por mar, lo que reduce los recorridos de larga distancia en los países sin costas marítimas. El conocimiento tecnológico se pone a disposición de la geopolítica, con lo cual la geografía ya no es barrera para la expansión del poder, como sí lo era en las épocas de Makhinder y Spykman.

En ese sentido, el verdadero éxito de BRI se sustenta en ser una iniciativa donde las rutas no son solo para el transporte y el comercio. Está relacionado con el significado original de las antiguas rutas de seda. Ferdinand von Richthofen, el geógrafo alemán, quien fue el primero en acuñar el término "Seidenstrassen" (Ruta de la Seda), prefirió los vocablos "Verkehr" (comunicación) o "Hauptstrassen" (rutas principales) (Waugh, 2007, p. 3). En efecto, tanto en el pasado como en el siglo XXI, las rutas de conexión en mención obran más como una serie de canales de comunicación para el intercambio intercultural en diferentes áreas y niveles,

donde el conocimiento y la tecnología generan sólidos vasos comunicantes. Esta afirmación se confirma hoy con una evidencia: más allá de las carencias y los avances en obras de infraestructura y conectividad, los líderes de Asia central, como muestran Cooley y Heathershaw (2017), están estrechamente conectados a los centros mundiales de poder a través de empresas y redes comerciales, cuentas bancarias de élite, tribunales extranjeros y abogados occidentales.

1. ALCANCE DEL BRI

Asia central constituye el escenario geoeconómico medular donde China está ejerciendo una influencia amplia, multidireccional y multiescalar como el poder emergente dominante de Eurasia, recreando el rol que durante siglos caracterizó a las rutas de la seda, terrestres y marítimas. Esta influencia en el actual siglo está representada a través de proyectos de inversión de muy diversa índole para la construcción de vías ferroviarias, carreteables, puertos, aeropuertos, redes de cable óptico, gasoductos y oleoductos de gran extensión, además de intercambios en materia educativa, intercambio de conocimiento en muy diferentes disciplinas y profesiones, junto con la difusión del idioma, la cultura y la tecnología. Tales proyectos han significado la suscripción de más de 170 acuerdos con 125 países (*The Guardian*, 2019). Se trata de una apuesta geoeconómica, pero con claras implicaciones en materia geopolítica que desbordan la geopolítica “de la tierra”, abordan la de los mares y el aire, así como las implicaciones espaciales de las numerosas innovaciones tecnológicas en el transporte y el armamento (Black, 2015).

El BRI es la apuesta china por la globalización en el siglo XXI donde las ciudades se erigen como los principales motores de las interconexiones que hacen que la iniciativa sea operativa, centrándose en Eurasia como su núcleo. Si bien la característica más visible y evidente del BRI es que se está

convirtiéndose en el área comercial y económica más grande del mundo, empero BRI representa un hecho de fondo que está cambiando la geografía económica y política de Eurasia: la intersección entre urbanización y desarrollo. Se trata de una iniciativa fundada en el papel estratégico de las ciudades a lo largo del BRI que apunta a conectar 252 ciudades en 91 países (45 asiáticos, 39 europeos y 7 africanos) a través de un complejo sistema de ciudades-nodo seleccionadas por cinco criterios basados en el tipo de relaciones que China, RPCh, establece con los diferentes países, condiciones de infraestructura, calidad y cantidad de los flujos comerciales, situación financiera, además de una clasificación de las relaciones diplomáticas de las ciudades en lo que hoy día se denomina para-diplomacia (Zapata, 2016). Con base en tales criterios se construyeron 30 indicadores para examinar el tipo de relaciones bilaterales con cada país al que pertenecen las ciudades, la estabilidad política de las mismas, nivel de libertad económica, estabilidad monetaria, nivel de internacionalización financiera, tendencias de la tasa de crecimiento de la población urbana para la próxima década, existencia y funcionamiento de ciudades hermanas, frecuencia de vuelos a China y procedimientos para obtener la visa en cada país, entre otros (Tu, 2018).

Las ciudades de Moscú, Hamburgo y Bangkok ocupan los primeros lugares en el análisis, lo que converge con el interés de China en fortalecer los lazos con tres áreas geográficas estratégicas: Rusia y Asia Central como un paso indispensable, Europa donde Alemania es su principal socio europeo, y Tailandia como eje geoestratégico de las relaciones con el sudeste asiático.

El hecho de que una ciudad pertenezca a un país miembro de organizaciones de cooperación internacional respaldadas por China como Brics, la Organización de Cooperación de Shanghái (OCS) y el Banco Asiático de Inversión en Infraestructura (BAII) son aspectos muy valorados en el análisis y clasificación de las ciudades, lo que se constituye en indicio

de los intentos concretos de configuración de un orden mundial distinto al planteado por la instituciones creadas en 1944 tras los acuerdos de Bretton Woods. En efecto, el BAI, creado en 2016 y el cual ya ha invertido más de 7.5 millones de dólares en diversos proyectos (*Global Times*, 2019), cuenta con la presencia de 93 países miembros (cerca de la mitad de los países del mundo), y un número significativo de ellos pertenece al continente asiático y europeo, lo que derrumba las intenciones de EE.UU. de mantener un control mayor sobre entidades multilaterales de primer orden en el mundo y de tener bajo su órbita de influencia a Eurasia.

1.1 La tecnología rebasa la geografía

BRI no solo toca y atraviesa ciudades clave en Asia central, sino que también se extiende hasta la periferia y el núcleo de Europa oriental y occidental en una red de rutas terrestres que desafían la geografía. Un simple análisis de costo-beneficio muestra las ventajas de enviar mercancías por tierra desde China a Europa. En primer lugar, la carga de un tren de China a Europa se tarda entre una cuarta parte y la mitad del tiempo que si se trasladara por mar, aunque este último es más barato. El tiempo de envío por tren está disminuyendo drásticamente con los trenes de alta velocidad. Además, el envío de mercancías por tren cuesta hasta un 65% menos que los envíos aéreos. Si bien numerosas industrias y compañías esperarían entre uno y dos meses para el transporte marítimo, un sector en crecimiento, como son las compañías de alta tecnología y alta gama, necesita ciertas piezas y equipo esencial lo más rápido y lo más barato posible. El 60% de los insumos de material para computadoras portátiles y el 30% de las computadoras portátiles terminadas dependen del transporte ferroviario. Llevarlos dentro y fuera del mayor centro industrial que es la ciudad de Chongqing (en el centro sur de China) por mar es costoso y consume mucho tiempo. Requiere un largo viaje

en tren a Shanghái o Hong Kong, los principales puertos desde donde se envían los contenedores a Europa (Chen y Mardeusz, 2015). Sin embargo, las líneas ferroviarias transcontinentales no pueden competir con el flete marítimo en el precio ni con el transporte aéreo a tiempo (Chen, 2018a). En última instancia, son un modo intermedio de transporte de larga distancia en términos de tiempo de tránsito y costo de envío (Chen, 2018b).

Al conectar un número creciente de trenes de carga con destino a Europa desde varias ciudades de China, Asia Central se ha convertido en un espacio cada vez más indispensable para la logística del transporte y los centros de transmisión. En la región, Kazajstán, por su ubicación geoestratégica para el establecimiento de rutas obligadas de tránsito, se destaca como el país más importante de Asia central para unir a China y Europa y vincularlas a través del comercio terrestre de larga distancia. Toda la región se ha convertido en el destino de un conjunto alternativo de líneas de trenes que se originan en varias ciudades y regiones de China. El resto de Asia central y sus países vecinos, como Irán y Afganistán, han comenzado a construir rutas y conexiones, ampliando así el comercio entre China y Asia central a incluso una región más grande conocida como “Asia interior” que se superpone parcialmente, pero se extiende más allá de Asia central (Chen, 2018b).

Al haber construido varios ductos de energía desde Asia central y muchas líneas de trenes a Europa, China ha disminuido la distancia con el Asia central. Además, la fuerza acumulada de estos ductos transfronterizos y líneas de trenes ha comenzado a volver a ubicar a Asia central como el eje axial del BRI con innegable impacto geopolítico.

2. IMPORTANCIA GEOPOLÍTICA DE BRI

2.1. BRI en perspectiva doméstica

Uno de los más grandes retos de la dinastía Qing (1644-1912) fue ultimar la destrucción definitiva del enorme poderío militar nómada de las estepas de Asia central a fines de la década de 1750. Alcanzado ese objetivo, el mayor logro de los Qing fue vincular el *hinterland* del interior asiático -Tíbet, Xinjiang, Mongolia y Manchuria- con el centro asiático oriental de China, constituyendo una vasta red de poder (Darwin, 2012). Dicha victoria no debe desconocer la innegable influencia que recibió China por siglos en su zona oeste desde el Asia Central, una influencia de origen túrquico-islámica. A su vez, haberse hecho a la región denominada Xinjiang (que se traduce del chino como nueva (新, xīn) frontera (疆 (jiāng)) le significó a China desde un punto de vista geopolítico una barrera de protección que le permitió mantener un cinturón de seguridad y una distancia prudente respecto al Asia central, con lo cual la hoy región autónoma de Xinjiang le es crucial para la estabilidad de su vasto territorio en la frontera occidental¹. Dicha claridad geopolítica en el contexto del proceso de reforma y apertura chinos se vinculó con la estrategia china de “Go West”, la cual se enfocó en el desarrollo del oeste lejano, despoblado y ruralizado, rezagado del desarrollo espectacular de la costa este. Desde inicios de la segunda década del siglo XXI, el Estado central se dedicó, entonces, a redirigir el capital excedente de su región costera hacia el oeste chino como medio para

1 En el capítulo 11 de esta publicación se hace referencia a las políticas chinas y tratados transfronterizos para garantizar la soberanía de China en el territorio y mermar amenazas a la seguridad regional. Sin embargo, el autor del capítulo 12 es más reflexivo en cuanto la represión contra los musulmanes en Xinjiang y cómo esto puede afectar la relación de China con los países del Asia central.

minimizar los brotes de inestabilidad y mantener la unidad en medio de las diferencias étnicas, religiosas y culturales.

Entre tanto, el presidente Xi Jinping lanzaba en 2013 la iniciativa de la Franja y la Ruta destacando el rol que de ahora en adelante tendrían los Estados fronterizos con China: “la zona de los alrededores de China es estratégicamente muy importante para nuestro país en términos de geografía, medio ambiente y relaciones mutuas” (Qian Tong [钱彤], 2013), con lo cual hacía alusión a un giro trascendental en política exterior consistente en que las relaciones fronterizas se elevaban a un estatus igual o más importante que las relaciones con Estados Unidos (Yan, 2014; Lei, 2015).

Este importante anuncio, si bien pasó inadvertido en países de occidente, develó una nueva realidad: China anunciaba una propuesta que cambiaría el sistema de pesos y contrapesos en el orden mundial al concentrar su atención no solo en la gran superpotencia que es Estados Unidos, sino que también daría el mismo o mayor nivel de atención a su propio vecindario. Esta política china tenía un propósito hacia adentro de sus fronteras: la iniciativa exterior ayudaría a cerrar la brecha entre las áreas internas pobres y la opulenta costa del Pacífico chino, impulsando de manera indirecta aún más el “Go West”. Se trata de un propósito que se cataloga como prioridad del gobierno chino para las próximas décadas.

En el marco de dicha política, casi todas las provincias de China desarrollaron su propio plan BRI para complementar el plan nacional. Dichos planes tienen como común denominador el desarrollo regional en cuya base están las ciudades como una realidad concreta: las ciudades son los pilares del BRI. Desde la perspectiva de los académicos chinos², la razón subyacente de la transformación urbana, la

2 Específicamente aquellos notables que pertenecen a la connotada Academia de Ciencias Sociales de Shanghai.

revolución urbana más grande y más rápida en la historia mundial, iniciada con el proceso de reforma y apertura y promovida ahora por el BRI, es que el nivel de urbanización de un país está correlacionado con su nivel de crecimiento económico. A la creación de 100 ciudades de un millón de habitantes más 200 ciudades de 500 mil habitantes bajo la política de urbanización iniciada en 2014, se suma la rápida internacionalización de las ciudades chinas, la cual se refleja en los resultados evidentes de informes como el Global Cities Report 2018, que registra un aumento exponencial de las ciudades chinas globalizadas: de 7 en 2008 a 27 en 2018 (A.T. Kearney's, 2018).

El BRI tiene en ese contexto como primer ganador al oeste chino, ubicado en el corazón de la iniciativa. La política denominada de “Desarrollo Combinado” a través de las asociaciones entre ciudades tiene como objetivo concreto nivelar el desarrollo del oeste con el que ya existe en el este. La alianza entre Shanghái, Shenzhen y Kashgar es el caso más ejemplarizante de esta política, donde las distancias no son un obstáculo. Shanghái, la ciudad más cosmopolita y centro financiero del país, se unió a Shenzhen, la capital tecnológica, ubicadas ambas en la costa este, en asociación con Kashgar, una ciudad remota ubicada en la frontera con Pakistán. El gobierno de Shenzhen ha otorgado 10 mil millones de yuanes (USD \$ 1,5 mil millones) para construir un nuevo campus para la Universidad de Kashgar y algunas compañías en Shanghái han establecido nuevas fábricas allí. A través de políticas públicas, estas tres ciudades están conectadas para construir obras de infraestructura a través de asociaciones públicas y privadas, generando empleo, así como el empoderamiento económico de Kashgar.

2.2. BRI en perspectiva regional: el rol de Asia central

El gobierno chino está haciendo uso de la “Diplomacia de Periferia”, una política donde las ciudades asumen el papel

preeminente, conectando así importantes centros regionales representados por ciudades fronterizas y aquellos que son polos de desarrollo en diferentes países de la región de Asia central. China ha ingresado a este nuevo espacio regional con una estrategia inicialmente geoeconómica para promover el comercio, asegurar el suministro de energía y construir infraestructura transfronteriza. Un importante antecedente del BRI son los logros alcanzados en el marco de la OCS. El BRI es, de cierta manera, consecuencia de los logros de dicha organización y de lo exitosa que ha resultado la OCS para China³. La RPCh ahora puede liderar procesos como BRI, debido a que no solo los conflictos de la frontera entre China, Rusia y las nuevas repúblicas de Asia central fueron resueltos, sino que las políticas de seguridad en la región han sido consistentes, las políticas económicas y los proyectos de infraestructura en materia de viaductos los ha integrado más. Esto allanó el camino para que China desarrollara su “Far West” en Xinjiang, con lo que su ambiciosa iniciativa prefiguró la integración de la RPCh con Eurasia. Tal integración dio como resultado que China sea el mayor socio comercial de toda la región desde 2013, reemplazando el dominio ruso en el comercio con Asia central (Krasnopol'sky, 2013).

3 Tras una etapa en la que se denominaron los 5 de Shanghái, la OCS se creó oficialmente en 2001, y hoy día reúne a China, Rusia, Kazajistán, Kirguistán, Tayikistán y Uzbekistán junto a India y Pakistán, además de contar con países observadores y socios de diálogo como Irán, Turquía y Afganistán. Se trata de la más grande organización transregional que involucra a más del 60% de Eurasia, el 49% de la población mundial (3.500 millones de personas) y el 25% del PIB mundial, lo que contrasta con la dimensión del G-7: representa el 15% de área terrestre, el 10% de la población mundial, y el 39% del PIB mundial. Si bien el porcentaje del PIB mundial de los miembros más activos de la OCS es más bajo que el de los del G-7, su capacidad de crecimiento económico es exponencial. La OCS está destinada a convertirse en piedra angular en asuntos multilaterales de Eurasia, y referente obligado de la agenda global en pocos años (GÓMEZ, 2017).

Pero lo que sustenta su real interés en la zona han sido los hallazgos que, en materia de recursos minero-energéticos, se encontraron en dicha región del mundo. La denominada política de “Diplomacia energética” que China ha desarrollado en Asia central surgió a raíz de los depósitos de gas natural en Turkmenistán y que representan la cuarta reserva más grande del mundo con no menos de veinte billones de metros cúbicos bajo el subsuelo. Uzbekistán y Kirguistán albergan la segunda reserva de oro más grande del mundo (Frankopan, 2015, p. 581). Kazajistán tiene la segunda mayor dotación de reservas probadas de petróleo crudo de Eurasia después de Rusia (Forbes, 2019), y es fuente de las denominadas tierras raras, además de uranio y plutonio. En tal contexto, la “Diplomacia energética” le representa a China dos objetivos concretos, uno en el orden de la seguridad energética y otro en el orden de la estabilidad política.

El primero está ligado a la creación de una zona de libre comercio en Asia central y al papel central de Kazajistán como gran proveedor de recursos minero-energéticos. Y el segundo refiere al nexo entre capital y coerción para utilizar los términos de Charles Tilly (1992) y que, aplicado a la situación de inestabilidad política en zonas como la Región Autónoma Uigur de Xinjiang, donde grupos secundados desde el extranjero abogan por la independencia y creación de un Turkestán oriental, hace uso del desarrollo económico como elemento disuasorio frente a las amenazas de los grupos islamistas, principalmente de Afganistán, que apoyan a activistas separatistas en Xinjiang. Mientras el primer objetivo está enfocado en la esfera doméstica, el segundo alberga la preocupación por la estabilidad política tanto dentro de las fronteras chinas como en la región de Asia central.

2.2.1. La seguridad energética

Respecto al primer objetivo, es preciso afirmar que China ha acelerado dramáticamente su consumo de gas. Con millares

de rascacielos y construcciones de todo tipo en sus cientos de ciudades que deben enfriarse y calentarse, China se ha convertido en un gigante en el consumo general de energía del mundo, al punto que se convirtió en el mayor consumidor del planeta en menos de 20 años, y ahora representa casi el 20% del consumo total de energía global. El rápido crecimiento de la demanda china de energía ha superado con creces su oferta interna. Su auge económico requiere que China importe más de la mitad del petróleo que necesita. Según la Administración de Información de Energía (EIA) de EE.UU., China puede importar aproximadamente el 75% del petróleo crudo que consumirá hasta 2035. Esto ha convertido a China en el mayor importador de petróleo del mundo representando el 16.7% de las importaciones mundiales de petróleo crudo en 2015, ligeramente por delante de los Estados Unidos, con un 16,5%. El consumo de gas natural en China también ha aumentado en la última década. El gas natural consumido en China en 2011 representó el 23.7% del consumo mundial de energía (Fazilov y Chen, 2013). La importación de gas de China está creciendo de manera exponencial, la creciente demanda de energía de China ha ampliado sus fuentes de importaciones, incluida Asia central y específicamente para Kazajistán, China puede ayudar a diversificar su sector energético.

En 2011, Oriente Medio, incluido Irán, le suministró 2,6 millones de barriles por día (51% del total de barriles que compra China); África, 1,2 millones de barriles por día (24%), la región de Asia y el Pacífico 173,000 barriles por día (3%) y otros países 1,1 millones de barriles / día (22%). China se ha vuelto muy dependiente de varios países en el Medio Oriente y África. Para acabar esta dependencia, China ha comenzado a diversificar sus fuentes de energía internacionales al patrocinar el desarrollo de oleoductos con destino a China en Myanmar y Asia Central. Mientras tanto, el vector de Asia central de la política energética de China se ha vuelto considerablemente más importante, debido a

su abundancia de depósitos de petróleo y gas natural, y la relativa estabilidad regional. Por tal razón, la RPCh ha buscado establecer una zona de libre comercio regional, en parte como una forma de aprovechar los vastos recursos energéticos de la región. Hoy en día, los principales actores energéticos chinos en la región son la Corporación Nacional de Petróleo de China (CNPC), la Corporación Nacional de Petróleo Marítimo de China (CNOOC), la Corporación de Petróleo y Química de China (SINOPEC) y Petro China. Se han asociado con compañías locales para competir con jugadores tradicionales como Rusia y compañías multinacionales como Chevron, ExxonMobil y BP en la exploración y extracción de petróleo y gas natural (Fazilov y Chen, 2013).

Ya están en funcionamiento dos viaductos gigantescos desde Asia central a China, el oleoducto Kazajstán-China y el gasoducto Asia central-China, dado el plan de China para aumentar las importaciones de gas de Asia central en cinco veces desde el 2015. El gasoducto de Asia central-China abarca Turkmenistán, Uzbekistán y Kazajstán, y el cruce de Xinjiang en la ciudad fronteriza de Horgos. Está conectado con el segundo gasoducto de este a oeste de China, que comienza en Horgos y termina en Hong Kong, con una extensión de 8704 km. El gasoducto Asia central-China con una capacidad anual de 85 mil millones de metros cúbicos, será el sistema de transmisión de gas más grande de Asia Central (Chen, 2018b).

China considera a Kazajstán como una fuente y un vínculo clave en su nexo de seguridad energética, y considera que la cooperación ayuda a fortalecer y asegurar sus fronteras noroccidentales de un Xinjiang inquieto e inestable. La cooperación también permite apoyar el programa “Go West” de China y lo ayuda a obtener un mayor acceso a los mercados de Asia Central. Algunos expertos consideran que la creciente cooperación entre China y Kazajstán en el campo de la energía está vinculada a los intereses estratégicos a largo plazo de los dos países, en especial desde que

se enfrentaron a una mayor presencia militar de los Estados Unidos en Asia central después del 11 de septiembre de 2001.

2.2.2 La estabilidad política

La estabilidad política de la región de Asia central desde la perspectiva china está determinada por lo que representa Afganistán, un proto-Estado ocupado por fuerzas extremistas como los talibanes. La guerra de los Estados Unidos en Afganistán culminó oficialmente el 28 de diciembre de 2014. No obstante, miles de tropas de la OTAN, lideradas por Estados Unidos, permanecen en el país para entrenar y asesorar a fuerzas del gobierno afgano. La guerra de 2001 a la fecha se ha traducido en más de 90.000 muertes relacionadas directamente con la guerra, que incluyen los insurgentes, los civiles afganos y las fuerzas gubernamentales (CBS, 2014).

Ubicado en el cruce entre Asia central y Asia del sur, con India en el sureste, Rusia en el norte, y China en el este, Afganistán, con su ubicación geoestratégica, es potencialmente hoy una parte crítica de la red de comercio e inversión de China hacia el oeste bajo el BRI. Si bien la gran necesidad de infraestructura de Afganistán es una nueva oportunidad para la inversión exterior china, sus vastos recursos naturales atraen a la RPCh. De hecho, China ha comenzado a encontrar formas de involucrar a Afganistán en el corredor económico China-Pakistán (CPEC, por sus siglas en inglés), un eje articulador del BRI. Sin embargo, a China le preocupan los talibanes y otros grupos militantes islamistas en Afganistán debido a sus posibles vínculos con la población musulmana en Xinjiang. El mortal ataque de los talibanes en una base del ejército afgano en Mazar-e-Sharif en abril de 2017 que dio como resultado más de 100 soldados muertos, es una clara advertencia del peligro para China de hacer negocios en Afganistán. A través de una alianza antiterrorista con Afganistán, Pakistán y Tayikistán para hacer frente a la amenaza del terrorismo, en el marco

de lo que China denomina “Las tres fuerzas malignas” (separatismo, extremismo y terrorismo), la RPCh ha anunciado 70 millones de dólares de ayuda militar para apoyar los esfuerzos antiterroristas del gobierno afgano (Stanzel, 2017).

La estrategia china tiene un primer objetivo doméstico consistente en fomentar el desarrollo de vínculos estrechos con Asia central a través de la financiación de iniciativas de infraestructura, en particular en el ámbito energético, con el objeto de disuadir las amenazas de los activistas separatistas en la Región Autónoma Uigur de Xinjiang. Para ello, China también ha reorganizado las unidades del ejército en Xinjiang para salvaguardar sus campos petroleros, dada la frontera oeste de 3300 km con Kazajistán, Kirguistán y Tayikistán (Chen, 2018b).

El recurrente énfasis del gobierno chino por la seguridad en Afganistán como eje determinante de la estabilidad en la región recuerda la importancia geopolítica central de Afganistán en el pasado, en lo que se denominó el “Gran Juego” original, acuñado en 1830 por Arthur Connolly, capitán del ejército británico en India, y que aludía a la rivalidad entre los imperios ruso y británico por ocupar territorios de Asia central y meridional, donde Afganistán representaba el Estado tapón entre los dos proyectos imperialistas.

3. GRANDES DESAFÍOS GENERADOS POR BRI EN PERSPECTIVA GLOBAL

Entre los desafíos a que está dando lugar el BRI desde una perspectiva geopolítica, dos se destacan por la dimensión y los Estados involucrados: The Five Eyes y el Proyecto Indo-Pacífico. El primero (FVEY, por sus siglas en inglés) refiere a la alianza en asuntos de inteligencia conformada por la esfera anglo del mundo tras la segunda posguerra con la suscripción del acuerdo multilateral conocido como Ukusa Agreement (5 de marzo de 1946), la cual está constituida por Reino Unido, Estados Unidos, Canadá, Australia y Nueva

Zelanda. Este grupo ha establecido alianzas para espionaje con países como Alemania y Japón, lo cual es indicio de un frente internacional más amplio contra las operaciones e inversiones de influencia china (Reuters, 2018).

Para los Estados Unidos, “Indo-Pacífico” es su nuevo proyecto en la era pospolítica del pivote, la cual había sido inaugurada durante la era Obama, pero no tuvo desarrollo ni alcance concreto. Después de los Estados Unidos, Japón es el jugador más activo en el marco del proyecto “Indo-Pacífico”, el cual comprende desde la ciudad de San Diego en California hasta las islas de Diego García, desde el Pacífico hasta el este del océano Índico (68 grados al este), incluida la India. En efecto, India ha sido vinculada a esta iniciativa debido a tres motivaciones: las desavenencias entre India y China por la sólida alianza económica y militar entre China y Pakistán (Pakistán es el primer comprador de armas chinas en el mundo); por considerar al BRI como un interés netamente chino y no abierto y multilateral, y porque China está ampliando su área de influencia a lo largo y ancho del océano Índico y los países aledaños como Pakistán, Malasia, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka y Nepal, lo cual riñe con el papel histórico y actual de India como líder natural de la región. Ya en 2010 el reconocido analista geopolítico Robert D. Kaplan advertía que la presencia de la India puede contrarrestar la creciente influencia china en Myanmar y Tailandia ante la aspiración china para la consolidación de una “cortina de bambú” en el sudeste asiático (Kaplan, 2010, p. 127).

El proyecto en curso del corredor económico Pakistán-China (CPEC) desde el puerto de Gwadar en el océano Índico hasta la ciudad fronteriza de Kashgar en Xinjiang, si se completa con éxito y entra en funcionamiento, aportará un salto cualitativo al comercio chino con el mundo al facilitar y acortar el acceso al mar para el noroeste y suroeste de China, que carece de litoral y lo acerca a sus vecinos de Asia central, meridional y del golfo Pérsico. Esta iniciativa ha dado lugar a que se incentive la alianza militar entre Estados Unidos

e India quienes específicamente en esta zona noroeste del Índico han desarrollado ejercicios militares conjuntos.

El “Indo-Pacífico”, sin embargo, carece de un componente económico como el BRI, pero conlleva un componente estratégico significativo. El “Indo-Pacífico” converge con la estrategia japonesa denominada “El Arco de la Libertad y la Prosperidad” de Asia oriental, una diplomacia que fue abandonada por las críticas al tono beligerante de Japón bajo dicha iniciativa después de la segunda posguerra. El “Indo-Pacífico” podría avanzar hacia una alianza política entre los Estados Unidos, Japón, India, Australia, Corea del Sur, Singapur y algunos otros países. No obstante, las posturas de algunos de los países vinculados no son tan sólidas contra China en este escenario multilateral por la relación directa de casi todos con Asia-Pacífico, y la preeminencia allí de China, la gran socia de todos en materia económica y comercial, lo cual se funda en el temor a represalias por las relaciones comerciales existentes con China y por los compromisos en el BRI.

El almirante John Aquinilo, al tomar el mando de la Flota del Pacífico de los Estados Unidos en mayo de 2018, advirtió a su audiencia que “la competencia con grandes potencias ha resurgido como el desafío central para la seguridad y la prosperidad. En ninguna parte las apuestas de esa gran competencia de poder son más altas que aquí en el Indo-Pacífico” (Aquinilo, 2018).

China ha impulsado un nuevo conjunto de conexiones económicas y de infraestructura en ambas direcciones a través de Asia central desafiando el poder de grandes potencias como EE.UU., India y Japón. China ha asegurado el flujo de petróleo y gas a través de varios oleoductos de larga distancia desde Turkmenistán en el oeste hasta su costa este. En relación con su mayor fuente de petróleo que es el Medio Oriente, China debe transportar el crudo por mar, mientras ha ganado gran terreno en Asia central a través de la construcción de oleoductos terrestres que recorren un

trayecto más corto que la vía marítima. De hecho, China ha relegado a Estados Unidos a tener una empresa de energía de segundo nivel en Asia central, donde sus compañías petroleras privadas, grandes como ExxonMobil, no se enfrentan a los poderosos gigantes petroleros estatales de China, como China National Petroleum Company (CNPC) (Fazilov y Chen, 2013). Además del petróleo y el gas de Asia central, China también se beneficia de las reservas de uranio, la producción de energías renovables que se están fomentando en Kazajistán, y los depósitos de arena de cuarzo de la región, que son esenciales para la industria de celdas solares de China.

Los numerosos trenes de China y Asia central han facilitado la estrategia de desarrollo “Go West” de la RPCh al inducir a más empresas manufactureras a trasladar la producción de la región costera a ciudades más baratas del interior, lo que a su vez fomenta un desarrollo regional más equilibrado. Al mismo tiempo, los trenes de carga que se originan en ciudades como Yiwu y Xiamen en la región costera, han beneficiado a las economías de Asia central, sur de Asia y del Medio Oriente de manera más directa, ya que los grandes pedidos de bienes de consumo hechos en China se pueden enviar más rápido y más barato por tierra. Además, el recorrido de estos trenes hace posible que también se beneficien los fabricantes más pequeños y las empresas de logística, especialmente las agrupadas en torno a Yiwu (Chen, 2015).

3.1. El rol central de las ciudades

El BRI evidencia el posicionamiento de ciudades hoy día catalogadas como pertenecientes a países del mundo en desarrollo, pero con un gran horizonte de expansión económica en el futuro, lo que confirma las proyecciones del estable y acelerado ritmo de crecimiento del Producto Interno Bruto (PIB) de países en desarrollo. Este es el caso de las ciudades

“emergentes” ubicadas en Asia Central como Astaná, o en el sudeste asiático como Kuala Lumpur. Particularmente diciente es el rol que recuperan ciudades con un pasado próspero y decisivo para el desarrollo de la antigua ruta de seda. Ciudades al interior de China como Xian y Kashgar, así como aquellas ubicadas en el exterior como Samarkanda, Estambul e Isfahan son un ejemplo de esto.

Xian, antiguo punto de partida y llegada de mercaderes de la Ruta y de los eruditos y estudiantes en conocimientos budistas, fue otrora la ciudad más populosa del mundo (cerca de un millón de habitantes en el año 900 d.C.). Kashgar, localizada justo antes del inicio del desierto de Taklamakán, fue un antiguo santuario budista, islámico y cristiano según la época, y uno de los principales ejes comerciales, ya fuere como capital del reino Kushan o como capital del Estado de Karakánidas. Kashgar junto con Urumqi han desarrollado zonas económicas especiales, parques tecnológicos y centros de distribución de bienes para el Asia central por constituirse en las últimas ciudades antes de la frontera noroccidental china.

Samarkanda, capital del imperio de Tamerlán, una ciudad cosmopolita destruida varias veces, fue tan próspera como poderosa, y hoy se revitaliza como el mayor hub de Asia Central y paso obligado de la vía férrea que hace parte de la ruta principal del BRI. Isfahan, denominada durante siglos como la ciudad más bella del Oriente Medio, antigua capital de Persia y uno de los principales y más grandes polos de la Ruta de Seda para el comercio aqueménida, sasánida y safávida, hoy día tendrá una nueva vía férrea de alta velocidad que la conecta con Qom y Teherán, proyecto que contó con una financiación del 40% por parte de China (Azadani, 2016), en el marco de la iniciativa de la Nueva Ruta de la Seda.

La gran transformación urbana china no solo destaca por su dimensión monumental, también evidencia que las ciudades medianas y pequeñas, las ciudades-región y la

internacionalización de las ciudades vuelven a recuperar su papel histórico en las dinámicas globales. Así mismo, el incremento en el impacto internacional de las provincias al interior de Estados también cobra vigencia como es el caso del Estado de Victoria en Australia que, a diferencia del Estado australiano, suscribió el Acuerdo de Entendimiento con China sobre el proyecto BRI, lo que supone la ruptura de una de las normas básicas de la diplomacia urbana: el necesario alineamiento y coherencia de la acción exterior de regiones y provincias con la política exterior nacional.

El BRI se constituye no solo en el proyecto globalizador chino sino a la vez en un cuestionamiento de fondo en el orden internacional al desafiar al Estado-nación como la unidad básica y el protagonista por excelencia del actual sistema internacional, como se había establecido a partir de los acuerdos de Westfalia en 1648, con lo cual las ciudades recuperan su papel histórico en las dinámicas globales. El rol preponderante de las ciudades como motores del crecimiento económico de los Estados, sumado a una agenda política autónoma de la agenda nacional y con política de internacionalización propia independiente del Estado central son factores determinantes que cobran atención frente al debilitamiento general del Estado-nación (Engelke, 2015; Acuto, 2011; Alger, 2013). Esto amerita la pregunta planteada por Black en el sentido de cuestionar por qué las ciudades (y las provincias) suelen quedar excluidas de los análisis de geopolítica, cuando es evidente su carácter global (Black, 2015).

En el marco del proceso globalizador actual, China no solo está desempeñando un rol determinante en la configuración de un nuevo orden mundial en términos del ascenso de un Estado a la categoría de potencia mundial en los términos de Nicholas Spykman (1944), sino que está a la vez contribuyendo de manera dinámica a la configuración de un orden urbano mundial a través de la iniciativa del BRI.

CONCLUSIONES Y RECOMENDACIONES

El BRI se constituye en la estrategia china para, a partir del afianzamiento de las relaciones con el exterior, fortalecer el desarrollo hacia adentro del Estado chino. Los agentes que impulsan este proceso son las ciudades tanto chinas como extranjeras que en calidad de centros desde donde se operan las conexiones de China con el mundo, son los referentes para establecer vías de comunicación y transporte con un impacto no solo físico en términos del traslado de personas, bienes y capitales, sino con un impacto prominente en la geopolítica mundial. En dicho proceso, Asia central se constituye en el corazón de la iniciativa por donde, en las décadas venideras, serán sus ciudades escenarios que ya no solo verán como testigos oculares el despliegue de China como gran potencia mundial, sino que impulsarán la economía y las relaciones de los países de esa región con el mundo.

China y el BRI están contribuyendo, de manera crucial, no solo a la construcción de un nuevo orden mundial que controvierte el actual, sino también a la constitución de un nuevo orden urbano mundial.

En el marco de su proyecto globalizador, China ha sobrepasado las fronteras euroasiáticas para abarcar proyectos también colosales de infraestructura que implican a América Latina. En esa medida, la RPCh enfrenta una serie de desafíos proporcionales a sus propuestas. En particular, desde la perspectiva latinoamericana existe el interrogante acerca del papel de este subcontinente en el marco del BRI, interrogante que no es despejado por China si bien está haciendo uso de la “diplomacia de periferia”. Esto denota que Latinoamérica no fue incluida sino hasta ya avanzada la iniciativa del BRI, cuando comenzó a vislumbrarse el tamaño, el alcance, el número de países comprometidos y los montos destinados para el financiamiento de las obras.

El 17 de mayo de 2015 el primer ministro chino Li Keqiang, acompañado de su esposa Cheng Hong y una delegación de más de cien personas iniciaron una gira por Suramérica, la cual los llevó a Brasil, Colombia, Perú y Chile. El objetivo central de este viaje fue plantar los cimientos de la “Nueva Ruta de la Seda hacia Latinoamérica”, con el proyecto de construcción del ferrocarril bioceánico⁴ que une los océanos Atlántico con el Pacífico sur al atravesar parte de Brasil, Bolivia y Perú. No obstante, dicho proyecto aún está por ejecutarse.

Las dos cumbres internacionales de la Ruta de la Seda china realizadas en mayo de 2017 y abril de 2019, además de reunir un número creciente de jefes de Estado y representantes de 68 y 125 países respectivamente, no arroja luces claras para América Latina acerca de su rol en dicha iniciativa.

Hasta ahora, once países latinoamericanos han firmado el memorando de entendimiento sobre la cooperación en el marco del BRI, pero no han realizado estudios integrales, en áreas concretas y para el largo plazo con miras a evaluar la viabilidad o no de la propuesta en este subcontinente. Esta ausencia de claridad es un reflejo del verdadero desafío que implica el BRI: más allá de la propuesta de “gana-gana” que profesa, subyace un *modus operandi* distinto al que Latinoamérica está acostumbrada con el mundo europeizado y anglo. Ese es el gran reto para China, hacer inteligible la propuesta.

Por su parte, América Latina representa tres grandes desafíos para China que debe enfrentar en el marco del BRI: 1) Las ciudades latinoamericanas no son una categoría administrativa, como lo son en China, sino un hecho

4 También es llamado ferrocarril transamazónico o 两洋铁路. Castro, P. (17/05/2015). La Ruta de la Seda se extiende a Sudamérica. *El Comercio*. Disponible en <http://elcomercio.pe/blog/viachina/2015/05/la-ruta-de-la-seda-se-extiende-a-sudamerica>

urbano (Lucena, 2006). El proceso de conquista español implicó la creación o la refundación de ciudades existentes en la América prehispánica que con el paso del tiempo se consolidaron como centros urbanos donde el poder municipal fue superado por el crecimiento urbano. El incipiente proceso de construcción del Estado en América Latina ha llevado a la falta de control territorial de los Estados y la ausencia de políticas eficientes para las ciudades (Patiño, 2016). En América Latina el crecimiento urbano no está necesariamente correlacionado con desarrollo. 2) Las ciudades latinoamericanas tienen las tasas más altas de violencia urbana en el mundo: 43 de las 50 ciudades más violentas del mundo están ubicadas en América Latina. Las ciudades se convierten en escenarios para todo tipo de violencia debido a la disputa por el control de los territorios y la presencia de actores ilegales (CCSPJP, 2019). Para estudiar las opciones de BRI en América Latina, no se pueden seguir los mismos parámetros de análisis utilizados en otras latitudes. El contexto latinoamericano tiene sus propias realidades que es preciso saber discernir.

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REFLEXIONES FINALES E INVITACIÓN A LA ACADEMIA

SORAYA CARO VARGAS

Los investigadores que han concurrido a esta publicación abren paso a una primera conclusión, la globalización no es un arcaísmo, no ha entrado en una fase de decadencia, la globalización se encuentra en un período de ajuste y de profunda transformación. Aprender a leerla en otra clave desestabiliza, entenderla desde la perspectiva asiática brinda un mayor grado de complejidad. La disputa por mantener el liderazgo del proceso es natural, así como naturales son las aspiraciones de las potencias que emergen, su capacidad decisoria e injerencia en los nuevos temas globales. Los diferentes capítulos dejan ver que los conflictos entre potencias tradicionales y emergentes no se plantean en torno al territorio y sus fronteras. Al territorio se llega mediante intensos desarrollos en materia de conectividad física y digital, dos escenarios que conforman las infraestructuras conectivas y dibujan nuevos mapas de poder para Occidente y Oriente. La soberanía adquiere una nueva dimensión.

La eliminación de barreras al flujo de bienes, servicios y personas ya no es el fin último de las economías que lideran el proceso globalizador, ni las instituciones que los administran siguen siendo indispensables para lograr la integración de las naciones a dinámicas económicas. La iniciativa china es un buen ejemplo de la realidad descrita. BRI no es una propuesta espontánea, recoge procesos de

planeación y prospectiva contruidos por el Estado chino y por las economías limítrofes durante las últimas décadas. En lo corrido de estos años esas naciones han sido testigos y actores de la transformación de las fuerzas productivas, del brío en el cambio tecnológico, de la fragmentación de la producción y la consecuente consolidación de cadenas globales de valor.

La velocidad con la que el modelo globalizador permitió esos cambios también dio cabida al desarrollo de las economías asiáticas y dejó en evidencia necesidades urgentes en materia de conectividad funcional. Por supuesto, la implementación de las tecnologías 5G y, junto a ellas, los encadenamientos submarinos, la conectividad náutica, las redes de astilleros, los sistemas portuarios ligados a redes de transporte multimodal que aseguran la logística oceánica y el desarrollo de estrellas fluviales, la puesta en operación de puertos terrestres, de autopistas y espacios para el almacenamiento, aeropuertos, la relocalización de centros urbanos, redes para los flujos de información, *big data*, plataformas, implantes biotecnológicos, entre otros, son sistemas de vertebración económica que transitan y conforman los corredores económicos modernos.

Sin embargo, ni la globalización es tan profunda ni la conectividad tan extendida. Al tomar las dos variables construidas por el índice de conectividad que elabora DHL desde 2001, profundidad¹ y amplitud², encontramos datos que sorprenden: aunque en 2017 el mundo alcanzó un nivel de conectividad nunca antes visto desde 2007, el mundo tiene frente a sí un vasto terreno por recorrer. Por ejemplo, en términos de profundidad, la mayoría de los

1 Cuánto de una actividad es efectivamente internacional en comparación con una medida relevante del tamaño de su economía nacional, hablamos de flujos de comercio, capital, información o personas.

2 La distribución de los flujos internacionales de un país entre sus socios tradicionales, en correspondencia con la distribución global de los mismos.

flujos comerciales, de capital o de información, ocurren a nivel doméstico: solo el 30% de la producción global es exportada, los flujos de IED equivalen al 7% de la formación bruta de capital mundial, aproximadamente el 7% de las llamadas telefónicas, incluyendo las de internet, son internacionales, y solo el 3% de las personas viven fuera de los países donde nacieron (Altman, S., Ghemawat, P. y Bastian, P., 2019, pp. 8-12). A lo anterior, se suma la errónea percepción corporativa sobre los negocios internacionales: según el estudio de DHL, la suma de la producción de todas las multinacionales fuera de sus países de origen, alcanzó solo el 9% de la producción económica mundial en 2017 y solo el 2% de los empleados trabajaron en operaciones internacionales de firmas globales.

Si nos referimos al alcance geográfico de las operaciones de un país, los flujos de la mayoría de los países se concentran en socios estratégicos, generalmente países limítrofes y tienden a ser su primer destino de exportación. En el *ranking* de DHL para el 2018, Colombia quedó en la posición 87 entre 169 naciones. Sus principales rezagos se observan en la restringida expansión de su comercio, el limitado desarrollo de sus comunicaciones y el reducido flujo de estudiantes internacionales. La expansión de sus flujos es limitada a sus socios tradicionales, en su orden Estados Unidos 43%, Venezuela 10%, España 6%, Panamá 5%, México 4%, Chile 4%, China 4%, Ecuador 3%, Brasil 2%, Perú 2%, situación que la lleva a ocupar el puesto 21, entre los países más locales. Si nos referimos a Latinoamérica y el Caribe, la región pertenece al tercer *clúster* de países, aquel que está por debajo del promedio global, junto con Asia central, Asia meridional y África subsahariana. En el caso particular de Latinoamérica, los índices muestran decrecimiento.

De los análisis geoeconómicos, regionales y de política local elaborados por los diferentes autores, surge de inmediato una inquietud inevitable al comparar el modelo planeado y de prospectiva de desarrollo de Asia, e incluso de África,

con la escasa cohesión regional latinoamericana. Se observa, entonces, la ausencia de una visión continental de mediano y largo plazo para superar las grandes brechas que padece la región en infraestructura. Esa ausencia de sentido regional tiene como una de sus causas la ideologización de los grupos regionales o de las diferentes aspiraciones de integración (Unasur, Alba, Celac, entre otros). Se puede afirmar que el propio Mercosur y la CAN no lograron acordar una estrategia integral de conectividad, con el agravante del cambio de prioridades en materia de financiación y cooperación por parte de la banca para el desarrollo regional durante las últimas dos décadas.

Los países de América Latina recibieron la iniciativa BRI de manera reactiva. Algunos proyectos han sido financiados con éxito por China y otros se encuentran estancados o fracasaron. Las áreas de inversión en su mayoría son de corte extractivo, minero-energético, algunos se cuentan en materia de logística portuaria, en particular en Panamá, y otros pocos en las áreas de manufactura industrial y conectividad digital (Sweigart, 2019). Sin embargo, de manera paulatina, algunas medidas que dan impulso a la conectividad acaban de retomarse por parte de algunos grupos e instituciones.

El grupo regional Alianza Pacífico (AP), aprobó en julio de 2018 la creación de un fondo para la canalización de recursos para México, Colombia, Perú y Chile con destino a la financiación de proyectos de infraestructura para la integración regional. Se espera que el Fondo cuente con 1000 millones de dólares, 25 de los cuales debe aportar el organismo gestor. Por otro lado, la Corporación Andina de Fomento (CAF), aprobó en marzo de 2019 la segunda etapa del Programa de Preinversión de Infraestructura Regional (CAF-PPI), que apoyará a los países miembros en materia de diseño, formulación y análisis de proyectos de infraestructura de integración. Megaproyectos de infraestructura de vieja data, como el Corredor Vial Bioceánico (Chile, Brasil, Argentina) o el ferrocarril bioceánico central (Brasil, Bolivia,

Perú, Chile y Uruguay) han recibido el apoyo financiero de gobiernos regionales, europeos y asiáticos.

Aunque las herramientas pueden facilitarse, la noción de corredores económicos está pendiente de construirse en Latinoamérica. Los Estados deben definir los objetivos en materia conectográfica, el portafolio de proyectos regionales, la pertinencia de las obras y los impactos en materia de integración. Deben identificarse los beneficiarios, la manera de integrar a las regiones que no hacen parte del trazo de las rutas, estudiar las posibles fuentes de financiamiento, las líneas rojas en materia de requisitos de desempeño a la inversión, a la cooperación y al endeudamiento inducido. Esos son los temas vitales que no han sido discutidos de manera suficiente por la sociedad civil y sobre los que no se ha construido el necesario consenso regional.

En el caso de Colombia los retos frente a los corredores son inmensos. Superar la corrupción, la burocracia y la visión local, son tareas en curso. Los proyectos en etapa de factibilidad dejaron de ser una opción para convertirse en exigencias cotidianas de la ciudadanía. Los ejemplos son múltiples: el tren de Cundinamarca, la ferro pista en la cordillera central de los Andes, el tren Quibdó-Nuquí, el corredor férreo Chiriguaná-Dibuya, la terminación de la cuestionada Ruta del Sol, el proyecto público privado “*A Todo Tren*” para el área metropolitana de Barranquilla, la utilización de los estudios efectuados por el gobierno anterior para avanzar en el proyecto integral de conectividad Diamante Caribe o el por décadas esperado Metro de Bogotá.

El carácter disruptivo de la iniciativa China BRI no es el planteamiento de las rutas terrestres y marítimas que, sin duda, le permite hacerse a posiciones estratégicas. Está en el diseño de una narrativa integradora dirigida a los países periféricos, que se percibe incluyente, que propone una geografía multipolar, un discurso orientado al desarrollo del Sur y a la renovación de sus instituciones. Lo innovador es el ofrecimiento de escenarios de cooperación y financiamiento

alternativos a la institucionalidad occidental, desprovistos de condiciones relacionadas con asuntos que, en principio, atañen a las naciones, como la estabilidad política y financiera; es decir, herramientas no reguladas, que al final terminan siendo proposiciones unilaterales, mecanismos de endeudamiento a los que se avienen los Estados mediante contratos de adhesión.

El ascenso de China es indudable, aunque no inmediato. El escenario unipolar no será sostenible, aunque la caída de los Estados Unidos de América es más un discurso ideológico con escasa materialidad. Pero si el balance de poderes no se logra en las regiones, y la multipolaridad se consigna solo como adorno, pasaremos de un hegemon a otro o nos confrontaremos de nuevo con un escenario bipolar poco conveniente. La iniciativa BRI es parte del proceso chino de internacionalización de sus empresas y corporaciones financieras, también es una narrativa eficaz construida para su relacionamiento con países en desarrollo. Colombia y América Latina deben definir con responsabilidad su estrategia porque se les está conminando a fijar posiciones que serán incidentes en la nueva geografía global. La academia debe estar presente en el análisis y en el debate, los empresarios deben abandonar sus zonas de confort y facilitar las decisiones en materia de integración y conectividad, quienes formulan las políticas de desarrollo deben asumir su responsabilidad como parte de un Estado y no como funcionarios de gobierno.

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Post tenebras spero lucem

El fenómeno de los corredores económicos en la última década, cuya expresión más popular es la estrategia de la Franja y la Ruta propuesta por China en el 2014, ha desatado fuerzas competitivas y de interdependencia global que, soportadas en megaproyectos de infraestructura de todo tipo (viales, férreos, energéticos, digitales, satelitales, etc.), han transformado no solo la manera como interactúa el hombre contemporáneo sino también el significado de conceptos propios de la geopolítica clásica, como soberanía territorial, naciones Estado o la seguridad nacional, conminando a los gobiernos a definir, con pleno discernimiento, los lineamientos de su política exterior, en un mundo que además de ser multipolar e interconectado, se explica en medio de la incertidumbre.

Los grandes proyectos de infraestructura que han permitido conectar al oeste de China con los países de Asia central y Eurasia hasta llegar a Europa, las rutas que unen el sudeste asiático para facilitar la movilidad entre las islas y el territorio continental, los corredores viales y fluviales que conectarán internamente a la India y a esta con sus vecinos, o aquellos que permiten unir al centro con el norte de África, además de solventar falencias logísticas y de infraestructura básica de países pobres y de menor desarrollo, han alimentado grandes debates sobre su factibilidad y conveniencia, pero también sobre las alternativas que los países de Asia (China, Japón, India, Corea del Sur, Turquía) brindan a las naciones para cumplir sus metas de desarrollo y conectividad.

Precisamente de esos debates se ocupan los artículos de esta publicación, elaborados por 13 expertos de las ciencias sociales, que desde sus geografías analizan la experiencia de hacer parte de las rutas que hasta días antes de la declaración de pandemia se construían sin pausa en sus territorios. El objetivo: hacer síntesis de las experiencias para ofrecer referentes a América Latina.

Esta publicación llega justamente cuando el fenómeno del Covid marca puntos de inflexión sobre las tendencias del desarrollo y la integración. Muchos corredores seguirán su marcha, se han tornado decisivos e insustituibles, como los tendidos de cables submarinos por los que se transmiten los datos de la telefonía móvil y el internet, redes que permiten la comunicación basada en la virtualidad, sector que cobra gran protagonismo en el marco del distanciamiento, aislamiento, confinamiento colectivo y del teletrabajo. Otros megaproyectos de implicancia geopolítica serán puestos a prueba. Este trabajo es un aporte al entendimiento conceptual y un análisis sistemático del fenómeno de los corredores y de su incidencia en la geopolítica. A la vez, es una plataforma para alentar el debate sobre los nuevos rumbos de la conectividad física y digital en un escenario que al menos, por ahora, tiene en pausa la aspiración de un mundo libre de barreras y fronteras.

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