

ARTURO OROPEZA GARCÍA

CHINA



New Power Dynamics
in the XXI Century

政权建设



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*For my dear friend Héctor Fix-Fierro, who exceed the virtues of
the friendship asserted by Confucius*

There are 3 types of good friends: one that is direct and honest when they think you are wrong; one that is trust-worthy, dependable, and generous when you need help; and one that is knowledgable and talented to guide you and show you what you can't see.

The Analects of Confucius

There is no more important region of the world for us to better understand than Asia – and thus we cannot afford to keep getting Asia so wrong. Asia’s complexity has led to common misdiagnoses.

Parag KHANNA
The Future is Asian, 2019

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INTRODUCTION

I

CHINA, THE INDECIPHERABLE

The superstitious transfiguration of the Malebranche. The nation without a past on the margins of history (Hegel); that by staying out of historical development was condemned to be conquered (Engels). China, the living fossil of Marx; the country that lacked a socio-political structure, that lacked vocation for profit and that lacked transcendent morality of life (Weber). Or in the words of M. Friedman, a country incredibly ignorant on the functioning of the market and the capitalist system.¹

On the other hand, China, the *social organism that won't go away*, as that immortal empire, the millenary civilization of Graham that survives since the era of Egypt and Babylon until our days. The oldest living civilization in the land of Leys, which condemns those who remain ignorant of her to having a limited understanding of the human experience.²

China, that of the eternal debate between whether it is the same thing or the *other*. The unrecognized heterotopia. Undervalued or overvalued. The struggle between whether it is more of the same or whether we are really before the different. Whether the problem is the *difference* between the cultures and

¹ Oropesa, Arturo (2019), China y el Estado Desarrollador. Una opinión desde las líneas de construcción del poder chino. In *Estado Desarrollador. Casos exitosos y lecciones para México*, Eds. José Antonio Romero Tellaeche and Julen Berasaluce Iza. El Colegio de México.

² *Idem*.

civilizations or just the indifference that is shown historically between China and the West, or both things.³

A debate that had just barely begun in the 17th century with Michele Ruggieri and Matteo Ricci, when their first written interpretations, their personal experiences, and their dictionaries arrived.

When Europe, absorbed in its Renaissance and Illustration, dismissed, in general, the opportunity to know that *other*, far away to its ideas of *being*, *God*, *freedom*, etc., of a different worldview, distant from the Western knowledge which boasts of its universality. A debate distorted before the absence of a reciprocal clarity of the parties and aggravated in its confrontation between their mutual aspirations to greatness.

This debate, which was tainted from the outset in the face of a rising Western hegemony in front of an Asian Empire in decline after more than three centuries, remains anchored to its old vices and limited by its same deficiencies, that today, in the face of the global debates of the 21st century and the Eastern Renaissance, comes to life again and demands an update from the beginning, with the aim of *ordering* a confusing and convulsive time.

Thus —Jullien says— that it is necessary to pass through China and conceive it face to face with the purpose of building a dissent at the heart of diverse intelligibilities that, “Become understandable as they look at each other directly”, which leads to a, “Dialogue of cultures”, away from the prevailing tautology of silly, closed identities.⁴

On the threshold of the third decade of the 21st century, China remains a challenge open to interpretation, just as the West is largely for China. A challenge, that fleeing from the mutual prejudices of the parties and of the common places, aspires to the construction of a new global dialogue in tune with the major issues of our time.

³ Jullien, François (2005). *La China da que pensar*. Ed. Anthropos.

⁴ *Idem*.

II

The 70th anniversary of the triumph of the People's Republic of China Revolution is presented as a new opportunity to review the progress on the subject during these seven decades in which this phenomenon has gone through multiple interpretations and approaches.

It can be said that China itself, since the end of its empire in 1911, has contributed much to propagate this confusion. In light of the decline of its empire and the hegemonic presence of a *civilizing force* it had never faced before, China lost its way, and the emergence of multiple existential doubts was part of an overwhelmed social body. Naturally, the immediacy and failure of the moment led to the dislike of the past as a first reaction; of that past that had not served to successfully confront superior military forces, unknown technology, and multidisciplinary cultural bodies, that as part of a whole, made the millennial China look *small*.

Quickly forgetting its success measured in millennia, Mao Zedong, in a First Stage of Reconstruction (1949-1976), orders as the central point of a new China, the elimination of the past, of those “4 old” elements of the Chinese culture that had to be removed because they had been the cause of its decline and defeat. Destroying the ancient uses, the ancient contributions, the ancient culture, and the ancient thought, and with it the Confucian past, was part of a new political will that *naively* believed that the powerful and current roots of Chinese culture could simply be substituted overnight. As Octavio Paz says, “Cultures are realities that resist with immense vitality to the accidents of history and of time”.⁵ The same Chairman Mao agreed with this opinion in 1972, four years before his death, when he answered to President Nixon when he commended him for having trans-

⁵ Oropeza, Arturo (ed.) (2009). *China-Latinoamérica. Una Visión sobre el nuevo papel de China en la Región*. Instituto de Investigaciones Jurídicas, UNAM.

formed the Chinese civilization: “I have not been able to change it. I only achieved it in a few places around Beijing”.⁶

Nevertheless, an entire generation inside and outside China buried Confucianism and the inheritance of a millennial time.

In 1978, with the installation of a Second Political Stage of Repositioning with Deng Xiaoping (1978-2012), China again surprises its internal and external exegetes, and in the historical framework of a First Reform and Opening, breaking with its ancestral history of isolation, collapses its political and economic walls and goes out as an actor to a global stage full of challenges and opportunities where China had never been, under the slogan “...there are no fundamental contradictions between Socialism and the Market Economy”.⁷

The 28-character policy that Deng imposed on China at this stage, also confused the West about the vision of the possible resurgence of a population of more than 900 million persons that at that time did not reach 200 dollars per capita. Under this policy, it was established that China should calmly observe global issues, secure positions, address the issues with peace of mind, hide skills and tackle the opportune moment, be good at keeping a low profile, not lead vindications, carry operations of a modest nature.⁸

Who was that China and what did she want? Between the antipodes of Socialism and the most rampant Capitalism, the opinions were pouring out while China was growing economically at an annual average of 10%.

The coming to power of President Xi Jinping beginning in 2013 has brought with it the Third Stage in these 70 years, and

⁶ Kissinger, Henry (2012). *On China*. Penguin Books.

⁷ Oropeza, Arturo (ed.) (2008). *México-China. Culturas y Sistemas Jurídicos Comparados*. Instituto de Investigaciones Jurídicas, UNAM.

⁸ Oropeza, Arturo (2019). China y el Estado Desarrollador. Una opinión desde las líneas de construcción del poder chino. In *Estado Desarrollador. Casos exitosos y lecciones para México* (eds.) José Antonio Romero Tellaeche and Julen Berasaluce Iza. El Colegio de México.

it is the re-launch of China as a global hegemon, now in the 21st century, with the aim of achieving by 2049, a hundred years after the triumph of its revolution, the recovery of its undisputed world leadership, and along with it, that of its culture and civilization.

To this end, President Xi tells China and the global community that, “We find ourselves at a new starting point, ready to embark on a new journey together in the quest for common development and the shared dream of a better life, through the construction of a Socialism with Chinese characteristics for a New Age” (Xi, Jinping, Opening Conference, Belt and Road Initiative Forum, 2017).

For this purpose, what President Xi proposes is a *Second Reform and Opening*, which, although started with the Market Socialism that Deng launched through his First Reform, Xi now transforms under a new global vision that recaptures China from the political *shadow* of the 28-character policy and places it with all the lights in the world display case of leadership, in a one-on-one with Western leaders within a contest that goes beyond GDPs or trade balances.

In the same way, it proposes a central change of model through the alignment of at least three structural axes that have overflowed since its arrival (2013) with the launch of the New Silk Road (Belt and Road Initiative, BRI), a geopolitical proposal that draws a new course for partnership for 70% of the world’s population, 55% of the global GDP, and 75% of the planet’s oil and gas.

It is followed by a new generation of economic plans that come into force in 2015 (Made in China 2025, 2035, and 2045), which puts all the State’s support in 4.0 Industry and 5G technology, as part of a strategy that bets on the technological leadership of services, where Huawei is already at the forefront of these disciplines vis-a-vis its American and European peers.

The last of the measures, perhaps the most important of all, relates to a *return* to the ancient forms of building politi-

cal power, by approving without major circumlocutions the fifth constitutional reform under a strong *Confucian* bias of sole power without limitations. In this way, Xi, as a new emperor in life, re-concentrates the political power of the State to gather in a single person the positions of General Secretary of the Communist Party of China (CPC), Chairman of the Central Military Commission of the CPC, Head of State of the People's Republic of China, the Core of the party, *Lin Xin* (historical leader like Mao Zedong) and Zuigao Tongde Huai, Supreme Commander of China, under the millenary idea of a power concentrated in a single person, *core* of the power without any limitation. To this end, among others, Article 79 of the Constitution is reformed, opening up the possibility of a lifetime presidency and incorporating in the text President Xi's thinking under the slogan of building, "a Socialism with Chinese characteristics for a new era".

While the West debates China's political, economic, and social nature, the Asian country is already the world's first economy in purchasing power and the second in its GDP; first exporter, first country in manufacturing, second-largest importer of goods, leader in 5G, first or second trading partner of more than 120 countries, the nation with the largest number of companies in *Fortune* Magazine out of the 500 largest companies in the world (129), which has the first four largest banks on the planet; which registers more than 40% of the patent applications filed in 2018 (1.5 million), etc. (B.M., 2018, WIPO, 2019, WTO, 2018).

III

As China advances and it consolidates geopolitically and geoeconomically together with East Asia, as part of a shared-root civilizing basin, the questions and debate in the West are perpetuated.

Can the success of East Asia find a vertebral explanation principle based on the millennial influence of China? Are the civilization, the Chinese culture, a fundamental part of Asian

economic success? And if this is so, is Confucianism still relevant? In what way?

Is there an Asian Developer State? Is it a development expression with native characteristics, or is it a *son* of the western economic *illustration*? Is China Communist-Socialist? Capitalist?

Does the construction of power in China have its own authorship? Does it have significant reminiscences in East Asia? Can it be differentiated from the Western Rule of Law? Does it have a light of its own, or should it be westernized?

Are Chinese societies Confucian or Western? Is their behavior part of the success of its development models? Are they already Western? Should they be?

Are there two structural cosmogonies between China and the West, or is it a false debate?

Do all of the above have relevance in the overall, everyday results? Is it a fundamental part of the leaderships, or the hegemonomies of the 21st century?

Is there a clash of civilizations? If there is one, is it starting or did it start in the 19th century?

There is no doubt that these first 70 years of the modern Chinese era present themselves as a good opportunity for academia, the public sector, and the Western private sector to take stock in the progress made and generate a re-launch of the Study of all that is Chinese and Asian in order to close the innumerable cracks and the inadequacy of definitions in China's economic, political and social issues.

IV

This book is part of four essays written during 2018 and 2019 that, although they were intended to stand alone, in the end, are in keeping with the main axis of contributing from various points of view to the construction of the always difficult Chinese narrative.

China presents us with two positions in time. The first concerns the obligation to see it in retrospect, if we accept the sug-

gestion of Leys and we want to appropriate its *complete knowledge*. But this position also overflows into the future, in line with a restless change that commits us to follow it in a systematized way if we do not want to be knitting over the past of a China that has already changed.

Past and future as explanatory engines within an overflowing present that frequently invite us to immediacy and error.

The vision of this book is far from a comprehensive look at the Chinese phenomenon; although through its analysis it attempts to provide some elements of differentiation that invite one to ratify the settled or to risk new interpretations of the Chinese narrative.

In this sense, from the field of philosophy, Jullien illuminates the path for us, first, in the face of the academic acceptance of the challenge: “Europe (West), China: we would have there a kind of alternative for thought”. Although cautiously he warns... “I do not intend China to be the most different; but, from the discomfort in which I have placed myself, I have chosen to build the difference in the thought”.⁹

Spring, 2020

Arturo OROPEZA GARCÍA

⁹ Jullien, François (2005). *La China da que pensar*. Ed. Anthropos.

CHAPTER I

CHINA. NEW POWER DYNAMICS IN THE XXI CENTURY

CHINA. NEW POWER DYNAMICS IN THE XXI CENTURY

A. INTRODUCTION

I

The issues of development and growth, under their different perspectives, have suffered the exhaustion of their results and the difficulty of their sustainability in recent times. Today in most countries, in particular in the West, one of the most pressing questions for governments and their public policies is the question with regard to the strategy to follow in order to achieve a more equitable development in the long term.

For example, from 1945 to the 1970s in most of the Western World an economic model that privileged the commitment to welfare policies dominated. These welfare policies were known in the United States as the Era of Paul Samuelson (Sachs, 2012, p. 27), and in Europe as the Keynes or Welfare State, which combined, without any *existential* problem, market policies with the committed involvement of the State (mixed economies), leading to one of the periods of greater stability and economic growth in the global economy.¹⁰ As is known, this policy was replaced as of the crisis of the seventies and early eighties by another economic paradigm, which with time became a para-dogma that in its central story abolished the participation of the State from all economic activity, turning it from a strategic ally into an *enemy*.

¹⁰ From 1950 to 1974, the global economy grew by an annual average of 5%, similarly, during the same period its trade climbed to a record annual average of 7.4% (Ocampo, 2017).

On this trend that has dominated the western economic strategy during the last four decades, Escalante summarizes,

Clearly, the neo-liberal program lives somewhat off-peak hours after the crisis of 2008. On the other hand, after thirty years, the economic results, regarded globally, are very poor. The increase in inequality is obvious, strident, offensive. Some of the basic ideas of the model appear clearly indefensible and nevertheless, neo-liberalism survives, and more; it remains the dominant model, and there seem to be no alternatives. The crisis did not lead to any significant change in economic policies nor on legislation. The phenomenon is remarkable. It suggests that the neo-liberal era has a considerable future despite everything. However, it is not obvious why (Escalante, 2015, p. 295).

Why? Escalante wonders, like Judt, who with European perspective questions himself,

Why do we find it so difficult even to imagine another type of society? What prevents us from conceiving a different manner of organizing ourselves that mutually benefits us? Are we condemned to stumble eternally between a dysfunctional *free market* and the much-publicized horrors of *Socialism*? —adding— “Our ineptitude is discursive. Simply put, we do not know how to speak about all this” (Judt, 2013, p. 295).

Clearly, the Western economic thought, as a result of its insufficient and inequitable economic results,¹¹ lives an identity problem, which is snared in its own inertia. It cannot imagine new scenarios that offer alternatives for a century with unprecedented challenges of a political, economic and global nature. Worse still, in the light of its main exegetes (Stiglitz, Sachs, Rodrick, Escalante, Rifkin, Judt, and many others), more than the lack of audacity in imagining the new, the problem remains mainly frozen in an

¹¹ 1% of the world population controls 50% of the world gross domestic product (GDP), and 10% have 90% of the GDP (Credit Suisse, 2015).

old debate that was born along with the Industrial Revolution, which is defined epistemologically by the old unresolved State-Market equation,¹² through which, by way of synthesis, there was a desire to circumscribe the narrative of a broad generation of authors who have dealt with justifying the preeminence, form, degrees of participation, or total absence of each of the two categories.

The debate, of course, overflows the academic cubicles and is embedded in the different schemes of the political-economic power, for reasons both ideological and of economic interest, which hijack not only the construction of a new, more comprehensive and inclusive offer, but even avoid the possibility of an open debate.

This old-new-debate, between State-Market, which is currently happening in most Western countries and their periphery, typical of the 18th and 19th centuries, is one of the main causes of the blockage to generating a new public policy in economic matters, both nationally and in the global sphere. Hence, the importance of inserting into the analysis, by way of a benchmark, the countries of East Asia, in this case, China, which lives removed from this old antinomy, having resolved it since the first centuries before our era, and which it continues doing successfully today.

II

In the second decade of the 21st century, China presents itself as the second world economy and has the most audacious project for holding the hegemony during the first half of the century, without the global society that surrounds it being able to identify, with a

¹² The participation of the State in the economy is born in different ways, together with the State itself. The opinion that is sought in this essay, when referring to the category of State, is the one of its participation in the economic and industrial endeavor, in its different modalities.

higher degree of certainty, what happened as of 1978, the date in which the Asian country experienced a dramatic change to its millenary tradition of solving its internal problems through its endogenous resources, whether economic, political or social.

In the debate of the hegemonies of a new era, and three decades before arriving at the first half of the century, China continues to enjoy the privilege of a lack of a solid diagnosis that provides the West with an adequate response. How is that a country marked by famines, where at the beginning of the second half of the last century (1958-1960), during its *Great Leap Forward*, about 30 million Chinese died for lack of food, can be in 2018 the economic force with the greatest impact on the global economy (30%)?

China, the advocate for the *Free Market*, Xi Jinping tells us at the Forum of Davos, Switzerland, of 2017. China, the protectionist, Trump accuses, while he sends the first legal notice (disclaimer) that detonates the trade war between the two nations (April 2018). “China S.A”; Fishman defines for us. “China, Red Capitalism”, clarifies Aguirre: “China and Global Capitalism”, translates Li Chun, while he describes “The transformation of Chinese Socialism”. Coase and Wang, for their part, explain with more diligence, “How China became Capitalist”. Woetzel, for his part, gives his version of the “Capitalist China”. Zhu Ling joins the versions of Chinese capitalism with his work “China Inc.”. If there were doubts about Chinese capitalism, despite the foregoing, Napoleoni (Maonomics) substantiates the reason why China makes a better capitalism than the United States.

Under this infinite line of free interpretation on how China has become a powerful *capitalist* and *free-market* nation, there are also competing views such as that of Fukuyama, who predicted that the Chinese success would collapse during the last century (Trust), or as that of Chang Gordon (Coming Collapse of China), which predicts the Chinese collapse during the 21st century, among others.

Still far from a generally accepted definition by most global specialists, since its first opening in 1978¹³ to the present day (2018), China continues to enjoy the privilege that its economic (but also political) strategy, which during the period has generated an annual average growth of 8%, has not been sufficiently explained. In spite of this, the global community is still debating whether the nature of the Chinese economic phenomenon is socialist, whether it is a true economic capitalist power, or whether the experiment alluded to by Deng is exactly that, a new expression of the combination of these two trends, that does not find any theoretical framework on which the construction of a new global paradigm can be based.

III

In this work, which tries to generate an opinion on the possible capacity of China as a Developer State, from the construction lines of Chinese power, we will give priority to the analysis of its first category of differentiation due to the nature of the hypothesis, that of the *Chinese State*, to the extent that under an analysis of the political power, the nature, the organization, and the vision of that State (cosmovision), or of any other State, is the one that decides the public strategy in economic matters, as well as the forms and policies for its application.

Thus, more than the particularities of its capacity as a *Developer*, which in some way is the result of the power and the vision of the State itself and which are widely known, in the next sections, we will analyze the origin of the Chinese State, its nature, its construction lines, its different modalities, etc.; and we will even try to underline some of its most relevant differences with regard to the Western reality, which as was already mentioned,

¹³ The second opening, to Central and Western Asia, occurred in 2013, in the face of the announcement of the Belt and Road Initiative by China, through which it invited about 70 nations to a new partnership project.

lives in a general manner the divorce of its economic policy from the State's participation, to which in more than a few instances it takes as the enemy that must be defeated.

The previous proposal takes on greater significance in light of the major phenomenon of a Chinese State that for more than 2200 years presents itself, among the different countries of the world, as the longest-lived, and in many ways current, political entity.¹⁴

In the following sections, we will try to deliver and develop the hypothesis, and the issues raised.

B. CHINA AND ITS CIVILIZING FORCE

The Western analysis of China, in general, originates from contempt; from the disdain that a region that was living *the end of history* at the end of the 20th century felt for a *distant* country that during that same century had been marked by the end of its Empire (1911), its multiple social movements (1912-1949), and by famines that caused it millions of deaths. Under that perception of China, this country *could not*, as it does today, be a rival to the Western order: neither politically nor economically. When the West, already near the beginning of this millennium, with great delay, decides to respond to the Chinese challenge, the depth of a powerful civilization, still in force, has hindered the path, to the extent that today there is no agreement among specialists, but neither among the major developed economies, on how power works in China, what is the nature of its economic strategy and in a special way what China wants with the established *Western global order*.

This discussion escalates when the Western analysis is made from the platform of its own tools, whether political or economic,

¹⁴ During this essay, because of the objectives set out, we will try to analyze and describe the forms of construction of power and of the Chinese State, without entering into the issue of its qualification with regard to Western political parameters.

in most cases resulting in large gaps where the Chinese reality does not fit into the Western molds, or it cannot be explained using the West's instruments of the reason.

The force of the Chinese civilization as a central element of its analysis is presented, then, as an inescapable element of its study. Not as a referential or erudite historical element, but as part of a current dialectic that today still explains sufficiently the construction of power in China, and from there, the action and objectives pursued in a global world that did not belong to it, but that since 1978 decided to open itself to it. China has gone from learning and implementation to proposing a new dream and international order to the world based on the cosmogony of the Chinese State.

China —Graham tells us— has been producing, until the present century, the singular spectacle of an empire that survives from the time of Egypt and Babylon, and that preserves a pre-alphabetic writing as an instrument of continuity and unity, legible through millennia by speakers of mutually unintelligible dialects. At the same time that the first Emperor sought the elixir of life, China discovered the secret of the Immortal Empire, the social organism impossible to kill (Graham, 2012, p. 23).

To accept or not that the essential elements of the oldest civilization in the world are still current and operate in the construction and performance of its political power and economic behavior of today, is a question that lacks a clear answer. In absence of the foregoing, alternatives are used, such as the idea that the Constitutional Reform of March 11, 2018, defines our knowledge of China today. Or, maybe this starts in 2012/13 with the arrival of Xi Jinping to power; or Hu Jintao's scientific development prevails through the present day, or perhaps the 1978 opening of Deng Xiaoping is our starting point. Alternatively, would we have to refer to the triumph of the Maoist Revolution of 1949 as the oldest antecedent to explain it? "China —adds Leys— is the oldest living civilization on Earth. An exceptional entity like

that implies a very complex relationship between the people and their past” (Leys, 2016, p. 307). And with the global community, we could add to what was noted by Leys.

Cheng, points out on the subject, “This political culture that clings to the ancient, cosmic, and holistic vision of an orderly and hierarchical world, far from having been obscured in oblivion like Europe, continued to inform the spirit of the institutions until the last century, in which the emperor continued to be widely perceived as «Son of Heaven» and as a kind of axis mundi that united the three orders of Heaven, Earth, and man” (Cheng, in Relinque Eleta, 2009, p. 48). Leys closes bluntly: “And whoever remains ignorant of that civilization, can only achieve, ultimately, a limited understanding of the human experience”.

The economic and political *domination* that China is carrying out in the Western world of the 21st century, finds one of its main explanations in the lack of the West’s adequate knowledge about China. However, this is also because the West does not end up agreeing on the force and effectiveness of its postulates and whether they remain an important part of the construction of the Chinese power and its State Policy.

C. THE CHINESE COSMOVISION AND ITS INTERPRETERS

The other challenge to understanding it is not only to accept the force of the millenarian Chinese civilization as a significant part of its current reality, which does not happen with any other country in the world, but to understand that that reality is in many cases different from the world-view and Western life. In that regard, to look at the *other* and to accept *the other*, to try to understand the *other* in its own conceptual framework, becomes the second requirement of preliminary motions to anyone who attempts to interpret the Chinese entity, in cultural, political or economic terms.

It is true that China and the region itself have abused this Oriental differentiation. That, in its name, a sophisticated soft power policy has been deployed to control the West. Similarly,

the West's ignorance of the Chinese culture has not given it the necessary tools to diagnose adequately the terms and modes of this relationship in both economic and political terms; China has gotten the advantage in most cases. The West still turns cautiously to that which it does not know; it reasons with doubt about that which is alien to it. For this reason, in most cases, the West adjusts to a ceremony and protocol that do not belong to it, but in response to its lack of proper knowledge, the West fears to offend them. China has been a direct beneficiary of this vacuum.

However, the difference seems to be real and starts with the complexity of the language and the language signs, and rises to the different concept of the universe, ethnicity, the *existence* of a god or the forms of the society and political power. Leys outlines on the differences between China and the West,

The core of this perception was not so much that China was enigmatic, complicated and strange, but more specifically that it was a world upside down: the Chinese did everything in exactly the opposite way to our normal uses and procedures. For example: “when the Chinese build a house, they start with the roof”; “when they are mourning, they wear white”; “they write from top to bottom and from right to left”; “when they greet someone, they press their own hand”, etcetera. None of these observations is actually wrong. And the general conclusion is basically valid. This is, in fact, the secret of the inexhaustible attraction that China and the West have always exerted towards each other: within the human experiment, they are the antipodes of each other (Leys, 2016, 338).

China and East Asia are not part of the Western Culture; a truism that is easily forgotten when dealing with Chinese issues. Moreover, they are part of a millenarian debate where the expectations of both sides seek to signify the pre-eminence of one over the other, generating confusion on a subject that is already complex.

Morris, in a comprehensive study on the hegemonic debate between the West and the East, ventures to say that “...our conclusion, in line with this theory, would be that the West has been the technological leader of the world for a million and a half years” (Morris, 2014, p. 71). Jaspers, despite his great contributions to the understanding of universal thought, dared to ensure that,

The West has behind it, in the depths of time, the longest and most certain historical tradition. Nowhere —he says— history exists before Egypt and Mesopotamia. The West has printed its stamp on Earth in the last centuries. The West has the clearest and richest articulation of its history and its creations, the most sublime spiritual struggles, the maximum abundance of great, visible, and palpable men (Jaspers, 2017, p. 108).

Beyond this confrontation, that is born with time itself, and given the transcendence of these two cosmovisions, the fact is that Jaspers himself, together with Lasaulx and Viktor Von Strauss, generate the theory of the axial age, which Armstrong explains in an objective manner:

Since about 900 to 200 BCE (before our common era) four different regions saw the light of the great world traditions that have continued to nourish humanity: Confucianism and Taoism in China; Hinduism and Buddhism in India; Monotheism in Israel and philosophical Rationalism in Greece. It was the period of Buddha, Socrates, Confucius and Jeremiah, the mystics of the Upanishads, Mencius and Euripides. During this period of intense creativity, some spiritual and philosophical geniuses opened the way to a totally new type of human experiences.

“The axial age —Armstrong concludes— was one of the most influential periods of intellectual, psychological, and religious changes in history that we remember” (Armstrong, 2006, p. 14).

The axial age, in addition to being one of the most lucid stages of human beings, also determined the evolution of two cosmogonies and two different cultures, which from that moment to date have built their own explanation of the world and life; but also of its social, political and economic order, under different parameters and criteria, generating two parallel histories of mankind, that despite finding themselves in diverging moments of their history, have never joined.

China, within the framework of its historical *isolation*, determined both by its geography and its cosmovision, lived a traditional pre-imperial period (Xia, Shang and Zhou dynasties from the 21st to the 3rd century BC), among the concerns of primitive questions, the sky and the rites, the bones and the bronzes, as the beginning of a social ordering. However, from very early on,

...instead of imposing an external moral law on society, that would awaken respect for the freedom and life of every human being, the founding myths of the ancient Chinese opted, from the beginning, not to dissociate virtue and politics, to the point of confusing one with the other (Cheng, in Relinque Eleta, 2009, p. 37).

This antecedent of a *golden age* based on the reign of morality gave rise to the emergence of the father of Chinese thought, Confucius. He was the author of a political-social narrative that although it was inspired by his relationship with Heaven (Tian), landed his central concerns in a solution of man based on ethics and virtue. In the axial age, China, with Confucius, places the Chinese civilization in a civilizational line, that from the God creator transits, in a sensitive time, to a naturalism of things determined by man, to which it invokes, not as an individual entity within the framework of its freedom, but as a social being determined by an idea of group, of family, of social issue; that was ordered vertically where the state was placed at its upper point and the person at the bottom, before passing by the subject; the

father and the son; where the State was the father and the people the children, which have reciprocal obligations.

Unlike the foregoing, the West, on an opposite route, from the pre-Socratic and Aristotelian naturalism transits to a civilizational line determined by the will of Heaven, where society, state, and person, were grouped under a divine order of reward-punishment that prevailed under its different modalities until a period of Renaissance (16th century) and Illustration (17th and 18th).

This difference in the conception of the cosmovision of China and the West, in relation to the social order and the construction of the power of the State, marks a structural difference whose consequences survive until today.

The Chinese thought, acting, and reasoning. The entire cultural expression in Asia, which has lasted more than 2000 years, results in an ethnicity difficult to comprehend by a Western culture that during the same period has lived everything, except *continuity*. On the contrary, its current narrative finds itself confronted with resolving, socially, the enormous gap that was left by the abandonment of a *theocracy* that gave an explanation to its social order. The certainties of its political progress that it presumes today coexist together with the ghosts of its unresolved individuality.

The continuity of the Chinese empire. The unity and *harmony* of what is experienced could be an explanation principle of the Chinese economic predominance during 90% of the modern era. In this section, we only emphasize it as a structural difference between China and the West, which invites us to be cautious in the use of the concepts, or the political, economic or social categories, especially in the use of the political idea of the State.

Similarly, as Jaspers points out, this difference in cosmovisions also informs us of other possibilities that we have not achieved and puts us in touch with the true origin of a different human being, which we are not and yet, also which we possibly are, and that is truly irrepresentable with historical existence; which calls us to rethink the idea of a universal history as a closed circle (Jaspers, 2017, p. 109).

D. THE CONSTRUCTION OF POWER IN CHINA

I

Political power in China is born as in any human group: from chaos. From barbarism, from horror, from war, from death, from the struggle of the strong against the weak. From the moment in which this reality is transformed into a state of tension, and the human group itself, in an act of good sense, decides to organize itself and generate a political power that serves as a force that manages and controls the prevailing chaos.

China had this concern since its first social organizations. However, its transcendent narrative begins with the period of the three pre-imperial kingdoms, with which began a historical and political story of order and longing, despite the multiple conflicts that occurred during this era. The Xia Kingdom, distant and nebulous in its memory (21st-16th BC). The Shang Period, as the starting point for the path of its integration (1600-1045 BC) and the Zhou Dynasty, Western and Eastern (1045-256 BC) as the freshest memory and experience for the Chinese philosophers, who turned to the past¹⁵ in the belief of a golden age based on righteous and virtuous kings (King Wen, Duke Shou, etc.) to begin the construction of a theory of power and social organization.

These three pre-imperial periods, in their political and social effervescence, intertwine, and even give rise to an era of enlightenment (551 to 221 BC) where the “Chinese philosophy will get to know its maximum development and will achieve a flourishing that has never been equaled since” (Preciado, 2015, p. 48).

It is in this vast period of almost half a millennium that the period of the “100 schools” emerges, so called because of the con-

¹⁵ Benjamin Schwartz notes that among the civilizations of the Axial Era, China is the only one whose main concern is to look from the present upheaval, backwards, towards an empire and a culture that flourished in the immediate past (Graham, 2012, p. 21).

siderable production of thinkers and philosophers who have been arguing ever since about the Chinese existence and *being*. However, at the time only six schools succeeded in influencing the construction of the Chinese ethnicity. Firstly, the Confucian school or that of scholars; after that, the legalist; the Maoist; the Daoist or Taoist; the Buddhist (Yin-Yang) and the nominalist. Among all of them, the Confucian and the legalist schools are the ones that influenced the most in the debate on the Chinese State, although the contribution of the Moist and Daost currents is not less important with respect to the model of being Chinese, its social order and the construction of its forms of power.

II

As is known, for over two millennia, Confucius and his followers represent the relevant explanatory source of Chinese society and its political power. On the other hand, Shen Dao, Shang Yan and Han Feizi (3th-2nd C. A.C), were the representative voices of the legalist thought. Modi (Mozi), (4th C. BC), through his work (Mozi) contributed to the creation of a particular school with Confucian roots. Laozi (Lao-Tse), through the important texts Dao De Jing or Tao Te Ching and Zhuangzi, among others, has an important impact on the social and political order, although together with Buddhism, its frame of reference comprised mainly the spiritual field of people.

The foregoing is a synthetic vision of the philosophical schools that disputed the organization forms of the pre-modern Chinese societies, which, as was mentioned before, during the Axial age were contemporary of similar reflections in other parts of the world. Within this intellectual current, the figure of Confucius shows up as the most ancient and transcendent Chinese philosopher since he represents the nuclear thought from which the millenarian social organization of China began, as well as the different forms of its political power. In a special way, Confucius was the bridge where the philosophical-political thought transited from

theocracy to the naturalism of things, by *revealing* the importance per se of the human being and his relationship with the other, removing him from a divine order or sanction, and inculcating a respect and love for humanity (Ren).

Certainly, the things from heaven were the first justification of power in China, during its nascent monarchies. Traditions and ceremonies also constitute their first bonds of power. The sources of the Zhou Era (11th-5th BC), whether they are bronze vessels or writing corpus, etc., proclaim that King Wen received the *Man-date from Heaven* (Tianming). However, since then, it provides for the possibility of withdrawing the power from the king in turn as soon as he *fails* in his mission that is: to maintain peace in his territories, to ensure the happiness of the people and to preserve the unity of “everything that is under Heaven” (Tianxia) (The Space of Chinese Civilization) (Cheng, in Relinque Eleta, 2009, p. 39).

In this regard, in the face of the challenges and questions of his time, Confucius based on the foundations of the traditions for beginning the construction of a social and political morality that serves as the solution for the chaos, and the organization of a society in formation that could sustain itself axiologically over time. The grand master, “Kong” (Confucius), of a low noble family of the now province of Shandong, at no time claimed the paternity of a new school of thought. On the contrary, he declared his revisionism towards a vanished golden age when he affirmed: “I pass through without inventing; I love and trust in the old” (Graham, 2012, p. 31). To which he added, “I am not someone born with wisdom, but rather I limit myself to loving ancient times, and I strive seriously to emulate them” (Bauer, 2009, p. 60).

And Confucius did not deceive with the truth. What he does is to interpret the power of his time through its best social expression, in order to offer a formula that rescues the human being from himself: from his barbarism and his chaos in a sustainable manner.

In this respect, Confucius’s transcendence is to offer social morality as a primordial source of political power, which far from

converting it into a religion and him into its priest, repeatedly until his death, puts social ethics as the only alternative for a healthy coexistence; and the commitment to it, as the sole justification of a central and sustained power. Thus the love to mankind (ren), knowledge (shi), ceremony, chivalry and good manners (li), righteousness (yi), benevolence, filial piety (xiao), loyalty to the monarch (zhong), that of the prince to his subjects (shu), love to the elder brother (ti), etc.; is what Confucius offers to society and to Chinese power, as the only path of personal and collective happiness.

As in most societies of his time, the best resource for Confucius would have been to continue building on a theocracy based on the power of Heaven (Tian), where it would justify the infinite, and in turn, the power, as was done later in Europe. Placing personal morality, and not Heaven, as the first stone for the construction of the Chinese society and power, was perhaps one of his greatest contributions toward the sustainability of the Chinese civilization. Certainly, in his speech, Heaven coexists with social morality, in a moment that required enormous sensitivity in the handling of symbols, categories, and concepts; however, in a clear and persistent way, social morality, benevolence, and the love for mankind and its people, became the philosopher's stone of the Chinese power. Based on this philosophy, Confucius ruled that "A person who appreciates morality does not need special laws or punishments" (Schleichert & Rotz, 2013, p. 43). That, "When one is straight, one does not need to command, and everything will work by itself. But when one is not straight, even if he commands, nobody will obey". Taking the recommendation to the extreme, "He who rules through virtue resembles the polar star, which, remaining fixed in its position, is revered by the rest of the stars around it" (2. I).

"Treat the people with respect—he recommended to the prince—and you will be venerated; be a good son to your parents and a good prince to your subjects and you will be served with

loyalty; honor men of value and educate the less competent, and everybody will feel incited to good”.

As for the way of governing, he insisted, “That the rulers give an example of solicitude towards their families, and the people will naturally tend toward humanity; that they give an example of fidelity towards old friends, and the people will never be cynical” (Cheng, in Relinque Alicia, 2009, p. 43).

Confucius had no doubts between human beings, political power and the power of Heaven. Despite his insistence on morality as a source of legitimacy and of political and social action, with historical links sensitive to the Tian, in the text of Lunyu, which deals with his dissertations, it is stated: “The master never spoke about strange (phenomena), powers, chaos or gods” (Schleichert & Rotz, 2013, p. 48). And this position of distancing the social and the State life from the gods and spirits, is a second transcendent contribution to the Chinese civilization when we compare it with the route that the Western culture followed, which took nearly 18 centuries to separate the church from the State, and even in some countries still continues as a pending issue.

His position in this field had to be extremely careful, to avoid offending ancestral traditions of the time or dying in the attempt (on several occasions his speech put him in physical danger), while at the same time concluding toward rational orders. When asked how to serve the spirits and the gods, Confucius answered skillfully, “He who cannot serve men, how will he pretend to be able to serve the spirits”. Adding also on the issue of death in an elusive way “He who does not understand life, how will he understand death?” (11.11). For this reason, some authors conclude “...different signs indicate that Confucius could be considered an agnostic who was not speculating on the emergence or the purposefulness of the world, nor on the origin of men, nor on life beyond death, not even on the gods and demons” (Schleichert & Rotz, 2013, p. 49).

III

The military struggle for the unification of the seven kingdoms occurred along with the philosophical debate on the duty of the State and its exercise of power. In the face of Chinese moralism, which in the midst of the tribal struggles seemed like a decontextualized *rara avis*, thinkers emerged who bet on a more realistic manner for creating laws as a way to manage chaos and the hierarchy in turn.

Because of their contrasting nature, these schools experienced a great deal of debate regarding the organization of the social order, of the state, and of power; which, as is known, was won by Confucianism, even though the first Empire declared Legalism the official school to lead the State.

The rationality of Legalism was opposed from its birth to the endeavor of a State, which subordinated its origin and action in the *ethics* of the monarch, warning of the fragility of this foundation. Instead of the Confucian concepts on virtue, the Legalists introduced three topics for political success, law (*fa*), power and position of power (*shi*), and the arts of the State government (*shu*). Similarly, the Legalists did not bet on the existence of a wise sovereign with superhuman abilities to solve social and political problems. Rather—they pointed out—a political methodology tailored to normal sovereigns and subjects should be established (Schleichert & Rotz, 2013, p. 200).

Among the most prominent philosophers of Legalism is Shang Yang (338 B.C.) who is recognized for his severity in the generation and application of laws. “A wise ruler,” he said, “does not value justice, but the law. If the laws are clear and the mandates are executed without any condition, then everything is in order” (Schleichert & Rotz, 2013, p. 225). Han Fei (280-233 BC) who was the author and promoter of the Han Feizi, represents another of the most sophisticated exponents of the Legalistic School. Just as Shang Yang, regarding the exercise of power, he indicates that when the base of power is occupied following the law, there is order; when the base of power is occupied rejecting

the law, there is a disorder. When one abandons the base of power and rejects the law and expects a Yao or a Shun (exemplary Kings) to come, one will have one generation of order for every thousand of disorder. When one adheres to the law and occupies the base of power anticipating that there will be disorder only when a Jie, or a Zhou, comes, one will have one generation of disorder for every thousand of order. Graham concludes in this regard: “For Han Fei, then, the political order does not depend either on the power as such or on the moral value, but on the order that falls on the base of power, with which he meant the existence of established laws, clearly defined, and rigorously implemented” (Graham, 2012, p. 393). Notwithstanding the importance that these millenary reflections, between a *de facto* and *de jure* state, could have for the West, as Bauer warns,

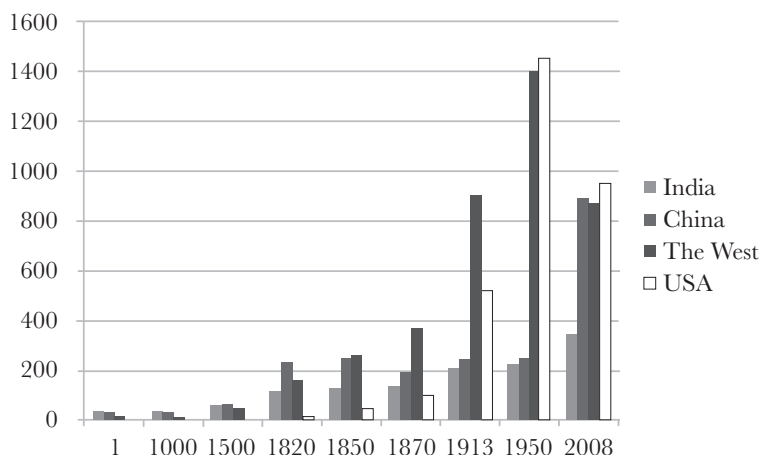
The philosophy of Legalism (in Chinese Fajia, “School of Law”) at first glance operates within the history of Chinese thought as an isolated phenomenon: it was an accepted ideology throughout China only during the notorious Qin Dynasty (221-206 BC); after the dramatic collapse of this dynasty, it became an immoral non-philosophy and was outlawed (Bauer, 2009, p. 123).

For the West, it is not easy to understand how this struggle between utopia and reason, as a prelude to the formation of the Chinese State, could opt for the former in an environment where the barbarity of human beings was barely declining, and religion, and then law, as happened in the West, were the instances that marked the outcome of its civilization. Accepting that the military kingdoms opted for a “commitment to morality and virtue” not only as personal aspirations, but as social structures and government, is a phenomenon that even in China itself is subject to various interpretations.

The reality is that, on the civilizational route of China, through *centuries* of ideas, it followed the military and political integration of the seven main kingdoms by the first Chinese emperor, Shi Huangdi, which forms the first Chinese State, which lasts for

more than 2000 years. Given the new global geopolitics between the West and East Asia, this matter is presented as an element of the utmost importance. First, because it precedes the formation of the Western State, a millennium and a half before, with all that this means. And secondly, because its ancestral construction is under a cosmovision and parameters opposed to its counterpart from the West; which has resulted in a comparison of strengths and weaknesses between the two states, which in the last two millennia has resulted in a greater *economic strength* of the Chinese State, according not only to the results of the last forty years, but of 90% of the time of the modern world.

WORLD'S GDP (THOUSANDS OF MILLIONS OF USD)



SOURCE: Emilio Ontiveros/Mauro F. Guillén, 2012.

In comparison —to the millennial strength of the Chinese State— the European dynasties were just provincial potentates within the Oikumene of Christianity, at the head of regional

kingdoms. As Jacques Genet points out, at the end of the 17th century, the first modern state —the kingdom of France— was just being organized, while China had been for some time, “A great centralized empire that was governed by a «uniform» administrative system” (Fairbank, 1996, p. 72). Fukuyama adds, “China built a centralized and meritocratic bureaucracy that managed its population, with uniform taxes, military control, and an organized society, 18 centuries before a similar State was created in Europe” (Fukuyama, 2014, p. 354).

In this dialectic of the Chinese *construct*, the philosophy of its ideology and the political integration of its government, coincide in time to form the first Chinese State, as one of the most finished examples of its time. The military territorial integration by the “Yellow Emperor” (Qin) coincides with multiple offers of *forms* of social organization, and of power, which emanated from its Axial age of the “100 schools”. In particular, it is noted that the constituted empire had not only the guidelines of government and social organization of the philosophical thought, but unlike other civilizations, it transforms this philosophical thought into *official* and forces its practice as a form of government and education, which must be respected in society. Hence, another of the millenarian differences with regard to Western behavior.

The victory and the coming to power of Qin, as the first emperor of China, in addition to representing the first act of the Chinese State, during his brief term (221-206 BC) also signified the coming to power of the Legalistic current, based on the legacy of Shang Yang and the decisive influence of his minister Li Si. However, in this landing of philosophy and power in the Qin Dynasty “I will be the first emperor (Shi Huangdi), the subsequent reigns will be counted from me, the second, the third and even the ten thousand, the transmission will never end” (Graham, 2012, p. 510), there is also a first closing of the different philosophical currents, where a powerful and violent emperor not only makes the empire of Legalism official as a form of government, but also outlaws the rest of the existing currents, reach-

ing to the extreme of ordering the burning of books (213 A. C) that were written during the period of the hundred schools, and even ordered the killing of 460 scholars, mainly Confucians, of which some theorists talk of the possibility that they were buried alive (Fainbank, 1996).

The aggressiveness to accept the lines of the power and the *officialization* of these philosophical currents during the government, in turn, speak of an idiosyncrasy that has always aspired to a single government, a single thought and a single power; that to achieve this, it did not hesitate to exclude or destroy the different currents of thought. Also appearing as a highly significant fact, the debate that China is living today between a *de jure* state and a *de facto* state had its first antecedent, in terms of power, during the second century before our era. The debate of these two great schools, after the brief Legalistic triumph during the Qin dynasty, was replaced by the following Han Dynasty (202 BC to 220 AD) which, although it did not kill philosophers or completely ban the rest of the schools, following his predecessor's policy, took Confucianism as the official thought of his period (more than 400 years) which defined the ethnicity and the construction of power in China, in a manner diametrically different from Legalistic parameters and also from the West. Armstrong comments with regard to this,

In 136, the court scholar, Dong Zhongshu, presented a report to Emperor Wu (140-87) claiming that there were too many schools competing and recommending that the six classics, taught by Confucians, should become the official State teaching. The emperor agreed, but instead of abolishing all the schools, as the Qin had done, he allowed the others to continue. The Confucian philosophy supported the Han meritocratic system, which elected its officials through a public examination. The Confucians had always believed that a man of virtue and wisdom should occupy a high position in government, regardless of his origin. They supported the family, the basic unit of society, and above all, they were both men of school and thinkers, intimately familiar with the cultural

history that was essential to China's national identity (Armstrong, 2006, p. 503).

Confucianism, as the "official" line of thought, construction of power, form of government, and social organization, under its different historical moments and facets, is the clearest line of interpretation of the Chinese millenarianism, even for the last constitutional reforms of March 2018, as we will see later. Along with this, the syncretism of the other political and philosophical thoughts, show up as an accompaniment that explains the sustainability of Confucianism and the development of power and society in China. As a synthesis of this initial stage of construction of Chinese thought, in Cheng's words, we could point out the following:

Chinese thought is based on a relationship of fundamental trust between man with regard to the world he lives in, and the conviction that he possesses the ability to encompass the totality of what it is real with his knowledge and his action, unique wholeness that is formed by the infinite multiplicity of its parts. The world as an organic order is not conceived outside of man, and the man who naturally finds his place in it is not conceived outside the world. This is how the harmony that reigns in the natural course of things must be maintained with existence and human relations (Cheng, 2006, p. 35).

From this second Han Dynasty, and for more than 2000 years, under a decision from a State that opted for the "moral" order of things rather than a legal order, the Chinese people built the oldest living civilization in the world, which today confuses the West.

E. THE FORMS OF POWER IN THE CHINESE STATE

The significant distance between the date the Chinese State was founded with respect to the Western State is not only relevant, leading for the former into a millenary political culture, trained, in

the face of triumph and adversity, to keep the State itself alive for hundreds of years. It is also surprising that this sustainability has been achieved, for the most part, through the *forms* or modalities that the State itself adopted since its origin, derived from Confucianism in all its aspects and related schools.

Unique Power

Currently, the West is surprised by the Chinese “totalitarianism”, its high concentration of power in the figure of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), the President in turn, Xi Jinping; as was also a subject of observation, for the same reason during the political term of President Mao Zedong and the late empire. Beyond the political reflections on this event, which divide the opinions inside and outside China, the unique power (Core leader) is a millenarian conception that derives itself from the way in which China has always been organized against chaos, barbarism and the challenges derived from the binary composition of the human being and the adversities of nature.

The pre-modern Chinese thinker (Confucius, Menzio, Shang Yan, Xunzi, Shen Dao, Mozi, Laozi, Han Feizi, and many others) was worried about barbarism, violence, chaos, war, social decomposition. China’s internal and external challenges. Its confrontation with others, social cohesion, and well-being of the people. The organization of the family and its role before the State. The formation of the State and its capacity to face these challenges.

Their sensitive warning regarding the social and natural challenges led Modi, for example, to declare that chaos ruled the world, “As with animals”, and that this chaos had arisen because there was no administration, no supervisor. He was even already venturing, as the solution to this chaos, which should be solved by “the most skilled”, the “most convenient”, adding without leaving the Confucian vein, that he was “vested” as the son of Heaven. The Guanzi, on the other hand, explains in agreement with Modi, that

In antiquity, there was no distinction between monarchs and vassals or between authority and subjects —that— men and women still did not live together as a couple. They lived among the animals, formed hordes and submitted themselves to each other; that people with knowledge introduced virtuous norms for the people; that in this way moral methods arose; that upon seeing this, people were impressed, and they also turned to the moral life (Dao) (Schleichert & Rotz, 2013, p. 100 and 202).

The image of non-order, animal chaos, human injustice, has as its response the creation of a powerful, unipersonal, qualified State, which is vested with an absolute power, in exchange for its commitment to society. In China, the central and absolute power is justified since the time of the 100 schools and survives, under various facets, up to the present date.

In China, the construction of power and the creation of the State follow a long path from its ancestral kingdoms, Xia, Shang and Zhou, as immediate antecedents, the figure of Confucius appearing, as was already indicated, as a synthesizer of theories and as an effective driver in placing morality at the base of power and outlawing the establishment of a State based on laws. In a special way, the vision of power, from the moment it became possible in the face of the geographic and military integration of the Chinese State, its moral acceptance was providing guidelines on the construction of its modalities, based on the pre-imperial philosophical proposal. Thus, if the acceptance of a central authority was the political response to the demand for the control of chaos, the construction of that authority was drawn since the dawn of time, unique, central, absolute, without conditions, under the consideration that only a power vested with these faculties would have the potential to yield satisfactory results to the society in turn. This original idea of power has accompanied the Chinese authority for over 20 centuries and is one of its essential elements to consider in the context of its long sustainability and economic success.

Certainly, the antecedent and accompaniment of the Tian-ming (mandate from Heaven) during its first empires were part of a ceremonial that, based on tradition, recognized the connection of the power with the celestial force. Then, little by little, under the force of an agnostic philosophical current (that even when they can refer to Heaven like Confucius, Mencius, etc., and can recommend the belief of spirits like Modi, all classical philosophers were basically *irreligious*), China begins the construction of a single monarch, which concentrates power and attributions, who like the “father”, will take responsibility for their “children”, in order to provide order to a holistic cosmogony, and a social cohesion, that will facilitate governance between the monarch and subjects and will give an orderly answer: each category in its place, the heavens, the earth, and the State, as the responsible and virtuous provider of the “things” of man (Schleichert & Rotz, 2013, page 18).

In this ideal of Chinese centralism, the influence of Confucius is decisive in imagining the Monarch and the State as a natural construction of the family organization. Xunzi, in this sense, as one of his clearest followers, points out that the monarch is the father and mother to his people.

Why must the mourning of the ruler last for three years? I say: the ruler is the lord of an orderly government; the origin of the models of a refined culture, the summit of feelings and appearance (decorous); so when the people, amongst one another, turn him into the most eminent, why is this unacceptable? The poems say: “happy is the prince, [he is] father and mother of the people”. This prince undoubtedly deserves the definition of “father and mother”. The father can give life [to the children], but not feed them; the mother can feed them, but cannot educate them; the ruler can not only feed them, but also educate them... (Pines, in Relinque Alicia, 2009, pp.72 and 73).

The State, then, as a central provider of the social universe of the Chinese “being”, as an *exemplary center* (Geertz), a moral

example, an educator for its people. A monarch that arrives in harmony with Heaven, but that requires virtue as a prerequisite and the obligation to commit himself to his people. And that his arrival was not a prize but a responsibility, that if he performed it badly, his revocation or even his regicide would be justified (Xunzi, Mencio).

The unique government is crucial for the proper functioning of the political system (Shen Dao). The monarch is not a beneficiary of power; he is a servant to his people (Shen Dao). The monarch should benefit others and not himself (Lüshi Chunqiu/book), there is no social order without a ruler (Shang Yan). An efficient government requires unity; duplicity means chaos. Xunzi says: “A ruler is the eminence of the State; a father is the eminence of the house: when there is only one eminent person, there is an orderly government, when there are two, calamity is produced...”. Power should be centralized to face chaos; to achieve harmony, unification, and victory against third parties (Laozi). The ruler must never divide his authority (Laozi). There should be no institutional limitations (but should be moral limitations) on the power of the ruler (Shang Yan) (Pins, in Relinque Alicia, 2009, pp. 55-85).

Schleichert and Rotz comment (2013, p. 203): “The monarchical state was never in question in ancient China, although often real power relations could be presented in another manner”. The Chinese philosophy, from antiquity until well into the 19th century, sets off from with the evidence that the government is monarchical. Conclusively, Pines points out “Throughout the millennium, different political, religious and ethnic groups repeatedly challenged the legitimacy of the dynasty, but not a single one questioned the basic concept of the imperial political system”. Adding, on the millennial validity of the empire, that “And thus, throughout all Chinese history, no institutional limitation was ever imposed upon the power of the monarch” (Pines, in Relinque Alicia, 2009, pp. 56 and 57).

In China, the construction of power arises from the reflection and philosophical debate of ideas and not from an autocrat flash or divine revelation, although many times the ruler, in turn, has taken advantage of it. He may or may not coincide with it, but its ontological value is remarkable. The vision of power, transformed into time, ran deeply in the ethnicity and politics of China, so that during a first stage, until the fall of its empire in 1911, its form of organization was never questioned, and more importantly, no limitation was imposed on it. This culture of power and social coexistence, very different from the Western uses, marks a good part of the contrasts between these two civilizations.

Vertical Power

The hierarchical organization, the verticality, the ordering of the Chinese State, is a category derived from its conception as the *organizing center* of things. This being so, the State and consequently, the monarch, as its representative, become the nucleus from which all directions depart. Upward, its harmonious relationship—not dependent—with heaven, and downward its organization is structured as a large family in the Tianxia, which becomes the entire Chinese civilizing space. The rest belongs to *barbarism*.

In this regard, Confucius noted: “That the sovereign be a sovereign, that the subject be a subject, that the father be a father and that the son be a son” (Schleichert & Rotz, 2013, p. 35). The famous social pyramid (filial) through which the human endeavor was ordered.

In the case of Confucius, to submit to the leader has as a central justification, a principle of hierarchical order initially supported in the lineage, but more importantly, in the merit and virtue of the ruler. In the case of Modi, submitting to the leader has the purpose of unifying the moral (*yi*) throughout the world, from an organizing ethical center that covers rulers, parents, children, and people:

In ancient times, in order to shine the light of his luminous virtue throughout the universe, [the sovereign] began by ordering his own country. To order his own country, he began by arranging his own house. To fix his own house, he began by perfecting himself. To perfect himself, he began by straightening his heart. To straighten his heart, he began by making his thought authentic. To make his thought authentic, he began by developing his knowledge; and he developed a knowledge by examining the nature of things (Cheng, in Relinque Alicia, 2009, p. 45).

The social and political hierarchy in China is a central part of a cosmogony that is created from an interpretation of the universe. The central power is the sun of that vision, and the other categories are ordered trying to follow a natural order of things. The hierarchy and the verticality of the State result in an organizing principle that has been accepted for centuries; despite its moral justification, on many occasions, it has been part of an excluding dictatorial social-political order.

In this context, the reference of moral order on which the Chinese State is built, in its own way, resembles the De Jure State of the West, to the extent that both are social ideals to be achieved; driving guides, although the diverse societies that compose them stumble all the time in the pursuit of their objectives.

Meritocratic Administration. The Chinese Mandarin System

The monarch in turn's lack of capacity to govern was a matter of concern since the time of Confucius. The anxiety of choosing a monarch who did not comply with the dictates of Heaven was the cause for the emergence of various alternatives, which since Modi, as was mentioned previously, proposed the incorporation of "competent and convenient" ministers. Xunzi also recognized in his own way that "there is no one who can be sovereign alone because he needs officials and counselors as support and as crutches. They can never be required too soon" (Chapter

12.12). Xunzi even noted that the selection of officials was the most important task of a sovereign. He even defined the ideal bureaucrat: “The specialists without humanity are as useless as the humanitarian personalities that lack specialized knowledge: whomever brings together specialized knowledge and humanity is a true jewel for a ruler” (Chapter 12.8). Even for the Legalists, “The ideal State... is ordered by a precise bureaucracy that regulates exactly all the different tasks through corresponding competencies” (Schleichert & Rotz, 2013, p. 232). Graham adds

The great change that came to pass with the reunification of the Qin and their successors (the Han, 206 BC to 200 AD) was that, despite a brief and partial return, at the beginning of the Han Dynasty, to Zhou’s policy of distributing fiefs, China becomes, henceforth, a centralized empire, administered by a bureaucracy of appointed scholars and not by a hereditary aristocracy educated in the chariot and bow. The term *Shi*, which still designated that class of people that hold political office, has been better translated as “erudite” or “scholars” than as “knights” (Graham, 2012, pp. 19 and 20).

The merit of the stratified organization of political and social comparisons and civil service corresponds only to the West, exclaimed Weber at the beginning of the 20th century. Meanwhile, in China, the civil service issue had been discussed since the 5th century B.C.; and even during the Han Dynasty there are already records of the existence of an Imperial Academy (2nd century BC) that had 30,000 students, as well as a high-level written bibliography, and that this Academy prepared the officials to take their admission exams. In 156 B.C., for example, the canonical writings were elevated, officially, to an object of compulsory study within a State-funded training. Since that date, evidence also shows up on the completion of admission exams for aspiring public officials, which consisted of anonymous and written exams, made before notaries to avoid the identification of the candidates, who were only known by key number (García, 2014, p. 31). On this

important subject Leys adds, “Until the modern era, this was undoubtedly the most open, flexible, fair and refined system of government known in history (it was, specifically, the system that impressed and inspired the European philosophers of the 18th century)” (Leys, 2016, p. 362).

Upon trying to question the reasons for the survival of a power that renounced law and theocracy, as forms of sustainability, at the time of construction of its civilization, the idea of *shielding* the ruler in turn through a trained, loyal and professional administration, appears as one of the most credible explanations for obtaining good political, economic and social results for a society that survives through time.

Confucianism and its Force

A State that is “impossible to kill”

The immortal empire, Graham insists. The oldest social organization in the world points out Leys.

The multidisciplinary philosophical construct, starting with Confucius, was the one that determined the formation of power and the Chinese State, as well as the central configuration of its society. By moving away from absolutes and coexisting since the Han Dynasty with complementary and related thoughts, Confucianism was perpetuated facing the adversities of its time. During the exercise of power, Confucius appears as a purpose to be followed, as an inspiration and a form of *chivalry*, within an everyday political realism. “If Confucianism had simply promoted the idea that in politics, one must proceed morally; this would have been a valuable contribution to human civilization. There is, however, another additional fact that does not stop calling attention to itself, namely, the centennial existence of Confucianism” (Schleichert & Rotz, 2013, p. 380). And it is this existence that transcends millennia that precisely justifies the current study of Confucianism, as an inevitable condition for knowing China

properly, for trying to interpret it, for knowing the China of today, through its relevant attributes of yesterday.

Confucianism does not disappear with the Hans. In many ways, it survives to this day through its adaptation or recomposition throughout imperial life. Its historical weakening and its affectation before the ascendant influence of Buddhism, for example, forced a re-launch and the adaptation of its postulates during the Tang Dynasty (6th century A. D.), with Han Yu (768-824). During the Song era (10th century), along with the rebirth of the Chinese identity, a neo-Confucian movement follows, led mainly by Zhou Dunji. In 1130 this movement was followed by a powerful Confucian movement orchestrated by Zhu Xi, which restructures the Confucian philosophy, shortly before the empire fell defeated in 1280 by the Mongol armies. During the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644), successor and integrator of the Mongol, a Confucian idealism appears, led by Wang Zhounen, as a response to the invasion and the reconstruction of the identity as a nation. The second Chinese defeat at the hands of the Manchus in 1644 was a less demanding challenge for Confucianism since the millennial influence of the Chinese empire in East Asia had previously won the Confucian affiliation of the conquerors. Nevertheless, at this time, the empire was already beginning its declining period, the first “nationalist” movements appearing with Huang Zongxi (1610-1695), who directed criticisms at the monarch and at Confucianism, while at the same time he urged support of a Legalist government (Wang Fuzhi). Along with the fall of the empire (1911) ends the golden era of Confucianism and begins a revisionism and permanent questioning, which subsists in academic and political terms until the present date.

After the empire and the long period of social upheaval, Mao appeared in 1949, a critic of Confucianism, sympathizer of Legalism and promoter of a new Marxist-Leninist ideology. In spite of this, in February 1972, during his first meeting with President Nixon, Nixon congratulated Mao for having transformed an ancient civilization, to which Mao replied, “I have not been able

to change it. I only achieved it in a few places around Beijing” (Kissinger, 2012, p. 128).

Confucianism is still a subject of debate in the global world, but there is no doubt, as Mao tacitly says, that its roots in China and its tributary zone of East Asia will not be easy to change. Octavio Paz says that cultures are realities that resist the accidents of history and time with immense vitality.

F. THE POWER OF THE CHINESE STATE. A DEVELOPER STATE?

I

Beyond the philosophical positions on Confucianism, which is always in a perpetual debate inside and outside of China, what is relevant for this essay is to try to demonstrate the continuity in the construction of power that China follows since 221 B.C.; and how it, in its different versions, always returns to its original form deposited in one person, from which the verticality, the authoritarianism and the *absolute* power of the receiver of power in turn are constructed. Throughout the millennia and the countless historical clashes that the country suffers, the pieces of power can be divided or suspended temporarily, but even today, they always return to the organizing center, to its *exemplary core*, granting it unlimited powers; which has generated a political-comptroller (and developer) component towards its economy in a permanent way.

Shi Huangdi, despite being a Legalist, inaugurates the great absolute power. The Hans, with the official adoption of Confucianism, absorb the total power as children of Heaven by imposing highly centralized governments. In these cases, the State, as an absolute power, administered the greatest wealth, the land, and its sale was prohibited or very limited, and its distribution was part of the government’s management, which varied with each empire. Despite this great power, based on

the Confucian precepts and the leading schools, since then, a censorate was established, which was composed of officials of high prestige, which operated as a moral and politic audit, even against the emperor himself. During the Tang Dynasty, in the framework of its great cultural successes and military and economic problems, the State tried to maintain its economic control, regulating trade and stable prices. In the Song Dynasty, the bureaucracies remained prone to a central, strong, closed and Confucian State, although the policies applied did not always conform to the ideal of Confucius. With the Ming, after the trauma of the Mongolian invader, the State and the Emperor, in addition to being central and absolute, were transformed and became more interventionist and repressive. This generated veneration towards the Emperor, which is something that the Mongols themselves adopted. At the same time, the Emperor lost part of his *benevolence*. This creates the generation of a kind of *Almost Enlightened Despotism* with the Manchus (Qing), the last Chinese Dynasty (Botton, 2010). They certainly deepened in the roots of Confucianism, since the Manchus were already inclined by the precepts of Confucius before their invasion, and translated a large number of classic books for their greater dissemination. The empire, but not the Chinese civilization, was diluted standing up, faithful to its millenarian precepts of power centralization, with little attachment to profits and capitalism, agnostic, with a permanent intervention of the State, and with a social order attached to moral custom and a rejection to the rule of law. However, throughout the imperial period prevailed a State that although it never stopped fighting against its aristocrats and external forces, it adapted itself to the political and economic circumstances of the time. It never gave up the axial principles of its origin, nor was it the object of questioning or limitation to this enormous power of the State, and its historical capacity of comptroller and responsible party for the economy and the subjects.

II

It is interesting to see that in the reconstruction of the power of the 20th century, the pieces also return to a political center.

In 1976 Mao and Zhou Enlai had died. In 1978 Deng Xiaoping was barely regaining power, but from that moment he ordered and organized the opening of a millennial and closed State, which accepted his leadership and status without major questioning,¹⁶ which he maintained *legally* and *extra-legally* until his death in 1997. The case of Mao, with the reservations of the case, bears an important similarity with Deng himself to the extent that from the triumph of the Revolution in 1949, until his death 27 years later, he maintained a solid power that endured the post-revolutionary adversity. Both Mao and Deng, Mao toward Marxism-Leninism and Deng toward market socialism, in both cases, do it under a central and all-embracing power, vertical and authoritarian, where the people were a faithful companion for both the Communism case and the step towards a Capitalism with *Chinese characteristics*. Naturally, as an innovative figure, the structure of the Chinese Communist Party shows up, that is integrated into the construction of the State power with great sophistication; however, in both cases, it allows and articulates the core leadership.

Usually, an easy evaluation that concludes that Chinese civilization has ended is made as of 1911, when Qing's last Chinese empire falls. The above, in the face of the multiple invasions suffered by the country in the 19th and 20th centuries both by the Western powers and by Japan, and in light of its economic fall in the 19th century as the leader in world manufacturing at the hands of the United States, and with it, the economic hegemony that it lost, together with India, for nearly 18 centuries. However, after a period of social turbulence from 1911 to 1949, within

¹⁶ The above does not ignore the internal political struggles at the death of Mao and the efforts of his wife, Jiang Qing, to remain in power (Band of the four).

the framework of the reconstruction of power and the Chinese project, in the strength of its new political hegemons and the general way of exercising that power, (with the forms and updates of the case) towards the recovery of a central power, a nuclear and charismatic leadership, is observed; dressed with new names, but that behind the labels reminds us with clarity of the attributes granted to the power by the philosophical-political thought, from before our era. And here arises again the question on which the different schools do not agree, whether Confucianism and all its historical legacy as a source of Chinese power are dead, as Bauer, Cheng, and others argue, when talking about the self-dissolution of Confucianism; or as other opinions postulate, that, “For a few decades, the Chinese philosophy, especially Confucianism, has experienced a renaissance” (Leys, Schleichert, Rotz, etc.).

The reconstruction of power in Mao Zedong and Deng Xiaoping, diametrically opposed in the economic and the political, show at first glance show the parameters and characteristics of power that the Chinese philosophers of the *100 schools* thought and imagined, with regard to a solid construction of a State with Chinese characteristics of central power, that over the millennia has passed the fierce test of oblivion or even more, that of results.

III

The assessment of the above becomes clearer and more important for this study, given the changes to power made in China in March 2018, which speak us empirically of the return of an ethnicity of power which is largely Confucian, and that has never left.

Xi Jinping comes to power in 2013, as a representative of a fifth political generation (Mao Zedong, Deng Xiaoping, Jiang Zemin, Hu Jintao, Xi Jinping), and even he was shaped by two positioning trends. That of Mao himself (1949-1976), with a continuism of almost three decades, and that of Deng, where it is accepted that both Jiang Zemin and Hu Jintao belonged to

that economic and political project. The former, as was already mentioned, attempted a return to “Legalism” within the framework of a new Marxist-Leninist philosophy. And the arrival of Deng was a first attempt to expand that Legalism, but from a Western perspective, through a principle of separation of powers between the CCP and the creation of the Rule of Law. Under this vision, the first western-style Chinese constitution was approved in 1982 (three socialist constitutions had been promulgated in 1954, 1975 and 1978) through which, for the first time, in China, a systematization was built that to date includes five amendments and more than 240 national laws. Deng’s vision in this regard, confronted with the opening and globalization that he faced in 1978, considered that it was time to lead China, for the first time in its history, towards the Rule of Law, which, at the time, represented the possibility of breaking the Confucian apothegm of the absolute power of the State.

This approach for the future, which Deng personally did not practice and, which had small advances with Zeming and Jintao, were reversed by the reform promoted by Xi, when recovering, through an adaptation of the 2nd century BC into the 21st century, all the central power of the State in one person, as has been done for the last 2000 years.

In such a manner, through the constitutional reform of March 11, 2018, approved almost unanimously by the National People’s Congress (NPC), President Xi Jinping remains a 21st century emperor, by concentrating on his person all the categories of China’s real power. Since the reform, President Xi assumes, or is ratified, as the General Secretary of the Communist Party of China; likewise, he is confirmed as president of the powerful Military Commission, and of course, he is ratified as the head of State of the government. As if that were not enough, in a special way, in a frank use of the categories of the ancestral power, he is named as the core (Core leader) of the Party, in a remembrance without prejudices to the customary language. In this reactivation of the language and symbols of the unique power, he was also given the title of Ling

Xin, which recovers a historical recognition that had only been granted to Mao Zedong after the revolution. Finally, but avoiding any doubt about the new limits of the State, he is recognized as Zuigao Tonge Huai, which rescues a term of broad symbolism, of *greatest commander, supreme commander of China*.

Is a Confucian concentrator State revived, or had it never left?

Within these constitutional reforms, the Supreme People's Court of China lost its original power of judicial review, transferring it to the Standing Committee of the NPC and the CCP, where Xi Jinping is the incumbent. Also, the president's ideology was inserted in the Constitution, which is the "Construction of a Socialism with Chinese characteristics, for a new era", elevating his thoughts, within the constitution, to the level of Mao Zedong. In a relevant manner, the declaration that the leadership of the CCP is the defining feature of Socialism with Chinese characteristics is included in Article 1 of the Constitution. This shakes the validity of the concept of 1982 on the autonomy and foundation of the legal body, with which the initial approach to separation of powers initiated by Deng is damaged, thus motivating a return to a de facto state dominated by the highest authority of the CCP, in the figure of Xi, in his character as General Secretary. Also of Confucian inspiration, the reform includes the creation of a modern censorate through the National Supervisory Commission, which covered 50% of the constitutional reforms and whose duty will be to care for, *colossally*, the non-corruption in the government and the party (At the end of 2017, in different ways, the anti-corruption policy had sanctioned more than one and half-million people).

As reinforcement of the above, within the framework of the 19th Congress of the Chinese Communist Party (11-2017) and the 18th Congress of the NPC (3-2018), the speeches, official print, electronic media, and mass media reiterated constantly a thousand-year-old mantra of total loyalty to Xi Jinping, as the center, core of the Chinese State. Even more, the necessary legal

changes were made so that state functionaries promised loyalty to the Constitution, to Xi and to his thought.

“The CCP members must enter into the greatest unity with the Core”. “The party must have a powerful leadership and a core or center of power”. “The core-leader is the key issue of China”. “The Chinese party and people need leadership”. “Any leadership must have a soul, center, axis, otherwise it will be unreliable”.

The CCP constitution stipulates that each member of the Party must obey the party organization, that minorities must obey the majorities, that low-level organization must obey the higher-level ones and that all must obey the CCP Central Committee, which demands self-government, self-regulation, and self-purification (China Daily, People Daily, March 2018).

As can be seen from the above, Confucius, Mencius, Modi or Laozi, could have written some of these texts.

IV

What is relevant in an effort to differentiate the Chinese State from the Western State begins by recognizing that they are different from each other. That they are born under different cosmogonies and that the construction of their power is done and administered differently. That the ancestral Chinese State remains current, with its strengths and weaknesses and that its economic adaptation to globalization, industrialization and new technologies is very advanced; and that as far as its coexistence with the Western political order, unlike the economic level, far from walking towards the democracy practiced by their counterparts (developed countries), returns with great determination to the place that it has never left, to that unique center of political power that it considers relevant in the construction of a renewed Chinese State, which rests on a lush civilization that aspires to a new Eurasian global order of Eastern tilt.

Regarding its status as a Developer State, we could point out that behind every Chinese State, a development policy has always been present, in a tacit or explicit way, directly or indirectly, within the framework of an always powerful state, with a natural vocation of intervention not only in the market but in all the *tianxia* or the Chinese world.

Thereby, in China, in terms of the construction of power and the State, everything has changed to remain the same.

G. SYNTHESIS

I

China or the difficulty of universalizing the concepts. China or the dilemma of a current Orientalism or just another actor in the cast. China, or the great Western challenge of understanding the “other”.

This dilemma about the other half of what is Western, is not new. It started as of the 16th and 17th centuries when Matteo Ricci and the other Jesuits *discovered* China for the rest of the world. And since then until today the Western thinkers have not been able to agree on whether there is a particular Chinese cosmo-vision; whether this really makes us different; whether Chinese thought is inferior to that of the West; whether its philosophy has rational Western assembly; whether Confucianism is a philosophy or a religion; and now, the doubts that have been added in the 21st century, whether China is Capitalist or Socialist; whether it is already integrated into the free market or not; whether it is already part of the Western global order, or it is looking to create a new one; or, according to the question from this essay, whether China can be classified as just another developmentalist State, or if it is more than that.

China is complex, dense, historically tangled and current. A thread that pulls another and is crossed or is interspersed between different disciplines that easily invite error. Its force requires an

obligatory trip to the past, which breaks wills. Under these curtains, China itself plays, as in a thousand-year-old performance, at showing us a different face each day, so that we hardly know which each one of these faces it is, or if it is all of them at the same time.

These faces, since the first Jesuit books that tried to translate what they saw, caused the first great division over the interpretation of the other, as well as the acceptance of the other. Within the framework of a renaissance and an incipient European illustration, the arrival of an agnostic, moral state, determined by the thought of Confucius, added to the debate that would precede the Western acceptance of the creation of its modern state and, in a remarkable fashion, of its separation from the power of the church. Thus, the name of Confucius and his books were added to that of Spinoza, Leibnitz, Foucquet, Montesquieu, and others, who also extolled him as the founder of a utopian state or, as an articulator of an oppressive leviathan. Malebranche and Voltaire, diametrically opposed, the former is in charge of anathematizing, “The superstitious transfiguration and Confucian Atheism”, and the latter, first, recognizes, “China, once entirely ignored, then, longtime disfigured before our eyes”, and then, raise it to the category of, “A political utopia of enlightened absolutism where the State subsists by itself, rationally, without the help of religion” (Guarde, 2013, p. 349).

Not only astonishment or derision followed the China of Ricci, but along with it also appeared a feeling of competition and Western superiority that since then has been embedded in a long chain of thought that has prejudiced their opinion on China and, along with it, has prevented a more punctual and useful knowledge about China. Meanwhile, there has been no shortage of Sino-affiliated trends, exacerbating Chinese merit.

Adam Smith, for example, I cannot avoid this feeling of class, and comparing it with the England of the mid-18th century, he talked about a strayed China, where, “Any carrion, whether the corpse of a dead dog or a cat, for example, although it is half rot-

ten and stinking, will be as desirable to them as the healthiest food for citizens of other countries”, of course he was referring to Europeans (Morris, 2014, p. 62). Hegel, confusing the Chinese sustainability and ignoring its ancestral philosophical thought, even commented that although China was one of the oldest countries in the world, it lacked a past, that it had no real history and that together with India; they were countries that had *remained on the sidelines of history*. Marx did not resist either from commenting on China and called it a *living fossil, captive of time*, and that *thanks* to England (probably because of its invasion of China in 1839 in the Opium War) had been able to peer into the civilized world. Engels, continuing with the Hegelian judgments, also denounced India and China as countries that had, “Been left out of the line of historical development, for which they were condemned to be conquered and dominated by European civilization” (Relinque, 2009, p. 11).

In the economic field, for example, since the beginning, Marx, predisposed, placed the Chinese economy as an Asian production model (hydraulic despotism), unable to insert it properly within a *universalist* theory on the subject. In this regard, Derbik comments

It is regrettable that the only attempt to introduce a pluri-linearity of history in Marxism —I mean, the concept of “Asian way of producing”— would be so negative. Their implications —pejorative, orientalist— are evident. However, above all, the notion introduces a false plurality since it does nothing but theorize stagnation and only results in a constant impasse on societies without present or future (Relinque, 2009, p. 12).

Max Weber did not stay behind and despite acknowledging his lack of depth on the issues of China, of course disqualified it with regard to the West under the arguments of having a negative sociopolitical structure, its lack of vocation for profit and the lack of a transcendent life moral, which affected the formation of an economic mentality. Similarly, as was already

mentioned, Weber affirmed that, “Only the West has the merit of the structured organization of the political and social corporations, and of the civil service”, ignoring the scientific and moral strength of the Chinese administration. In this effort to interpret China based on the superiority of the West, he also advanced that the printed literature was born only in the West and that only in the West had there been science in that phase of development that is currently recognized as valid. In the former, there are records of the Chinese calligraphy for 3700 years, paper in the year 100 and printing in the year 700, and books were already being sold to the public since the 9th century, while it is recognized that the Gutenberg printing press did not appear until the mid-15th century. Mateo Ricci himself comments on the thousands of books he found published in China. On the latter, J. T. Needham (20th century), with a work that occupied him for more than four decades, made it clear to Weber and the West that the Chinese way of being was never an obstacle to science and innovation, areas where China demonstrates technological advances since a thousand years before our era.

The opinion on Chinese issues is not easy. De Gaulle in his time commented that “China is a big country, inhabited by many Chinese”. Nixon for his part came to say about the Great Wall of China, “This is a great wall” (Leys, 2016, p. 415).

II

The economic nature of the Chinese model of development, as a theme derived from the complexity of understanding China itself, continues to divide the opinions of experts in the field since its first opening in 1978.

Is China a Developer State? To get close to the beginning of an answer, we would divide its analysis, as was indicated at the beginning of this essay, into its two generally accepted attributes, which are: the STATE, as a determining element of this eco-

nomical alternative, and its DEVELOPER quality, which defines it in the face of the other models.

The first category, that of the State, although it is the first difference that identifies the countries that follow this path, at the same time, in the case of China, is also the one that gives it its distinctiveness and individualizes it with respect to the Western Developer States.

As we have seen, the political and economic meaning of the Chinese State, were born together, learn together, live together and are consubstantial in their origin. Similarly, their essential economic responsibilities are born in the same birth like primary forms that have changed little, because they are part of the construction of a power that was thought to be a responsible father in order to satisfy the material and economic needs of his people; of a people that was educated not to have, but to be, in the frugality of its Confucian moralism. Of a unipersonal imperial father (State), that is not accustomed to share its power or responsibility because it has never done so. Because it has never been subject to limitations (checks and balances); one which has always been accustomed to acting in an authoritarian manner, under the *moral and virtuous responsibility* of its origin, subject to the result of the satisfaction of its governed (children). To organize itself vertically as a father to his family, with a single voice and command from top to bottom, where the unlimited loyalty of each of the members of the family (State) prevails towards his ruler, in a vertical relationship without real glimpses of democracy, because they have never been part of its State cosmogony. From a State that, to guarantee its good results, is surrounded by a civil organization with a millenary, meritocratic career, from a government of the best; dynamic, updated, disciplined and pragmatic, like an administrative army that during millennia administered the land, during the last century administered the industry and services and now is focused on its task of becoming the most powerful nation in the world in 2049 (Xi Jinping, 3-2018). A State that, as always, will try to preserve China from the chaos of

globalization and global disorder, the “barbarism” of the United States, under the shared idea between the people and the Chinese state, that the latter will always be the most qualified and the only one to decide the best strategy of the moment. Just as in 1949 the people and the State marched together towards an economic model of central planning, believing that it was the best alternative for China; likewise from 1978 to date, as defined by Deng Xiaoping, it will continue with an economic strategy of “market socialism” until this strategy serves its purposes, and this, in turn, will be a model for the construction of Socialism and (Market) Capitalism, according to the global and internal frameworks of China. Deng Xiaoping points out:

“Currently, there are two models of productive development. Insofar that each of them serves our purposes, we will make use of it. If Socialism is useful, the measures will be Socialist, if Capitalism is useful to us, the measures will be Capitalist”. In this regard, in an unusual and pragmatic way, he pointed out “There are no fundamental contradictions between Socialism and market economy”.

The experience that we have gained over the past few years has shown us that we could not develop the productive forces within a rigid economic structure. For this reason, we have been implementing some useful Capitalist measures. It is now clear that the correct approach to open up to the world is to combine a planned economy with a market economy, to which structural reforms are implemented.

“Surely, it is incorrect —he added— the affirmation that the market economy only exists in a Capitalist society, that there is the only Capitalist market economy. Why cannot Socialism practice the market economy?” By way of a summary, he concluded: “Both are means” (Oropeza, 2008, p. 450).

The Chinese state, unlike the other Western Developer States, did not have to change the nature or vocation of its economic role to opt for market socialism in 1978. At that time, it

did not decide to be more interventionist with its economic reality to seek growth or to support the industrial development of the country. Nor did it become autocratic given the urgency of its social demands to potentiate the new policies of its development. It did not start, as of its opening, the expropriation of power from its *private* or public companies to head the new development. The Chinese State, that everlasting State, in all its ontology and millennial power, decides not to bet on a Communist strategy of central planning and starts a new economic stage where it does not inaugurate or change its role, what it does is to change the means, as Deng said, to obtain the ends of the development sought.

While the vast majority of the developer models of the West incur in one or some of the above assumptions to introduce or lead industrial development policies, the interventionist Chinese State, like Monterroso's dinosaur, was already there, in a long-standing economic intervention that has never changed in terms of (totalitarian) presence and responsibility; Yes, obviously, in terms of its strategy and participation tools.

A State always present in the economic commitment, statist, monopolistic, interventionist, to a greater or lesser degree or luck, but that sustained China as the largest economy in the world in 90% of modern times, is not a characteristic that can be compared with any other State in any other country in the world. A long-lived, wise, oppressive, ceremonial state, tanned in millennia, which has withstood the test of military adversities and time, cannot be compared with any Western State either.

But in spite of all these differences, all of them relevant to mark essential differences between a Western Developer State and the Chinese case, there are two more that amply reinforce this assumption.

The first is that all these characteristics accompany the construction of the Chinese State, while the scholar's debate whether they are still alive or not. Whether they died with the Empire, with Mao, or continue to be part of its daily events, the political

reform of March 2018, the fifth reform to its 1982 constitution, clearly reveals that this millenarian way of building power in China is still current; consequently the same reform ratifies the need of a center, a *core*, a nucleus of power in the figure of Xi Jinping, who is assumed as an exemplary center, a radiant center, and organizing principle of the entire Tianxia, the Chinese civilizing space that today includes the whole world. Likewise, through a Confucianism for the 21st century, the Chinese State calls for the loyalty of the children with the father, of the least with the most, of the underdogs with the political Tianming.

The empirical evidence of the reform and the official and media statements that accompanied its implementation, once again ratifies the existence of a Chinese State that, inspired by its everlasting cosmogony, without responding to absolutes, is installed and adapted to make China not only the economic hegemony, but also to take over the geopolitics of the 21st century.

The second point, as part of an Eastern dialectic of conceiving the power and the State, which differs with regard to the Western Developer Model, is that while in the cases when the model was applied to Germany, Finland, or even in its Latin American versions, in the middle of the last century such as Mexico, Brazil or Argentina, in these cases, once the State goal was achieved, or not—to implement an industrial process competitive with developed nations—this lowered its sails and returned to a political position of adaptation with the international economic order, limiting its direct participation in companies and processes, aligned to a global economic logic. China, in four decades of economic success, from being the second economy in the world, the first exporting power, and the first manufacturing nation, is still there, under different masks, maintaining its entire presence, and as the specialist Pankaj Mishra points out, the end of the participation of the Chinese State in the development of its economy, “Has never been on its agenda” (Mishra, 2018).

III

Regarding the issue of China's *developmentalism*, since its opening, it has been inspired by the success of Taiwan, Korea, Germany, Japan, and even the United States. In theory, of course, it drinks and learns from Hamilton and Lutz. It asks its academics, as in other disciplines, to be inspired by them; as it did at the time with Toffler and Rifkin, and with others, to whom it led to long seminars with its Confucian bureaucracies, so that they can learn, ask, and embrace knowledge and strategies.

Since 1980, Chinese developmentalism is installed through its economic zones that came to include all models and facets. They represent the foundations of its economic miracle. Despite its weakness, the selective, progressive and pragmatic opening, at all times was focused on enhancing its content and national interest. Its appropriation of technology, its vision for the future; its always priority bet to a national industry and not only to maquila. The strength of its Development Bank, as the financial muscle of its success. Its champion sectors of development dynamically selected in each of its five-year plans; its industrial clusters. The selective control of its currency, the commitment to science and technology, the high-volume production. Its state policy of support to exports and industrial production. The short, medium and long-term planning. Its subsidies and tax exemptions for the foreign industrial investment, and priority sectors; its educational policy for development. The protection of its domestic market, of its companies, of its jobs, etc., are part of a widely known economic lesson.¹⁷ The *software* of its success, which corresponds

¹⁷ For more information on the developmentalist economic path of China, see "China entre el reto y la oportunidad" (Oropeza, 2006), especially Chapter II. "El comercio chino, un modelo de Estado", III. "Una visión general sobre el sistema financiero chino" V. "La relación China-OMC, ¿Detonador o protocolizador del éxito comercial" and VII? "China-México: un encuentro inesperado". Likewise, "México-China. Culturas y sistemas jurídicos comparados" (Oropeza 2008), in a special way, "China y su modelo de Desarrollo: líneas generales desde una perspectiva mexicana", through which political stability is

to the living keys of its civilization, is a pending task for a better understanding and administration of a new era, which will inevitably have a high Asian component.

However, the topic of China, due to its importance and dimension, cannot remain circumscribed to a debate of whether it is a Developer State of Western heritage or not. The magnitude of the facts exceeds this question, and before the evidence of its enormous success, that places it, in a probable way, as the economic hegemon of the 21st century, it is necessary to continue exploring the integral strengths of an Asian model of development, with its own characteristics, recognized by China as *market socialism*, that although it borrowed part of the technical instruments from the developmentalist model during the first decades of its opening, is far from being just that; and even, the Chinese know-how on incorporating not only the industrial issue but the integral process of globalization, already represents a case study and inspiration for most of the undeveloped countries.¹⁸

detailed, as a fundamental element of the Chinese model and Economic Development, as a priority of the State, which includes the general lines of the economic model as of 1978, among others, the implementation of a policy of selective opening, the creation of Special Economic Zones, the long-term vision of the economic strategy, the companies owned by the State, the industrial policy, the Chinese policy on the issues of research and development. Additionally “El mundo según Goldman Sach: reflexiones generales al proyecto BRICS” in *BRICS. El difícil camino entre el escepticismo y el asombro* (Oropeza, 2014); “El acuerdo de Asociación Transpacífico: ¿bisagra o confrontación entre el Atlántico al Pacífico” in *El acuerdo de Asociación Transpacífico: ¿bisagra o confrontación entre el Atlántico al Pacífico* (Oropeza, 2013) y *Del Atlántico al Pacífico. Hacia un nuevo orden global* (Oropeza, 2017) and “El desorden global. México y su circunstancia” in *México 2018. La responsabilidad del porvenir*, Volumen II (Oropeza, Salazar, Romero, 2018).

¹⁸ Regarding Nationalism as an inherent factor in the development models of the West, it may be noted that in China, unlike the European countries, the first Nationalist expressions can be found in the ancient Confucian principles, when the idea of an axiological belonging that gave identification and meaning to the Chinese people is common. As already stated, Schwartz highlights this fact by pointing out that China was the only one of the axial civilizations whose main concern was to look and recognize itself in its past. In its long histori-

The theme of the Japanese model, because it began in the 19th century and because of the way it was carried out generates a relevant distortion for the analysis of the Asian models of development, in such a way that allows it to be set as an example of neoliberal success (World Bank, International Monetary Fund) or as an economic success of tributary Confucianism, where mandarin administrative positions predominate, highly prepared bureaucracies, loyal and disciplined with their governors and their companies; as well as a central planning after 1950.¹⁹

Regarding the developer models for the industrial growth that were implemented throughout the world with more or less

cal journey and in relation to its identity confusion during the Tang Dynasty and the rise of Buddhism “The reconquering of China by a Chinese cosmovision...” (Bauer, 2009) operated as a tool that was always at hand so as not to lose its own personality, a Chinese pride that among its many meanings can be labeled with the modern stamp of *Nationalism*. This same feeling and politico-intellectual attitude are always active, to a greater or lesser extent, in the face of external threats that frequented China over two millennia. In a special way, this *Nationalism*, or preservation of the Chinese, stood out against the Mongol invasion and was stronger against the conquest of China by the Manchus, where the resistance came to suicide. Certainly, the late empire brought with it re-releases and revisionisms that judged the causes of the imperial decadence. In the 17th century, in the context of these events, for example, Huang Zongxi is considered the first Chinese nationalist (Bauer) and responsible for introducing an intellectual current of social criticism. Therefore, it can be said that *Nationalism in China*, with Chinese characteristics, appears from its millenary origin, through a feeling of pride and belonging, which always turns to the past to nourish its responses to the challenges of the present. The same to defend itself against the challenges of the exterior of the last centuries (Western and Japanese invasions) as to start the new *Chinese dream* of becoming the new hegemony of the 21st century. In the specific case of its inauguration, as a Developer State as of 1978, its Nationalism uses it as an engine to overcome its enormous backwardness and as a motivation to achieve a better present. The humiliation of the Opium War or the Japanese invasion are also, without a doubt, permanent incentives for not turning down the public agenda of building a Socialism with Chinese characteristics for a New Era.

¹⁹ For more information about the theme of the Japanese model see; Oropeza, Arturo, 2019, *Japan and the Importance of its Role in the Encounter Between East and West*.

success since the 19th century to date, which found a natural point of expansion in the Chinese world of East Asia (Taiwan, Korea, Japan, Singapore, Malaysia, now Vietnam and other Asian nations), the ease of adaptability in terms of the successful role played by the State of each of these countries, must be based, largely, on a cultural Confucian *taxation* that permeated from the Chinese civilization, which flaunts itself, and must be believed, as the only *living civilization of millenary nature*.

In the face of a new economic era that is opening up and a declining period, in which a sick neo-liberalism from the future contrasts with an Asian development model led by China, which drives by itself 30% of global economic growth versus the 28% of all developed countries (ECLAC, 2016), the challenge of imagining new alternatives for economic development arises, in a distortion period that will not be easy for anyone.

When Milton Friedman was invited to China in the early eighties, during that Asian euphoria, to learn from the other, Friedman pointed out that the Chinese person who welcomed him when he got off the airplane emitted a “terrible bad smell”. At the end of his lectures, when leaving China, Friedman stated that the Chinese were “incredibly ignorant of how the Market and the Capitalist system worked” (Mishra, 2018).

Almost four decades after these declarations and in light of an enormous ignorance of what China represents, it is imperative that academia, for the purposes it pursues, not disregard China.

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CHAPTER II

ASIATIC DEVELOPMENT MODEL. SINO-JAPANESE HERITAGE

ASIATIC DEVELOPMENT MODEL. SINO-JAPANESE HERITAGE

A. INTRODUCTION

Over two decades, the 21st century has been characterized, in many ways, by highlighting the encounter, shock, dialogue, etc., between two cultures-civilizations, which have struggled since the 19th century for the recognition of their transcendence within a new global order; after a historical distance, wrapped up by the difficulty of its geography, and Asia's geopolitical self-isolation, which already anticipated, in the face of a possible change, the disarray of the events in its millennial time.

The arrival of England to China in 1839 and of the United States to Japan in 1854, with a belligerent and threatening embassy, causes the first encounter of two millenary²⁰ civilizations that had been avoided for various reasons. However, since that moment, their coexistence occurs in an uninterrupted way, full of challenges and outstanding issues that are still waiting for a sustainable solution.

The East-West relationship is as old as man himself, but the intensity of the events since the Opium War between Great Britain and China, and shortly after, by the violent arrival of Commodore Perry to Japan, marked a before and after between the two civilizations, two regions that until that time marched through different geopolitical and geo-economic roads.

²⁰ For the practical purposes of this work, in East Asia is recognized the existence of the Chinese, Japanese and Muslim civilizations, in direct coexistence with the Russian and the Indian. Western civilization is understood to be the sum of the United States and the European Union.

In this regard, Japan and China are the crowning pieces of a civilizing process of global integration, which although always present, the circumstances and conditions that surround it show it to be the central geopolitical period of an unfinished dialogue, of a first clash of civilizations between East Asia and the Western nations, heirs of the First Industrial Revolution.

This becomes relevant in light of the growth of a global debate that is already talking of a political and economic move from the Atlantic to the Pacific, where the different sides begin to build a new story that tries to explain the reasons for, or impediments to, an *Asian inevitability*, where yesterday's defeat would result in a successful return, the degree and nature of which are not known for sure.

Within this long journey that already spans for more than a century and a half, Japan appears as a country of the East Asia region that has played a relevant role from the very beginning of this encounter because it was the first link between the two universes.

Japan, in the framework of its circumstance, experiences the challenge of being the first East Asian country to face the experience of the Western clash. It is also Japan's responsibility to succeed in turning this challenge into the opportunity to become, first, an industrial nation, then, a world power and, in general, a successful economy that, under different forms and conditions, has maintained itself as the third largest economy in the world from the late 19th century to date.

However, the nature of its economic and political response in both the 19th and 20th centuries remains so applicable today that the majority of the Asian countries, with their own conditions and times, have been reproducing it with such success that, today, it is giving rise to what is recognized as the second encounter or clash of civilizations. In this framework, China, as Japan did at the time, again calls for the configuration of a new global order with Asian characteristics.

The dimension of the questions that are asked today with regard to this proposal forces us to seek within their first explanations about the origin of an Asian model of development, of a Developer State, which has been in place with great success since the 19th century to this day. In this regard, the events in Japan in its experiences with the West, notwithstanding the time elapsed and the literature generated on the subject, are represented as a question of prior declaration, both by the national achievements obtained, and by the effects inherited by its region.

Japan is part of an Eastern civilization that, with its governance during the first clash of civilizations of the 19th century, generated an economic and political strategy with its own characteristics, which has been successfully reproduced by most of the East Asian nations, especially by the People's Republic of China.

The following sections will seek to address the nature of this participation and its relevance as an approach to explain this second *clash* of civilizations of the 21st century.

B. JAPAN AND THE *CLASH OF CIVILIZATIONS* OF THE 19TH CENTURY

Much is said of China. Of the Chinese miracle, of its possible hegemony during the 21st century. Along with this, East Asia's economic and political rise since the second half of the 20th century is also added, at the same time that the decline of a good part of the European economies and the problems of the United States is observed.

There is a discussion of changing times and eras and the move of the global center from the Atlantic to the Pacific. Of a new re-configuration of the established order and the sunset of a Brettonian time that no longer fulfills its role of reasonably ordering the world flow.

Many reasons are discussed so that this might happen. However, at this stage of the *Asian inevitability* and even the *Chinese inevitability*, what stands out is that it is by no means a new process.

Rather, it goes back to the time when the first clash of civilizations takes place—in the opposite direction of Huntington's approach—where the great civilizing force of the West from the 15th to the 20th century clashes against the weakened civilizations of Asia (with China and Japan as of the 19th century), and they stage the first military, economic, political and cultural encounter, whose consequences in time have not ended, given the depth and validity of their cultures.²¹

Japan, as one of the leading civilizations of East Asia, played a central role in the history of this encounter in the 19th century. Certainly, it was not the first Asian civilization to resent the arrival of the pre-industrial-Renaissance outbreak that began to take global positions in Asia from the late 15th century. However, the way it faces the arrival of hegemonies, the way it manages the challenge, the speed of its political reordering, its eastern *assimilation* of the Western culture, and above all, its way of constructing an economic-political model of development with Asian characteristics, are part of a reality that is still explaining, in great

²¹ The world was radically transformed in the 19th century by the titanic new powers triggered by the Industrial Revolution and the Scientific Revolution. Modern transport and communication technologies, such as the steamship, railway, and telegraph (the first telegraph link between China and Europe was established in 1871), connected the planet like never before. New military technologies, including steam war battleships and machine guns, gave industrialized countries unprecedented military superiority over non-industrialized nations. Power and wealth also turned these industrialized countries into very attractive models, although there was a noticeable period of delay before many peoples, outside the core of early industrialization, perceived the seemingly irresistible character of the modernization, and many of them never welcomed it. "From 1860 to 1914, the steel network [the railways] spread all over the world, and so did the political, financial and engineering techniques that were developed together with it"; however "Among non-Western peoples only the Japanese showed real enthusiasm for the railways", and, even in Japan, the first 29-kilometer stretch of railway track was not installed until 1872. In China, the first short railway line was built by a British company in 1876, but was later acquired by the Chinese government to be dismantled the following year (Holcombe, 2016, p. 253).

measure, the change that is experienced in this first half of the 21st century.

In the vast civilizing geography of Asia, as already noted, its central-eastern part stands out for housing five of its greatest exponents which are the Chinese, Indian, Russian, Muslim, and Japanese civilizations, of which the latter stands out for having started the path of regional vindication in the second part of the 19th century, after most of them, at different times and in different ways, were co-opted by the Western hegemonic cycle starting in the middle of the second millennium of our era.

East Asian civilizations, especially China, India, and Japan, lived the privilege of the distance that kept them away from an extremely belligerent climate that characterized the evolution of early Western and Asia Minor societies for many centuries. The distance, geography, natural barriers, and the lack of technology caused the encounters of East Asia with the West to be exceptional, and while they were assumed in their respective antipodes, their communication and contact only began to multiply in an obvious way until the technology and European will broke into the seas and the unknown territories of their time.²²

The first generation of the pre-industrial innovation, especially maritime transport and new war technology, cause distances to shrink and barriers to fall, and that step by step and one by one these Asian civilizations were gradually yielding to Western war superiority. First India, with the arrival of the Portuguese in the current Kerala (1498) and shortly afterwards with the English through the British East India Company, which for about 350 years would dominate the country under different political and economic figures.

²² The scope and quality of the information on different parts of Asia depended heavily on Europeans. In the 18th century, unlike the second half of the 19th century, many Asian governments were still able to regulate the entry and movements of foreigners. Reports of travelers from all provinces of the country (China) were only available around 1900. No other Asian state practiced a foreign policy as uncompromising as Japan, Korea, and China (Osterhammel, 2018, p. 113 and 117).

After multiple attempts during the Opium War in 1839, the English superiority defeats China without bending it, and forces it to open itself up to English trade and interests, and along with them to those of the major European countries. Japan, which had also enjoyed the privilege of a policy of isolation or *Sakoku*, as a means of regional, and certainly global, defense, receives 13 years after the *defeat* of China, the arrival of the North-American fleet, which tells it that its period of isolation had ended and that together with its regional neighbors, as of that moment, it was already part of a global chess game that since then has staged different realignments. That the world, as Thomas Friedman says, had become flat and more complex.

India lives its circumstance until its independence in 1947. China faces its own circumstance through a rocky internal and external, path that partially recover it until 1949. Japan, unlike its regional neighbors, through pragmatic and efficient diplomacy and a successful understanding of the historical moment that it was living, achieves the incredible leap with a successful transformation, which, still today, continues to be a topic of debate about the type of attributes and degree of their participation in order to achieve this. There is no doubt that with the success of its incorporation into the Western society of its time, Japan built a multi-dimensional political, economic, and cultural bridge between two regions of the world whose dialogue is far from concluded.

This first *encounter*, *shock* as Huntington suggests, or *fusion* as Mahbubani tries to soften, which happens frontally between the West and the East from the 15th to the 19th century, to the detriment of the Asian nations, has not ended. In an era of the Pacific that is gradually settling in exchange for the decline of an era of the Atlantic, puts back on the table the theme of a second confrontation of two regions-civilizations that are bound to find the formula for a sustainable and harmonious global coexistence within the framework of their differences.

C. JAPAN AND THE ASIAN MODEL OF DEVELOPMENT

The Political Construction

The incorporation of China and Japan into this first clash of civilizations causes countless effects for two civilizing universes that had dialogued little and shared little. First, the strength of its waves generates, among other effects, the interruption of the civilizing inertia of a region more than two millennia old, while opening up for the first time the possibility of a full coexistence between two worlds with different visions.

This encounter leaves in the immediacy of its first contact a relevant balance of winners and losers, as well as an easy reading of superior and inferior civilizations that is produced with the smoke of the gunpowder from the cannons that did not allow anyone to see, at the time, beyond the economic results of a military superiority.

Japan's clash with the West is exemplified by the arrival of Commodore Matthew C. Perry's fleet, which in 1854 forced it to sign a treaty (Kanagawa) by which it pledged to break its isolation by opening the ports of Nagasaki, Shimoda, and Hakodate; followed by another treaty in 1858, which included an extraterritoriality clause, which meant the end of an ancient era of internal cultivation, sullen to all kinds of foreign relations.

Japan like China, as of these first international agreements, lives what was called in East Asia, "the century of treaties", which were the key that opened the door so that later both China and Japan would have to sign similar treaties with other countries like Russia, Holland, England, France, etc. The Sakoku era had ended for Japan, as well as the Middle Kingdom for China and its traditional isolation.

In this first clash of civilizations, the Asian powers had to conform and yield in multiple ways to Western hegemony, due, among other reasons, to the exhaustion of their civilizing cycles that because their backwardness, in the face of the Atlantic in-

dustrialization, easily exposed them to the dominance of the maritime powers of the second half of the millennium.

China was managing with great difficulty the decline of a dynasty (Qing), which would eventually end in 1911. Japan, with severe upheavals, also witnessed the end not only of a phase of its Early Modern State in the auspices of the Tokugawa Shogunate, but also lived the aftermath of a political order regulated primarily by the power of the sword and the Shugun in turn, as well as by an imperial presence of a symbolic nature.

In January, 1869, fourteen years after Japan signed its first act of opening with the exterior, this situation radically changes before the declaration of the Dynasty Meiji to begin a new phase of government based on the restoration of the monarchy, as a first step to reorder the inertia of the past and importantly, to deal with threats from abroad.

The process was not smooth or fast. It was not was not an easy task to reorient a political, economic, and military reality that had prevailed for at least the last 400 years. However, Japan operated in an agile and efficient manner and went from living a feudal fragmentation internally and being a mostly tributary nation of China externally, to invading the Asian giant for the first time in 1894, 26 years after its restoration, and becoming the dominant nation of East Asia upon defeating Russia also in 1905.

For two millennia, Japan has been practicing an intelligent strategy of internal development, while at the same time it has practiced a strategy of learning coexistence and balance with the most powerful economy of its time, which had inaugurated its modern state in 221 BC. In this way, for Japan, learning and pragmatism become instruments of survival that as of the 6th century give it the guidelines of a path with its own characteristics. However, it was always under the presence of an exuberant civilization that enriches their cultural heritage and limits it in its internal and regional development.²³

²³ Few peoples have created such an unmistakable lifestyle. And yet, many of the Japanese institutions are of foreign origin. The morality and political

From the 6th to the 19th century, Japan traverses a long road on which it builds its own civilization; exploring different forms of political organization. In this period, it passes through an Ancient State where its first States and a Unified Central State (3rd century-12th century) appear; a Medieval State where the Shogunates rival the central power and the figure of the Emperor (13th-16th century); an Early Modern State, in which the Tokugawa Shogunate generates greater order and stability (17th-19th century) until the Meiji Restoration in 1868.

In 1221 with the Kamakura Shogunate, in 1392 with the Shogunate Muromachi, and in 1680 mainly with the Tokugawa, Japan administered an era of medieval political power and an Early Modern State through the main figure of a Shogun, which in appearance ruled together with the figure of an Emperor, in addition to multiple feudal lords and a large cabinet and administrative apparatus. However,

In fact with only a few short-lived exceptions, since the end of the 19th century at least, the Japanese Emperor did not rule, but merely reigned. When the Shogun Tokugawa assumed political control in the 17th century, they struggled to maintain the idea that they were ruling on behalf of the Emperor, stating that they were simply attending worldly matters that were not worthy of Your August Majesty (Heisig, Kasulis, Maraldo, Bouso, 2016).

In spite of this, from the suspension of the imperial figure as the center of power for almost a thousand years, Japan did not hesitate in the 19th century to return its central power to the Emperor in order to bring the various domestic actors together

philosophy of Confucius, the mystique of Chuang-tsé, the etiquette and calligraphy, the poetry of Po Chü-i and the *Book of Filial Piety*, the architecture, the sculpture and painting of the Tang and the Sung modeled the Japanese for centuries. Thanks to this Chinese influence, Japan was also aware of the speculations of Nagarjuna and other great metaphysicists of the Mahayana Buddhism and the meditation techniques of Hindus (Peace, Octavio en Asia, 2014, p. 59).

around its nuclear and sacred image, both to orchestrate its defense and to initiate its response to an unknown order.

Was Japan a successful Asian civilization in coexistence with a Western order? Did it flee to the West? Did it become an industrial Capitalist State, or did it remain as a totalitarian Asian State (Meiji Absolutism)? Or did it inaugurate a pragmatic-eclectic model, between the assimilation and implementation of the best of two realities and two models of State?

The truth is that Japan, in the face of Western arrival, manages to transform a long period of Shogunates plagued by feudal lords (Daimyō) and hundreds of thousands of Samurai, through the restoration of the figure of the Emperor (Tennō). With the arrival of the Emperor Meiji Tennō (Mutsuhito) (1867-1912) and a new organization of political power, Japan responds to the Western presence that ultimately, rather than an intrusion in its internal feudal life, serves as a catapult to ascend to geoeconomic and geopolitical places that it had not had before.

It took China more than 100 years (1840-1949) to reach a principle of political stability against the West, and more than 130 years (1840-1978) to reach a principle of economic recovery. India, from the year 1600, the date that grants permission to the British East India Company for the exercise of exclusive trade, passing through its various expressions of control and dominance until its independence in 1947, took almost three and a half centuries to free itself from Western dominance. Japan, as was already indicated, took less than 20 years for its institutional redesign (1854-1868).

The liberal *modus* demanded from Japan by the West, as a requirement to resume broader and fairer trade negotiations, was the story of a first encounter of two cultures in which one of them, in the exercise of its hegemony, demanded from the latter the total assimilation of a legal, economic, and commercial language that was oblivious to its custom and its idiosyncrasy.

To solve these challenges Japan decides to build a Western integration bridge with Asian features. Under this concern, it

sent several missions to the various European countries in order to learn about the other, to know the other. To know their cultures and learn the secrets of an industrial revolution that was defining the success and backwardness of the regions. Japan goes to France and Germany to learn the legal-political models, to the United States and England the industrial, to Germany and the United States the military, etc., in an accelerated pragmatism to master the secrets of the dominant nations. However, in this vibrant phase of change, in this first dialogue between Asia and the West, what Japan does not do is to forget the assets of an ethnicity and a culture of power that was different from the Western one.

Political Change and Ethnicity

What happens in this first Huntingtonian clash is the approximation of two civilizations with different cosmogonies, which are brought together and confronted by the global flattening, where the *assimilation* of Japan into the Western order is the narrative of an encounter of two cultures that debate day-to-day the degree of their assimilation in a dimension that we know today is not only economic, or political, but also civilizing. It is the *experiment* of a dialogue formed between a millennial and complex Asian country, which as pointed out by Prince Shōtoku since the 7th century, like a large tree, had Shinto roots, a Confucian trunk, and Buddhist fruits.

Therefore, although the Meiji Dynasty promulgated a proto-constitution in 1868 with 5 clauses and approved a first constitution in 1889 to accelerate its dialogue with the West, it never forgot that its Confucian and Shinto roots were speaking of a strong national government, able to control its society, its feudal lords, and negotiate with strength overseas. Although it required a *modern* State, it should not lose the ancestral attributes of an absolute control that clearly recognized the most complete reverence and loyalty to the Emperor (Heisig *et al.*, 2016, p. 1042).

In this regard, Tanaka says, “...the constitution could well be the test of a progressive advance, but in reality, with it, the aristocracy had not only defeated liberalism, but also ignored the true principle of the representative institutions”. He added that,

The powers of the emperor were defined by law in the constitution, and as it had been promulgated by the emperor himself, only he had the ability to initiate amendments and changes; moreover, the constitution itself was above criticism, because no one was allowed to criticize the emperor; his word was sacred and inviolable (Tanaka, 2011, pp. 202, 207).

With the legal, political, and economic assimilation of Japan to the liberal model of the time, a first encounter is produced between two cosmogonies that have different visions of the world and of life, and therefore, the way to live and to resolve it. A dilemma that, as Mishra points out, is far from being resolved in the face of West’s obsession, since then, with imposing on the world, in this case East Asia, the *religion* of the *Western Model* (Mishra, 2017, p. 37).

This first phase of Japan’s Westernization, worth noting, does not happen as a voluntary act of change by copying the other. It is first and foremost a necessity of survival in the face of external threat. Moreover, its emergence is backed by the convenience of escaping from an exhausted endogenous cycle and a regional tributary dependency. It is produced with haste and under the terms of an external contract of adhesion, which leaves no space to negotiate its clauses. For this reason, from the outset, the Asian part resorts, in turn, to the *assimilation* as a strategy of simulation, such that while it tries to adhere to the Western clauses, in the background it operates the Asian *adaptation* that best suits it, either in political form or in economic strategy.

Thus, for example, in the Five Principles of the Emperor Meiji (1868), in addition to issuing a reassuring message of inclusion and participation to the newly dissolved internal political actors (feudal lords and samurai), it also defines the strengthening

of the imperial government. Similarly, in the 1889 constitution, after sending various learning missions to the West and designing a legal system similar to its Western counterparts, as already indicated, Emperor Mutsuhito in Article 4 places himself as the, “Head of the Empire, combining in Himself the rights of sovereignty, and exercises them, according to the provisions of the present Constitution”. To leave no doubt to the above, Article 5 clarifies that, “The Emperor exercises the legislative power with the consent of the Imperial Diet”. And if there were any doubts about its omnipresent power, in Article 6, it is bluntly established that, “The Emperor gives sanction to laws, and orders them to be promulgated and executed” [The Constitution of the Empire of Japan (1889), Harvard University].

In this first clash, Japan takes the Asian leadership of vindication under a bounded integration strategy, forced by the weight of an Atlantic hegemony that left little room for negotiation. However, with special sensitivity, it gives the impression of leaving Asia and *fleeing* to the West with a diplomatic handling that satisfies the industrial nations, which place it as an example of success for all of Asia. China, in this first clash becomes outdated, first, because the multinational Western invasions within its territory followed one after another throughout the 19th century and into the mid-20th century, in the face of the refusal of China to give up its status as the center of the world. Also, because its large internal differences, unlike Japan, could not be resolved quickly or pragmatically. The leafy tree of the Chinese civilization required more decades to renew its foliage, although it never ceased to observe and closely follow everything that Japan did in its rapprochement with the West, which to date it has been using to its advantage since its first opening in 1978.

In this *flee* to the West,²⁴ Japan, as a millennial country, as a member of a region rich in civilizing development, resorts to

²⁴ Among the most popular and fervent pro-Westerners of the time was Fukuzawa Yukichi (1835-1901), who came to comment in 1885 that Japan should “leave Asia” culturally and distance itself from its more backward neighbors. “It

its ancestral culture, its beliefs, its ways of ordering power, the State, and society, to build a new profile. This story of myth, legend, and reality that the Meiji reformers reconstructed, notes Martínez Legorreta, achieved the loyalty of the masses to the imperial institution and his person. “In that historical moment”, he added, “They gave Japan a unity that perhaps it would not have reached otherwise, and at the same time a sense of oneness that would serve it not only to counter foreign ideologies, but, years later, and under new circumstances, to promote and carry out their own national, hegemonic and expansionist project in East Asia” [Legorreta Omar, in Tanaka (comp.), 2011, p. 208]. The same author adds that in modern history, no other nation has changed so drastically its society, customs, economic practices, and political structure to create a modern state like Japan; although he adds that this occurred without losing, in the process, its cultural identity [Legorreta, Omar in Tanaka (comp.), 2011, 186].

Other authors such as Hajime Tanabe, with different nuances but agreeing with this cultural assimilation, explain that the Japan of the Meiji era was an ancient mixture of Buddhism and Confucianism, in coexistence and assimilation with the technical and scientific culture of the West (Heisig *et al.*, 2016, p. 1049). Heisig, Maraldo and others also comment that what is present in Japan in the first half of the 20th century is more like a kaleidoscope of Eastern and Western sources, *stumbling around* and reflecting one way or another on the issues that have marked, for centuries, the search for wisdom (Heisig *et al.*, 2016, p. 823).

In their diversity, the different opinions tell us about an encounter-shock-assimilation of civilizations, of an unexhausted process where, despite the large change that Japan lives in the late 19th and the first half of the 20th century, the identity of a

is better that we leave the ranks of the Asian nations and try our luck with the civilized nations of the West”, wrote Fukuzawa. H.M.Hopper, *Fukuzawa Yūkichi :From Samurai to Capitalist*, Pearson Longman, New York, 2005, pp. 121 and 122, en (Holcombe, 2016, p. 291).

millennial civilization, of an Asian region rich in cultural content, appears constantly in a dialogue with the developed civilizations of the moment. Now we clearly see that this dialog has been extended until our days. We also observe the presence of two visions that to date continue to *stumble around*, in a rearrangement that does not seem to conclude and that, on the contrary, in the first half of the 21st century seems more alive than ever in the face of the rise of China and its *Asian characteristics* in the global scene.

Japan in its contact-clash-fusion with the West does not present itself alone. All the cultural production that the East Asian region had generated the two or three millennia before this first encounter go together with it. In particular, all the influence of the powerful Chinese culture is added to its interlocation, from which Japan, together with Korea and the other countries of the area, have always benefited.²⁵

Since the year 404, for example, (the tradition points out 284), through Korea it receives the political and social ideas of a Confucianism that gradually joins the scaffolding of a Japanese ethnicity in construction that would eventually become the *trunk* of the tree. In this regard, Smith comments that the first evidence on the use and adoption of Confucian practices on ethics and political principles is when Prince Shōtoku (572-621) promulgated the famous constitution of the “Seventeen Articles” in 604, in which Confucianism played a central role in the vertical organization of the power and duties of the people with the sovereign. This tendency to adopt the Confucian line for its organization characterized the Japanese attitude since the earliest times (Smith, 1959, p. 6).

²⁵ These paradoxes suggest that China was also diverse in the old days, as the remaining heavily populated nations still are. China only differs in that it was unified much earlier. Its “*Sinicisation*” meant the drastic homogenization of an immense region in an ancient melting pot of peoples, the Chinese population of the tropical Southeast Asia, and a massive influence in Japan, Korea, and possibly even India. Thus, the history of China is the key to the entire story of East Asia (Diamond, 2010, p. 371).

Confucian thought has been part of the political and social reality of the Land of the Rising Sun throughout its history. From its *founding* document, the Constitution of Shōtoku already accepted in its second article the forms of vertical power of Confucian nature and morality as a fundamental element of the State. That the superiors act and that the inferiors obey, that the rite, justice, trust, harmony be respected. That evil and injustice be punished, are criteria of a central document in the history of Japan marked by Confucian influences. At the time of the Shōgunates, especially in the Tokugawa era, Confucianism under the main reinterpretation of Zhu Xi and Wang Yangming, lives a period of special recognition in the social and political life of the country helping to guide the family order, the government, and even the military classes (Samurai). At this political phase, in China, children were asked to respect their parents; servants to respect their teachers; wives to respect their husbands; that brothers and sisters live in harmony; that the young man respects the eldest; that people behave righteously. An entire Confucian philosophical tradition can be traced throughout the construction of the Japanese story. Some of the relevant Japanese thinkers of the Tokugawa²⁶ era are Fujiwara Seika, Nakae Tōju, Yamasaki Ansai, Asami Keisai, Ogyū Sorai, and Sontoku.

²⁶ The debate on Confucianism is two and a half millennia old. With the news and concerns of each moment, its existence, its nature, its content, its scope, etc. are debated. In the 21st century, Confucianism does not lose its validity, and its reality, its flaws and attributes remain part of a discussion between the West and East Asia, between the different countries of East Asia and even within China itself. In the case of Japan, as was already noted, Confucianism was introduced to the country from the early centuries of the new era, “Along with the insertion of the written Chinese language”. “Over time, the Confucian notions had a decisive influence on a significant part of the Japanese culture, including the imperial names, titles of power, and the first attempt to articulate a constitutional structure for the political order”. With the expansion of neo-Confucianism, especially from the systematization of Zhu Xi (1130-1200), Confucianism experienced a second boom in the Japanese country in the face of the subordination of Buddhism during the Song Dynasty. At the same time, the Tokugawa rule from 1600 allowed the development of a cultural basis for the

However, in the 18th century, and especially in the 19th century, the need to have a strong nationalism in the face of furious

golden century of the Confucian philosophy in Japan. “During this period, the Confucian philosophers were often backed by members of the Samurai elite or were already part of the warrior class. However, even during this era of hereditary divisions among the samurai, peasants, craftsmen, and merchants...the Confucian philosophers were addressing the world from an inclusive perspective, which *a priori* intended not to omit or marginalize, but rather to understand holistically”. The clear influence of Confucianism in Japan, despite the exile attempted by the Meiji era, is reflected in the first construction of the word “philosophy” that arises in this period, formed with a neologism that included “subtle distinctions” derived from the ancient and modern Confucianism. “However, much more influential than the fact that the new word «Tetsugaku» catapulted Confucianism to the forefront of Japanese philosophy, was the impressive work produced by the first Japanese man to obtain an academic position in the area of philosophy in the Imperial University of Tokyo, Inoue Tet-sujiro (1855-1944)”. Inoue identified within the traditional Japanese philosophy various schools of the early Japanese Confucianism. In his monumental trilogy, Inoue reveals that long before Western philosophy had reached Japan, Confucian thinkers of the Tokugawa era (1600-1868) produced a copious volume of philosophical literature. “The research of Inoue persuaded many Japanese and Western scholars that Confucianism had been an element of vital importance within the Japanese tradition” (Heisig, Kasulis *et al.*, pp. 315-317). However, Confucianism and its influence in Japan are still under debate with the categories and the changes inherent to the 21st century. Novel authors such as Kang Xiaoguang, Jiang Qing, or Kiri Paramore, structure new confrontations and realities in the face of the “Leninism of the Chinese Communist Party”, in their comparison with China; such as *laissez faire*, neo-liberal *laissez passer*, or conservative cultural nationalism, among others. New Confucian movements in Taiwan, Hong Kong, Singapore, China, etc., are part of an endless debate. In the case of Japan, since the Meiji era and the second part of the 20th century, the subject has tried to be relegated to the construction of a unique cultural history, becoming, even, in a generalized way, part of a taboo in the intellectual and political environments. However, scholars such as Abe Yoshio, Watanabe Hiroshi, Kojima Yasunori, etc., are part of a new wave of specialists on the study of Confucianism in Japan and the rest of Asia. Although together with them, scholars such as Yonaha Jun (The Meaning of Japan), a brilliant and respected scholar in Japan today, irreverently and eruditely reconstruct the historical passage of Confucianism in Japan as part of a Huntingtonian clash of civilizations between the Chinese civilization and Japanese civilization, within the hypothetical framework of the Westphalia agreements. Maruyama Masao, for his part, as of 1945 inspired the “Maruyama rule”, which consists of tal-

external threats, together with the decline of the figure of the shogunate, gives rise to a time called “National Studies”. During this

king about Confucianism by avoiding mentioning its name. Today, as Paramore points out, the taboo of speaking about the shared cultural forms in East Asia, has transitioned to limit the topic. This stems from the challenges that both countries face in the 21st century (Paramore, 2016, pp. 173-182). The intention of this work is far from pretending to abound on an issue of regional idiosyncrasies and rivalries. Rather, it seeks to find keys that allow one to establish the constants of the construction of power, from a Western perspective, of a region rich in civilization production, whose strategies have led to common policies of an economic nature that have catapulted them to be the nations with the greatest development and social improvement of a global society that does not present the same results. In this regard, as was already stressed, the political and economic lines of Japan in the 19th and 20th centuries are otherwise suggestive in understanding the strategies followed by most countries in the area in the 20th and 21st centuries. Even the post-war economic policy of Japan is presented as an extension of what has been attempted as of 1868. Certainly, the military and hegemonic imposition of the United States as of 1945 changes, in a forced way, the analysis, although in the economic field, the power of the Japanese Developer State was never defeated and, on the contrary, it perfected its participation to achieve its second economic miracle. It is also clear that in the first half of the 21st century, in the face of the economic development that was achieved (\$40,000 per capita, 2018) and after a century and a half of coexisting closely with the West, the topic of Japan cannot be dealt with under the same line of analysis. However, it is sufficient to be in Japan and to see the permanent commitment between politics and economics, to feel its neo-nationalism, the validity of the Asian values, etc., to establish that a Shinto, Confucian, and Buddhist ontology coexists predominantly over a Western culture. The issue of the “Eurasian” fusion of Japan and Hong Kong, for example, is a pending subject at this time of change of eras. Meanwhile, the debate on Confucianism will remain open in East Asia to establish whether it has been a xenophobic nationalism; whether it has covered up a radical conservatism; whether it has adopted the nationalist fascisms; whether it has been an obstacle to the promotion of diversity, critical thinking, critical activism, etc.; or whether it has been a key part of a socio-political model that has helped sustain both the force of the East Asian civilization for two millennia, as well as its global economic hegemony for 90% of that period. Until these *Asian enigmas* are sufficiently solved, Confucius continues to teach that, “In the nature of heaven and earth, man is the most worthy of all creatures; of the conduct of human beings, none is so large (morally) as filial piety”. That filial piety includes five basic relationships of a familial, social, and political nature: father and son, husband and wife, older brother and younger brother, sovereign and subject, friend and friend, which

period Japan practices the reconstruction of its own story through the veneration of the past, which lead it to declare Shintoism as the national ideology of the State within the inauguration of the Meiji *restoration* in 1890, to which could be added that in 1940 the Prime Minister Fumimaro also recognizes it as the only *religion* in the country.

However, despite this important fact of Japanese identity, in the midst of the Meiji era, the Education Minister Fukuoka Takachika cannot help but to declare, despite the new Shintoism ideology, that, “In matters of discipline we must promote the only moral thought of this empire, which refers to following the doctrines of Confucianism” (Smith, 1959, p. 47). Without disregarding the Shintoism importance to the political and social life of Japan, as Smith acknowledges, from their birth Shintoism nationalism and Confucianism communicate and consult each other on a permanent basis, based on a Confucian ethic of values and on a political and social order of a vertical nature at all levels. From a Confucian principle of filial piety as a starting point for organizing the State and the highest loyalty and devotion to the Emperor, as the established central power (Smith, 1959, p. 237).

The Confucian vision of the construction of power that both China and Japan share under their own circumstances stems from the idea, as was already stated, of a strong, powerful, unrestricted State, operating under a verticalism of power based on the principle of filial piety.²⁷ Most of the ancient states of East

are still a fundamental part of the Asian society and State. Regarding the aforementioned, Flora Botton tells us that in recent studies in China (we would add Japan and other East Asian nations), emerge, “Important the survival of Confucian attitudes, which emphasize the duty to parents, harmony, and the common good that make the family look like an emotional and material support center in times of crisis” —and that— “Despite divergent views, there is a consensus among scholars that the ties among family members remain alive and strong” (Botton Beja, 2019, p. 367).

²⁷ Now the leaders of the Japanese court were consciously trying to build a powerful centralized state, something similar to the model used by China during the Sui and Tang dynasties. The Japanese monks who had been sent to

Asia converge in various forms, but with the same essence, under this central idea. Thus, what faces, what *clashes* against the Western political order at that first encounter of the 19th century, is not just the idiosyncrasies of a nation that debated its political and economic strengths and weaknesses in the industrial with the power of the moment, but that, in general, was the sum of the civilizing heritage of an entire region that at this initial stage had to rearrange its reality in order to preserve its interests and its future, but that did not give up its ethnicity, its culture, nor did it renounce, since then, the importance of its role in the new global era. As the journalist Tokutomi Shoho stated in 1905 when the Japanese fleet defeated the Russian naval force in the Tsushima Strait, “We have destroyed the myth of inferiority of the non-white races. With our power we are forcing our acceptance as a member of the great world powers” (Mishra, 2012, p. 3).

The Economic Change and the Ethnicity

The Asian State —the Chinese state as the founder of the model but in this case the Japanese State as a tributary country— in its political and economic sense are born together;

China to study, along with the first diplomatic missions, began to return home in the 630s, bringing with them direct knowledge of the conditions prevailing in the Tang dynasty. Around Prince Naka no Ōe (who later ruled as Emperor Tenji, r. 662-671), a coalition was formed with some of the teachers who had studied in China and they were led by a man named Nakatomi Kamatari (614-669). According to tradition, Nakatomi Kamatari carefully assessed the skills of all the royal princes and determined that Naka no Ōe was the most suitable person to carry out his long-cherished project of establishing a centralized government (Holcombe, 2016, p. 155).

The efforts to strengthen the Japanese State at this time of crisis included the accelerated adoption of Chinese-like imperial institutions, which, then, were simply the most impressive administrative model ever, and which is likely to have been introduced mostly indirectly at this time through the Silla mediation, in Korea, rather than directly through the Tang dynasty of China. H. Ooms, *Imperial Politics and Symbolic in Ancient Japan: The Tenmu Dynasty, 650-800*, University of Hawaii Press, Honolulu, 2009, p. 51 in (Holcombe, 2016, pp. 156 and 157).

learn together, live together, and are consubstantial in their origin. Similarly, their essential economic powers are born in the same birth in the form of primary modalities that have changed little, because they are part of the construction of a power that was thought of as a responsible parent for meeting the material and economic needs of its people; of a people educated not to have, but to be, in the frugality of their Confucian moralism. Of a unipersonal imperial father (State), which is not accustomed to sharing its power or its responsibility because it has never done so. Because it has never been subject to limitations (checks and balances), that has always been accustomed to acting in an authoritarian manner, under the *moral* and *virtuous responsibility* of its origin, subject to the result of the satisfaction of its governed (sons). To organize itself vertically as a father to his family, with one voice and command from top to bottom, where the boundless loyalty of each of the family members to its ruler (State) prevails, in a vertical relationship without real democratic glimpses, because they have never been part of its state cosmogony. Of a State that to guarantee its good results is surrounded by a civil organization of millennial career, meritocratic, a government of the *best*; dynamic, updated, disciplined and pragmatic, like a bureaucratic army that for millennia first administered the land, the last century the industry and now the intelligence services.²⁸

In the economic field, Japan, like the East Asia region as a whole, recognized from the outset that the main difference with the West was the degree of industrial development among them. That the power of the military powers emanated from an industrial revolution that they had not attended and, that now, the way to attain, and then compete, with these nations was to generate an accelerated industrial development of their own. In an era

²⁸ According to Chinese ethics, the social unit is the family, constituted of the system of hierarchical obedience, and the peasant enjoys the same importance as the emperor, that paternal autocrat whose virtues have placed him at the head of the great communist brotherhood of mutual duties, by his own choice and agreement. (Okakura, 2018, p. 60).

where market liberalism was imposed militarily throughout Asia, the articulation of the political response, and over it the economic strategy of Japan, in the 19th century is what can be defined as the most relevant antecedent of the now successful Asian development model or “Developer State” as Chalmers Johnson called it in the 20th century.

During the eighties of the last century, under the new train of Japan’s economic successes and in the face of the observation of the attributes of an Asian model with its own characteristics, Johnson sensitively stated that, “The Developer State exists and is in the process of changing the balance of world power, whether the Anglo-American academic and journalistic establishment recognizes it or not”, (Woo-Cumings, 1999, p. 33). In this regard, on the proposed characteristics, Francks added, “In the World of East Asia that (Chalmers) Johnson describes, the ruling elites and strategic economic ministries deploy the entire arsenal that is at their disposal as standards, regulations, subsidies, trade protection, restrictions on foreign investment, to guide their domestic companies in the direction of development that they deem necessary” (Franks, 2015, p. 17).

This commitment of the Asian State to its economy and its results, both in China and Japan, Korea, etc., has always been practiced and goes far beyond choosing winners (Picking Winners) or managing market failures (market failures). The idea of an interventionist state *responsible* for the fate of its subjects was born with Confucius and his followers and was implemented under different circumstances over two millennia. The creation of the first modern State since the 3rd century B.C. on the part of China and its tributary influence within its entire zone of influence is what determines the political and economic nature of the Asian State that always had a commitment to its economy and the people it governs. The correct interpretation that Johnson offers for the Japan of the 20th century finds its origin in the millennial ethnicity of a region that, through this interpretation, has been able to hold economic leadership during 90% of the modern time of humanity.

Japan, in the face of its economic challenge, built a political response with a *Western form* but with an Asian nature, where the power of the emperor and his restoration team had no limits on the management of the state apparatus from 1868 to 1926 with the Mutsuhito and Yoshihito emperors; and even, albeit under a different scheme, during the Taisho *democracy* and the War Regime (1931-1945). As of 1945 it repeats the economic strategy under the American *circumstance*.

The result of this, in political matters, was a Japanese parliamentarianism with Asian characteristics or a *Meiji Absolutism* with *Western peculiarities*, from which a Japanese economic-industrial model was born that at the time became the Asian model of development, which, from the 19th century to the 21st century, has been repeated under its own conditions by Taiwan, Korea, Malaysia, Hong Kong, Singapore, etc., and especially the People's Republic of China.

In economic matters, the Meiji Dynasty built an entire structure that has been catalogued by some specialists as *Sui generis* (Flath, 2014). The Japanese capitalism —Martínez Legorreta emphasizes— was not developed as a state capitalism nor as the result of private enterprise, but as a mixture of both [Legorreta Omar, in Tanaka (comp.), 2013, p. 208]. In the seventies of the 20th century, during the opening of China, Deng Xiaoping would translate the above by stating that, “There are currently two models of productive development. To the extent that each of them serves our purposes, we will make use of it. If Socialism is useful to us, the measures will be Socialist; if Capitalism is useful to us, the measures will be Capitalist”. “There are no fundamental contradictions —Deng summarized pragmatically— between the socialist system and the market economy” (Oropeza, 2008, p. 450). Neither were there between the liberal capitalism of the Meiji era and the new Japanese *Developer State*.

The *economic pragmatism* in the West was inaugurated by Japan along with its entry into the liberal order of its time in an effort to integrate itself into the winner's circle, but without ignoring its

Asian DNA, more as a consubstantial part of it than as a deliberate strategy of the moment. In this way, the Meiji administration builds a political-legal power by way of the Western forms, but centralist in its implementation.

Economically, this same power, now reflected in the image of a *Modern Developer State*, leads the industrialization of the country starting with the new infrastructure, banking, telegraph, railways, monetary system, etc. At the same time, it immediately assumes the same role that it has always played, of being a protectionist State, injecting capital into the private sector, creating companies, promoting public and private enterprises, supplying with advantage the delivery of inputs, raw materials, and generally distributing all kinds of stimulus, subsidies, or protection that would contribute to the formation of an industrial economy that could compete and win with Western companies.

Its relationship with the private sector, regardless of its size, is one of submission and dependence, at the same time that it is an opportunity to manage politically a displaced samurai class, which in the new economic and political order finds a place at the head of the new companies of the State. This characteristic of Japan is the one that explains, to a large extent, the birth of the *zaibatus*²⁹ or large economic conglomerates of the country, to whom, for strategic and political reasons, the empire provides with unbridled support in strategic sectors, creating world champions in heavy industry, capital goods, automotive, etc. Companies and families such as Mitsui, Mitsubishi, Sumitomo, Kawasaki, etc., are still examples of this 19th century policy. This state-private sector relationship, by nature of its origin, generates a differentiated development engine that is not easy to understand in other regions of the world, but which always involve, in synthesis, the commitment on the part of the State to their economic develop-

²⁹ In Korea, this figure will lead to the creation of industrial chaebols after the end of the 1950 war, and China will overflow with large state enterprises or SOES, as well as with the creation of special economic zones.

ment and especially with their results. This economic strategy in its modern version that starts in Japan during the *restoration* continues today with the modulations of the case. “Even though the process of industrialization was accomplished, and led Japan to a new stage of development” [Legorreta Omar, in Tanaka (comp.), 2011, p. 229].

There has always been an attempt to differentiate the Asian circumstances. In some cases there is talk of the “Japanese administrative guidance” [Woo-Cumings in Aoki (comp), 2000, p. 434]; in others of the “Samurai Spirit” (Francks, 2015), etc., which tells us that since its incorporation Japanese-Asian differences already demanded a distinction within the Western economic-political analysis. One can add to this the sense of respect and loyalty of the Japanese workers, employees, and officials, which impacted and continues to shock the West and which, now, could be generalized towards most East Asian countries that are more inspired by nationalism, loyalty, and merit than by profits. Francks substantiates the above,

On the success achieved in the new —Japanese— companies firstly, a patriotic commitment and social responsibility, must be highlighted, rather than a private accumulation of wealth. An unknown phenomenon —in the West— but faithful to a Confucian tradition and a society still in touch with its feudal past” (Francks, 2015, p. 57).

The contribution that Japan makes to the East Asian region is a phenomenon of the greatest relevance, the consequences of which continue to spread to such an extent that they are now identified as one of the main causes for the change of the economic center from the Atlantic to Pacific. However, the interpretation of the economic success of the Japanese assimilation with the West in both the 19th and 20th centuries remains a controversial topic that is discussed periodically but is not still resolved.

The predominant Western current (World Bank, International Monetary Fund, 1991, etc.) continues to explain the Meiji’s

economic success and its replica as of the second half of the 20th century, as a result of the *adoption* of the open and free economy model, adding in the political aspect its adoption of the Rule of Law and the democratic model, that is, the *Western Model*.

Another important current assumes Japanese success starting with the adoption of the Western lessons by theorists such as Hamilton, Thomas Jefferson, Bismarck, etc., or economic specialists such as Lutz, Smith, etc., which *motivated* it to adopt an industrial developmentalist model and then behave like a market economy. Stiglitz and Wolfson, meanwhile, highlight in the first place some of the contributions of the, “Miracle of East Asia”, among others: the achievement of a better functioning of the society; the flexibility of public policies; the relationship between the State and the markets; the accumulation of physical and human capital; modifications to the allocation of resources; official support to investment, etc. But not entirely convinced of their own conclusions, they comment,

Perhaps the true miracle of East Asia has been political rather than economic. Why —he wonders without answering— did governments undertake these policies? Why didn’t politicians or public servants misrepresent them for personal gain? —adding— Also on this point the East Asian experience has many lessons to share, in particular with regard to the use of incentives and the design of the public sector aimed at finding efficiency and reducing the possibility of corruption (Stiglitz, Wolfson, 1997, p. 347).

Another current known as “Comparative Institutional Analysis” (World Bank, 1993) is presented as an alternative that breaks with the economic reductionism about the origin or degree of participation of the Market-State equation. This position shows progress by including the study of the scientific behavior of both theories, but by noting that “...the economic growth of East Asia is not culturally determined, but emerged from a particular regional context of late development, a particular place called Northeast Asia at a particular time called the Cold War” [Woo-

Cummings in Aoki (comp), 2000, p. 434]. First, like the rest of the theories, they ignore the region as the cradle of the oldest current civilizations on the planet; and second, they ignore China's continual influence as the cultural-civilizing center of a powerful and complex tributary zone, in the face of the seduction of an economic positivism that refuses to analyze the ontological influence of a millennially valid region, where the differences between State and Market were debated philosophically more than 2000 years ago and that also decided its Moral and Vertical State without limitations centuries ago.³⁰

Japan barges into the global scene, and with its *Asian characteristics* manages to become an empire and a developed nation from 1870 to 1949. From 1950 to 1990, Japan repeated the experience, and adjusting what was adjustable, positioned itself again as the second economic power until the end of the 20th century. Taiwan, Korea, Hong Kong, Singapore, etc. follow the Asian model of development shown by Japan and in a fortunate mix of Market-State (Asian Developmentalist State) achieve economic success. Starting in 1978, a bankrupted China, emulating the winning regional experience, with Chinese characteristics and 900 million human beings, positioned itself as the second largest economy in the world as of 2010.

The Asian model of development exists and the Western categories fail to decipher it completely.

First, for the West, it will be important to accept that there is a culture that is different from its own with valid historical di-

³⁰ Asia is unique. The Himalayan mountain range separates, just to highlight them, two great civilizations: on the one hand, the Chinese of Confucian communitarianism, and on the other, the Indian of Vedic individualism. However, even the snowy barriers cannot stop this great expansion of love for the definitive and the universal that constitute the common legacy and thought of the peoples of Asia, that have enabled the gestation of all the great religions of the world and, that also differentiate them from the maritime peoples of the Mediterranean and the Baltic, who love to concentrate on the particular and the pursuit of the meaning of life, and not on its purpose (Okakura, 2018, p. 39).

mensions. That East Asia gives another interpretation and outcome to Western categories under debate: Market-State. That the dimension of the 2200-year-old Asian Modern State is an entity full of content, much of which with an ontology far from the Western idea. That Japan is an individual culture but at the same time is a tributary culture, just like Korea, Taiwan, Singapore, etc., and therefore, it is not enough to start the analysis of categories to decipher the Japanese model, or the Asian model of development, during the middle of the 20th century or during the restoration of the Meiji Dynasty, nor as of the Constitution of Shōtoku of the 7th century. It is necessary to refer to the debates from the 5th to the 1st century B.C. by the State and its functionaries, which occurred in China; to the ideas and writings of Confucius, Mencio, Lao Tse, Zhu Xi, etc., in order to understand the Asian verticalism and its forms for building power and its perpetually direct participation in economic development. To the Confucian filial piety and its ancestral culture of respect to power and social values; to its way of creating aristocratic bureaucracies for 2000 years and to its attachment to a society oriented to the Rule of Morality and not to the Rule of Law.

Effective interventionist state? Bureaucratic capitalism? Meiji Absolutism? Autocratic paternalism? Centralized State? Developmentalist State? Market socialism? Democracy and the Rule of Law with Asian characteristics? An ever-moving formula of a prevailing ancestral State? There is the challenge.

D. FINAL REFLECTIONS

Currently, the West is still wondering what has happened with that stage undoubtedly dominated by it, where in the framework of a force without obstacles it discovered new continents, went around the world, inaugurated an Industrial Revolution, conquered the great empires of its time, and in the 20th century, in the context of a global conflict, established a new institutionality for a future that was thought to be endless. The end of history, it was said, in an

intimate conversation where everything *worked well*, where everything was under control and predicted a 21st century of Western hegemony.

All this perception changed, and in a labyrinth with many doubts and few answers, the West is watching with concern how a global transformation is progressing where it gradually loses its control and dominance and walks inexorably towards a *new normal*, not knowing what it is, but in which the progressive presence of an Asian actor of a thousand faces appears, that already participates directly in the issues of its future and its present.

The study of the Asian phenomenon in general, but of East Asia in particular, since its *modern revelation* by the Christian missionaries of the 16th and 17th³¹ centuries has suffered, in general terms, from the absence of an analysis that is on par with the depth and wealth of the different civilizations that inhabit it. Ignorance, contempt, oblivion, supremacy are some of the reasons that have prevented the West from having a clearer perception of its Asian counterparts.

Faced with the increasingly repeated question of whether this will be a Western or an Asian century, or a Eurasian century, the need to have a more credible narrative of its modern encounter becomes an urgent need if the West intends to safeguard the terms of its future and to contribute towards the construction of a new and more sustainable order.

The relevance of the civilizations of this Asian region impedes hasty conclusions. Obviating them is not an option if the aim is to build a solid account of their political categories and, consequently, of their economic and social derivations. Also, see-

³¹ The Jesuits continued to report from China in the 18th century. The position of the Fathers in the Court, among the learned bureaucrats, and their scientific caliber might have diminished since the previous century. Several descriptions of the country, based on extensive travel through some provinces, had previously been produced, in particular the books of Alvarez Semedo (1642) and Gabriel de Magalhães (1688). Nonetheless, it was not until the arrival of the first French Jesuits in Beijing in February 1688 that literature on China began to flood the European market (Osterhammel, 2018, p. 115).

ing them in the light of the results of their last lustrums or years, is presented as a trap that is particularly favorable to self-deception. Finally, to divide them, to explore them only in line with their individuality, is to forget the interrelationship of a region that during the last two millennia operated, beyond their own wills, as a cultural and civilizing basin of countless contagions.

Japan, in this sense, emerges as one of the relevant actors in East Asia that for more than two thousand years has contributed and participated in the region's civilizing production. Therefore, its role on the world economic stage in the 19th century cannot be seen only as a wise decision of the *restauration* of the time. From 1868 to 1945, the economic journey of Japan carries with it a series of its own regional attributes and shared attributes, which have operated successfully within a Western political and economic reality. From 1945 to 1990, it recovered the experience of the 19th century in the economic field, and despite its new political reality, from 1946 to 1975, it grows at an average annual rate of 9.3%, and from 1976 to 1995, at an annual average of 3.7%, succeeding in placing itself as the world's second economy.

It is true that in order to achieve this, Japan, technically, first resorts to Keynesianism for the recovery from defeat; to Minister Tanzan's Economic Stabilization Plan; to a rapid growth period from 1951 to 1960; to a plan to double national income from 1961 to 1970; to the Stable Growth Plan as of 1971, until the 1990s when the country enters into a stage of stagnation that it has not been able to overcome. Nevertheless, during the Japanese economic recovery of the second part of the 20th century, the presence of an Asian-style Developmentalist State again took hold.

Holcombe confirms the aforementioned by identifying Japan, as Johnson did, as the original East Asian Developmentalist State, which the Japanese themselves described in the 1970's as a *planning-oriented market economy*. Holcombe, like many others, resorts to native notions to explain it, indicating that the high savings rates with which much of the *Japanese miracle* was financed

were related to the *controversial* thesis of Confucian culture. And although he acknowledges that this is debatable, he accepts as a, “Fact that high savings rates have been a common feature in all modern East Asia”. And by way of synthesis, in the late eighties he recognized that “...Japan’s exceptional economic success was precisely due to its unique national character. Accepting the ethnic difference of the country, although ignoring, as it is repeated on many occasions, its millennial civilizing link with the rest of its region” (Holcombe, 2016, pp. 276 to 382).

The political and economic trajectory of Japan for more than a century and a half, despite the time elapsed, remains the philosopher’s stone, the case study of a political-economic encounter of which the West has not yet found the proper interpretation. Japan, together with China, in a broad sense, holds the answer for the best identification of the Asian Developmentalist State.

In spite of Japan’s Westernization in the 21st century, of its quasi-one-party parliamentary democracy with Asian characteristics; of its neo Shinto-nationalism in the political, and of its economic stagnation, although it is no longer the best example of the application of the Asian model, through the cracks of its new time loom the traditions of a Shinto, Confucian, and Buddhist society in all that is economic, political, and social.

The West, at the beginning of the third decade of the 21st century and within the framework of a new Pacific era, has to decide whether the great economic, political, and social contrasts prevailing with East Asian countries are the result of a Jasperian equation of the axial era, or are simply the gap of two regions where the conquered party is beating the master.³²

³² China is the most fascinating land, a place to explore a rich and complicated civilization. However, I was attracted to the study of the Chinese language for another more speculative reason. Because Chinese is outside the large Indo-European language groups and uses another form of writing (ideographic, not phonetic), and because the Chinese civilization, which is one of the oldest (and it was recorded in early-stage texts), developed without any borrowing or influence from Western Europe for a long time, China presents a case study through

Finally, these two worlds in *coalition* will have to assume their responsibility to contribute, through their mutual acceptance and recognition, to make the 21st century a time for all.

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which Western thought can be contemplated from the outside and, in this way, take us out of our atavism. I'm not claiming that China is totally foreign, but at least it is different. At first, nothing seems to reconcile: outside of its element, the thinking process has difficulty orienting itself. However, that discomfort presents an opportunity; that disorientation can be beneficial. When I started studying Greek philosophy, I had a strange feeling because that way of thinking was familiar to me, I never expected to know it (assuming I was able to identify it). As different as Greek thought is, everything implicitly links Westerners to the risk of preventing us from seeing its originality, from the measurement of its inventiveness. To break the family ties, we will have to break up with the family. That is why it is necessary to take a step back. A theoretical estrangement is desirable, and this is exactly what China offers (Jullien, 2000, p. 9).

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CHAPTER III

THE NEW SILK ROAD OR THE RISE OF CHINA GEOPOLITICAL POWER

THE NEW SILK ROAD OR THE RISE OF CHINA GEOPOLITICAL POWER

A. INTRODUCTION

Since the early 1980's, in the framework of its first major Reform and Opening, Deng Xiaoping warned us that China would continue, as an economic strategy, an *experiment* that was not on the books. The Western voices that attempt a reasonable interpretation of the Asian phenomenon have lived relentlessly trying to decipher and keep in step with a China that for four decades has known no rest. Since then, apprentice of the global process, and now, converted into the leader of globalization, it imposes its vision and its rhythm on a Western and peripheral world that is not able to realize what is next.

The new initiative One Belt One Road (OBOR), or Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), One Integration, One Path in Spanish, The New Silk Road, etc.,³³ constitutes, in fact, the second great opening of China. While in 1978 its way out was to the Pacific, for being a natural evolution towards its geographic strength and of the use of the infrastructure that had survived the economic collapse of its communist phase; the BRI, or its opening towards its opposite axis, namely, towards Central Asia, Asia Minor, North Africa and the countries of its western border (more than 70 countries), represents a bold measure of innumerable interpretations that the West has not fully understood, nor has it constructed an adequate interpretation, or even worse, tried to elaborate a response of the BRI's magnitude.

³³ The author will preferentially use throughout this essay the acronym BRI, within the framework of a torrent of expressions on the subject.

The rescue of a millennial project? A new alternative to continental commerce? A new integration or regional association? The construction of a new geopolitical scheme? A new player of the multilateral commerce order? A different way of doing business? Contemporary adherents of the established global order? The first scaffolding of a new global order from the Asian continent? Unpublished chapters of the China-United States clash? A further escalation of the clash of civilizations? A Chinese positioning towards the confirmation of its global leadership by 2049?

It is not an exaggeration to assume that China's new BRI strategy, barely sketched in the speech delivered by Xi Jinping in the month of September 2013 in Kazakhstan, which he later ratified in Jakarta, Indonesia in October of the same year, involves, in a tacit or explicit way, the different categorizations enunciated in the previous paragraph which seek to be just a small sample of what the world begins to interpret regarding the BRI issue, which is discovered little by little like a snowball that in its passing breaks schemes, theories and paradigms that in just the first decade of the century were taken as immutable; or even worse, as is the case of Central Asia, where previously *inconsequential* economic issues, hidden by the sand of the millennia, now, because of China, are assumed to be strategic.

With the BRI proposal or the new Silk Road, with its relaunch, China communicates to the world without any reservation its clear desire to be the global leader of the 21st century in 2049, 100 years after the triumph of its revolution. Along with this, China makes public its new strategy to achieve it, reporting each of the three structural changes implemented for this purpose, as of the rise of Xi Jinping to power in 2012.

The first of these consists of the Reform of its political power, which was operated in March 2018 in the face of the promulgation of its Fifth Constitutional Reform (1987, 1993, 1997, 2004 and 2018). The second one consists of the Reform of its Economic Strategy, in the face of the implementation of its Made in

China Plan 2025, 2035 and 2045. And the third strategy that refers to its Geopolitical Reform, in the face of the announcement of the new Silk Road or the global partnership initiative known as BRI in 2013.

China, at the end of the second decade of the 21st century, cannot be seen in the light of only one of these three structural changes, however important each one may be; nor does the traditional analysis of its first economic and political opening work. It is necessary to attempt an integral reflection that seeks the construction of a new narrative that describes each one of these three great actions; in a special way, from its connection and synergy with respect to the ultimate goal sought by China, which is to occupy the hegemonic leadership of the 21st century.

Certainly, this completely new project cannot be isolated from its referential framework. First, the one that corresponds to the implementation of a thousand-year-old idea that gives substance to the BRI, that refers to an emblematic and epic figure of the past—which is the Silk Road—and second, along with the removal of these historical and commercial dunes, that had been hidden for centuries, one cannot avoid, even in a referential way, analyzing the BRI in the midst of the rising debate between a legendary East (East Asia) and a declining.

In line with these concerns, the sections that follow will attempt to be a first approach to the description and relevance of what the BRI, or the New Silk Road, is, and what it could represent in this first half of the century.

B. BRI OR A RETURN TO THE ORIGIN

For China, the oldest existing civilization in the world, the BRI, or the New Silk Road, has meant the re-launching of a geopolitical strategy that was inaugurated in the year 138 B.C., when, in the framework of its second dynasty, the Han, Emperor Wu Di commissioned Ambassador Zhang Qian to venture into its eastern

periphery in search of information, expansion, and trade, which gave rise to the millennial silk caravan.

At that time, China was boasting the founding of the first modern State, in 221 B.C., in the face of the submission of the *Seven Warring States* on the part of the first emperor Shi Huangdi, at the same time, it inaugurated the first works of the now Chinese Wall, as a defense against the *barbarians* from the north.

By means of Ambassador Zhang, China tried to learn more about an unknown and complicated region located between huge mountains and deserts. The first antecedent of the Silk Road lasted 13 years, full of uncertainties, risks, and dangers. However, Ambassador Zhang made a second trip that set a precedent of interest and a possibility that would be repeated with varying imagination and interest for around two millennia.

The Silk Road, in its origin, is a first encounter between the West and East through presumptions, merchandise, and spices. At the beginning of the Road the Western counterpart of the second Chinese Empire was the Roman Empire, which knew since Alexander the Great, who came to the banks of the Indus, that beyond Antioch (Syria) and Persia (Iran), existed great kingdoms that he never wanted to explore because he did not want to expose the stability of the empire. China did the same, despite having launched and protected a silk caravan that opened trade with distant and unknown peoples; and although it is stated that since Tiberius (370 AD) the silk clothing was known and that China knew of Rome (the legendary Daqin), the truth is that the ancient empires of the West and East did not know each other;³⁴ that the Romans believed that silk grew on trees and it wasn't until 652 A.D. that Nestorian monks introduced to Europe silkworm cocoons hidden inside a bamboo cane (Marco Polo, 2014).

China was satisfied with knowing about Central Asia, and Rome did not want to see beyond Antioch in a first East-West

³⁴ Seneca said "These silk outfits are acquired at an enormous price from people who are not known for their trade: just so that our women make themselves as visible in public as they are to adulterers in the bedroom" (Höllmann, 2015).

meeting where the other was known but there was no political will for expansion. Within these intuitions, the silk caravan worked as a witness of the other which was evidenced by its merchandise, which in the case of China was led by silk and multiplied by porcelain, precious woods, precious metals, gems, spices, animals, etc.

Naturally, the Chinese Soft Power made itself present since then, as a strategic weapon of doing business:

“The Chinese words were always soft, their contents always weak. With its soft words and weak contents, it is said, the Chinese attract people who live far away...” (Old Turkish inscription, Mongolia, Höllmann, 2015).

But also the Silk Route was an open artery between the East's and West's civilizations, through which religions, insurgent movements, invasions, slaves, gold, silver, war, etc., traveled. Similarly, a civilizing route was opened where the culture of the other was percolated, which had an intermittence determined by the geopolitical cycle of the moment, of great flowering, for example, in the Han era, but dominated by the Kushans in the 3rd century A.D., re-launched with the Tang Dynasty (618-907 A.D.), defended during the Pax Mongolica (14th century), and collapsed along with the Mongol Empire. The emergence of the Ottoman Empire (1299-1922) summoned again its operation and motivated the opening of a Silk Maritime Route that arises along with the innovation of Chinese ships and instruments of the 14th and 15th centuries, and that departed from Nan King (China), passed through the southwest of India (Calcutta), and arrived at Ormuz (Arabian Sea), and to Malindi, in what is now Kenya. Its most audacious expression was in 1405 when it was able to charter more than 300 ships of which there were 72 for the transport of goods; however, for reasons still controversial, the Chinese Ming emperors decided to cancel the sea route, leaving only short stretches. This caused the breakdown of its fleet at a time when the world was debating its geopolitical future in the seas. In the 19th century the Silk Road (Central Asia) was defined by Russian

influence. And also in the 19th and 20th centuries, there is the decline of the Chinese Empire, which loses protection capacity with respect to its travelers and merchants. The Western renaissance and the fatigue of China motivate the beginning of the oblivion of a millenarian figure that paradoxically is recognized historically and is baptized as *the Silk Road* by the geographer Ferdinand Freiherr von Richthofen in 1877.

It is now, in the 21st century, that China decides, under the protection of its own hegemonic resurrection, to once again tap into an alternative of millennial origin, that gives it history, meaning and direction to its new commercial and geopolitical objectives with close to 70 countries (49 countries throughout Asia) because, to some extent, they all share in memory a long history of belonging and direction. China, as Thomas Friedman, believes that the Earth is flat and it allied with Asian countries that the global world did not remember and invites them to a great economic project. Through the BRI, China rescues the zone of oblivion and puts it back on the geopolitical map as a strategic hub for infrastructure, raw materials, gas, and oil.

However, the task will not be easy. When Alexander came to Punjab in India, his tired armies forced him to return to the West.³⁵ Now China, facing the new complexity of Asia, in its economic-political position, will have to deal with the internal problems of Iraq, the revolutionary movements of Kyrgyzstan (2005-2010), the civil-religious problems of Pakistan and Afghanistan, the civil war in Syria, the presence of ISIS in much of Asia, the violence in Tajikistan, the Kurdish conflict, these will be just some of the challenges that, like Alexander's generals, will challenge China to bring the bold BRI initiative to fruition.

"The skill of following in the footsteps of the past", stated King Wu-Ling in 307 B.C., "does not guarantee improving the world today" (Frankopan, 2015). The millennial China of the 21st century will have the challenge, in this re-launching of the Silk Road, to take these words into account.

³⁵ Without reaching the West, he dies in the year of 323 B.C. in Babylon.

C. BRI, ¿CLASH OF CIVILIZATIONS?

In the 19th century, a first encounter of civilizations was lived before the belligerent arrival of Great Britain to China (1839) and the United States to Japan (1854). This first debate, shock, encounter, fusion, etc., far from being concluded, has lasted in time and now, as a half of the century advances, between China and the United States becomes increasingly visible. The measured acceptance of the nineties and even the denial of this hypothesis, little by little has been giving way to the analyses that try to comment on this clash in more realistic terms. The debate now continues regarding the level and adjectivization of it. Whether it is just a commercial clash or whether it is about discussing the hegemony of the 21st century. Whether this is confined to the two nations, or it involves the entire West against East Asia. Or, as the configuration of the BRI seeks now, the inclusion of 49 nations from all over Asia, adding Central Asia and Asia Minor.

Beyond denials and demands of absolutes that confuse the analysis, the BRI sends us forcefully to a beginning of East-West confrontation, which in addition to the different schools of thought that addressed it since the 18th century, today connects directly with the discourse and contemporary strategy of the different political actors on the side of both parts.

The debate between East and West is not a new issue. However, the resurgence of China and East Asia, together with Western conflict and decline, place it back on the agenda of a global table where stories and leaderships reappear. The West, in light of its renaissance and illustration, forgot very early about its medieval past and decreed that the world started and ended in the West from the 16th century and from that triumphalism it built an omnipresent interpretation and a manifest destiny that it interpreted in the 20th century as an end of history where the West would reign forever in the world. From the Judeo-Greek-Latin root, the Western power took an irresponsible leap of more than 10 centuries and installed itself as the start of everything in the

middle of the second millennium, within the framework of a pre-industrial era that endowed it with the necessary tools to its geopolitical military advance, having as its destination the rich Asian civilizations.

In its haste, the West forgot that during 90% of the modern time India and China led the world's economic wealth within the framework of their ancient civilizations and vast demographics.

The debate of the East-West pre-eminence, which was born mainly together with its maritime encounters in the 15th and 16th centuries and the discovery of China by the religious groups that frequented it in the 17th and 18th centuries, shows up with all its historical weight in currents of thought that are now rescued, that begin to sharpen arguments in the re-composition of a dormant debate, not forgotten, of the sympathizers of both sides. The Westerners, sheathed in the still supremacist discourse of the last quarter of the millennium, and the Orientalists, rescuing from the memory chest the old blazons and current cultures that gave them meaning.

The Western side, where a contempt for the Oriental has prevailed since the Academy, still considers that it is important to underline that the West has been the most developed region of the world during fourteen of the last fifteen millennia of the history of mankind. That the West has been the technological leader of the world for a million and a half years. That in cultivated plants, fortifications, proto-writing, large towns, domestication of animals, comprehensive agriculture, cities, large buildings, ceramic elaboration, the West was always ahead of Asia with an average of 1700 million years (Morris, 2014, pp. 45, 46, 71, 168 and 169). Under this idea, Jaspers also states that, "The fact that only the European evolution has led to the Technical Age—which has given the whole planet a European appearance—and that the rational way of thinking has spread to everywhere seems to demonstrate this primacy". With a hint of justice, he adds, "True it is that also the Chinese and Indians—as well as Europeans—have felt like real men and have asserted their primacy as evi-

dent”. “But it does not seem to be the same as when all cultures believe that they are the center of the world, because only Europe seems to have retained its pre-eminence by virtue of their achievements” (Jaspers, 2017, p. 106).

The claim of supremacy in the midst of the unawareness of the other. In spite of being both millenarian cultures, in general terms, it can be said that until the maritime encounters since the 15th century, East and West knew each other only by intuitions, by sayings, by some merchandise and scarce trade. That the distance and the difficulty of their geography kept them distant. Both successful and often unsuccessful in their historical cycle. The arrival of Portuguese navigators to different parts of Africa since 1430,³⁶ the arrival of Columbus to America (1492), that of Vasco da Gama to India (1498), that of Giovanni Caboto to Terranova (1497), that of Christopher Columbus’s cousin, Rafael Perestello to China, that of Magellan to Asia Pacific (1480), etc., together constitute a military maritime invasion that gradually dominated the Asian continent and especially, their most successful civilizations.

Paradoxically, the shock of the conquest also forced both latitudes to venture into the knowledge of the other. The West from the pride of the triumph, and the East from the grudge of the defeat. Therefore, the comprehension of one with respect to the other is still a pending issue, of which the East, from the recourse of the vindication, seeks to generate a new platform of takeoff.

The history of the East, beyond the European borders, is carried out primarily by catechization priests such as Juan de Plano Carpini (1245-1247) in the Karakórum region, just as Guillermo de Roubrouck (1253-1255), Juan of Montecorvino in Beijing (1271-1238); as well as Odorico de Pordenone (1314-1330); or the Jesuits who arrived in China since 1582 and that were the

³⁶ Of which, Morris says, it was one of the decisive moments in the history of the world, in which the domination of the West over the East became possible (Morris, 2014, p. 480). For Crespo, this moment refers to the discovery of America (Crespo, 2012, p. 25).

source of the closest interpretation of the reality of China, headed by Michele Ruggieri and Matteo Ricci, who developed the first draft of the Chinese translation dictionary. Of course, there were merchants like Marco Polo (1271-1295) and adventurers or researchers like Sven Hedin of Sweden (1895-1899); Aurel Stein of Great Britain (1900-1906-1913); Paul Pelliot of France (1906), among others. (Höllman, 2015).

Characterized by the late knowledge, the trend that defines most of the narratives of the different cultures of the East is the analysis that is made from the Western superiority, where Morris classifies them through the “School of the Ancient Destiny” (1750-1950) that explains the West’s leadership as a process that had been brewing since immemorial time (Marx, Landes, Diamond, etc.) and the *School of Modern Randomness*, as of 1800, which argues that this superiority is somewhat random and the result of the modern juncture (Morris, pp. 21-37). Both schools have different approaches, but they have the same matrix of justification on the advantages of Western civilization.

By fortune, determinism, environmental issues, biological issues, climatic issues, etc., the West never stopped to build with greater or lesser modesty, a narrative of the Oriental from the logic of the white man, and the watchtower of the Enlightenment and the Industrial Revolution, which provided sufficient inputs to minimize the other, and disqualify it from competing in the military and in technology.

It is true that the theme of the Oriental in Europe also had a broad group of sympathies such as Leibnitz, Voltaire, Jones, Said, and many others. However, in the first quarter of the 21st century and before the obvious rise of China, as Osterhammel comments, the world is returning to the moments of the 19th century where it did not have any restraint in publicizing its dominance not only over the East but with respect to the four continents, which led it to deploy its more arrogant and condescending attitude with respect to other civilizations (Osterhammel, 2018, p. 3).

On the Western side, within this current of the discourse of conquest that, in general, prevailed regarding the Orient, there is a breaking point that started in 1978 with the appearance of the book “Orientalism” by the Palestinian-American author Edward W. Said,³⁷ who through his book substantiated a scientific claim of the Asian nations, as well as the denunciation of the autistic and incapable discourse for dialoguing objectively with those cultures.

Said places the East as a fundamental part of Europe;³⁸ it highlights the neighborhood of its old Greek colonies, the richness of its ideas; of its permanent contact and exchange with the West as an integral part of European civilization. As an intellectual reference of its discourse and justification of its institutions, of its vocabulary, of its doctrine, etc., He also defines it through the development of the main characteristics that explain it. Of the ideas and academic institutions that speak of the Oriental and treat it through its main doctrines. In this group, he includes books, writers, poets, scholars, who accept the idea of an East-West through the study of their ontological and epistemological differences. He supports it in the same way through his texts, bibliography, history; of its discussion, teaching, forms of power; of its politics, sociology, ideology, militarism, despotism, of an intellectual realism without prejudices, etc. (Said, 2001).

³⁷ Said’s work has not been exempt from a broad debate and criticism, both from the East and from the West, among others: that he adopts a Foucaultian determinism that limits the work; that he does not give the due credit to his predecessors like Anouar Abdel-Malek and Abdul Latif Tibawi, among others; that he falls into the same totalitarian fallacies that he criticizes; that he lacks a historiographical method; that he falls into epistemological contradictions; that he fails to take into account important Orientalist texts; that his work has anti-Semitic features, etc. (Hallaq, 2018, p. 7). Relevant issues that seem essential in the analysis of a cultural production that encompasses the vastest civilizations of the world.

³⁸ The idea of Asia as a continent is only from the 20th century. But its name is attributed to Herodotus, he named it after a nymph, daughter of Ocean and Thetis, among other interpretations.

Said's work, due to the quality of its content and transcendence, has been the spearhead of a large school of critic and reflection on the subject, which starts from the need to recognize the depth of the subject without the prejudices of the conquest. Of inviting to debates in the academic or ideological field about Orientalism and the Oriental; regarding the origin and depth of each of the categories; in the framework of an inexhaustible universality of the multiple Oriental civilizations (Hallaq, 2018).

The East-West debate, initiated right with the takeover of the main Asian states by the West, tempered by the surprise of the 18th century and radicalized by the triumphalism of the 19th and 20th centuries, in light of the new China-United States encounter in the 21st century, resurges with great push on both sides, in a line of resistance so as not to lose what has been won by the West and to recover what the East believes was lost in these 200 years.

The most radical voices come from the Eastern countries on the rise, who, beyond commodities, trade and economic numbers, are building day after day a new discourse of return, where the search for the economic hegemony does not just appear, as in the case of China, but also that of a dusted civilization that claims a place in the construction of a new global order. Clearly, it is already announced that "The 21st century will witness the confrontation between the Atlantic impetus and the Pacific impetus..." and "That the 21st century will be characterized by the fact that East Asia will rise as the world center of power..." "That it would be risky both for Europe and for all mankind if pundits were incapable of liberating themselves from Eurocentric conceptions of the world—that—like the other parts of the world that enjoyed a splendor at other times, Europe is exhausted"³⁹

³⁹ On the subject, Mahbubani recently provided the idea of "A great convergence", through which he explains the massive change that is being experienced globally. That since the beginning of mankind history, man has lived in different communities and tribes and in different cultures and civilizations. Now, the forces motivated by globalization are creating a new global civilization. That until recently, the North-South-Developed-Not-Developed themes were

(Mahbubani, 2002). Huntington, for his part, thinks that: “The era that began with Western intrusions in 1840 and 1850 is coming to an end. China is taking back its place as a regional hegemonic power and the East is taking a stand of its own” (Huntington, 2001).

Some of the contemporary Asian intellectuals recommend, as part of the solution to the East-West problem, dismantling the conceptual and intellectual architecture of Western winning history, which has prevailed dangerously in its history and has shaped Anglo-Saxon thought (books, reports, newspapers, TV, etc.). Along with this, they propose that the West withdraw, as the religion of universal progress, the *Western Model* (democracy, capitalism, free market, etc.), as well as the recipes that they impose on the entire world (Mishra, 2017, p. 37). Osterhammel, from the Western point of view, also comments that when one remembers the 18th-century Eurasian equilibrium, it is not surprising that China understands its new geopolitical rise as a return to a historical normality and not as an economic miracle. That to recognize Asia as a partner on equal terms should not cause any problem in Europe, although it should be more difficult for the United States. After all, Europe has done it before (Osterhammel, 2018, p. 33).

The BRI, within this current framework of misconceived supremacies, cannot be interpreted as a commercial association scheme anymore. Its composition, today still informal, with the virtual participation of the 49 countries that are part of the largest continent on Earth, which occupies 30% of its living space and contains 60% of the world population in 45 million km², does not look anything like the commercial agreements of the 20th century and its objectives go beyond a simple trade exchange.

the terms used. That now these terms seem irrelevant. That the convergence of income growth should be the story of our time. That in the 19th and 20th centuries, the story was the divergent incomes. That at that time the income of the West had a large edge over the rest of mankind. That now this is changing rapidly. That this is inevitable and desirable. That the West is not losing power. That it is only sharing it (Mahbubani, 2013, pp. 1-11).

The announced change of Era from the Atlantic to the Pacific, along with the Asian inevitability (Oropeza, 2017), that set the global *litis*, first, between China and the United States, escalating later to the West (the European Union and the USA) and East Asia (16 countries), before the bold call of China to all its continental neighbors through the millennial figure of the Silk Road, forces the Western pundits to update their reflections from the integral rethinking of history between East and West, based on a still unresolved historical dispute, that together with the commercial, economic and political strategies of both parts, will be playing a preponderant role in this encounter, debate or clash of civilizations, where the ghosts of yesterday resurface demanding a new order of things.

It is evident that the Western discourse on the Orient that sets off from arrogance has been exhausted. That the West cannot continue to ignore the relevance of other cultures and civilizations that from their roots are reconstructing the integration of their political power and their new economic strategies. Given the weight of the figures and projects that are now announced as BRI, to continue to ignore their ethnicities and natures would be a big mistake. Similarly, in the face of the large challenges that all mankind will face, including that of its survival, it would also be desirable for the East to pass from the *useful* resource of resentment to the comprehensive proposal of a multicultural world.

For the purposes of this essay, it is enough to draw attention to the fact that the BRI issue, due to its size and the number of Asian countries convened, is already part of this debate of civilizations of the first half of the 21st century and that, with this, it reconfigures the vision of an area that is still seen today with ignorance and suspicion.

D. BRI AND THE SECOND REFORM AND CHINA'S OPENING

The first reform and opening headed by Deng Xiaoping in 1978 was preceded by hunger, fear and the failure of a Maoist period

that failed to solve the great social needs of the Chinese people. In the context of the death of President Mao in 1976, and of the second political actor of importance in the same year, Zhou Enlai, the return of the figure of Deng Xiaoping under a fortunate political juncture, installed him at the head of a weak power, with doubts, for whom it was urgent to ratify himself and to give concrete answers to an enormous population of more than 900 million people who required the basic necessities of their houses, their clothing, and their livelihoods.

Although the decision of the first reform and opening of the Chinese State was first and foremost an act of courage, after two millennia of closed doors, the internal options had been exhausted and the global economy under construction was presented as the irrevocable solution for a nation that in economic matters still had not entered the 20th century. The results of this decision are already history and will remain as an example of economic success in the history of mankind: the second nation according to its economic value, the first exporting nation, the first in manufacturing, the first in contributing to global economic growth, the second nation in terms of importations, are some of the economic results obtained in four decades, which have not been achieved before by any other country.

Xi Jinping's rise to power in 2012, as the fifth replacement of a political generation that began in 1949, in the face of the triumph of the Chinese Revolution, took place in a framework of circumstances totally different from the arrival of Deng, determined by economic success, political stability, and an important social rise of the Chinese people. Under these conditions, it would seem natural that the government of Xi, like those of Hu Jintao and Jiang Zemin that preceded him, will continue with the winning formula of opening towards the Pacific in line with the unfolding of an Asian model of development with Chinese characteristics, to maintain the success of a widely recognized economic strategy. However, to the general astonishment, President Xi, son of a revolutionary hero (Xi Zhongxun), member of the political

elite and declared follower of Deng's reformist line, having been appointed member of the Standing Committee of the Political Bureau of the Party (11-15-2012), in a speech delivered at a labor inspection in Guangdong (12-7-2012), advanced that "...the guide of Comrade Deng Xiaoping, was wise and correct, and he is worthy to be considered the general designer of the reform and the opening of China and the emperor of the Socialist path with Chinese peculiarities". "From now on, we have to follow this successful path, because it is the way that strengthens the country and makes the people prosper—However, he warned; in addition to following it in an unalterable way, we have to adopt new needs and reach a new level" (Xi Jinping, 2014).

Days before this declaration, on November 29, 2012, shortly after the closing of the XVIII National Congress of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), the newly elected General Secretary of the Central Committee of the Party, went to the National Museum to visit the exhibition "The Revitalization Path", and at the end of the visit, he incorporated, for the first time, into the Chinese political dogma the idea of building a *Chinese Dream*, which he ratified in his inaugural speech as president of the country when he deepened in the search of a dream that leads to the revitalization of the Chinese nation: "The greatest dream harbored by this nation since the beginning of modern times" (Xi Jinping, The Chinese Dream, 2014).

Xi pays homage and recognizes the leader of the first opening, Deng Xiaoping. However, through the political proposal of the construction of a Chinese Dream, he sets the mood for the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), the National People's Congress (NPC), and for all of China, the idea that the 1978-2012 phase was exhausted and required a *revitalization* for the fulfillment of its goals.

The world is changing —Xi recognized— and China too. Hence, the development of Socialism with Chinese peculiarities must move forward following changes in the situation and conditions.

Only when China advances steadily along with the times will it be full of vigor. We are willing to take as a reference all the achievements of human civilization —although he clarified— but we will not copy the development modality of any country —to finally maintain— China's reform implies self-improvement and the development of a Socialist system with Chinese particularities (Xi Jinping. *The Chinese Dream*, 2014, p. 36).

As part of this concern, since he came to power in 2012-2013 and within the formulation of a new strategy and vision of Chinese development (Second Reform and Opening), during 2013 President Xi Jinping made state visits to the cities of Ashgabat (Turkmenistan), Tashkent (Uzbekistan), Dushanbe (Tajikistan), Bishkek (Kyrgyzstan) and Astana in Kazakhstan, where, at the University of Nazarbayev, on September 7 of the same year, he launched, in the center of Asia, the call to build the new scheme of Association BRI or new Silk Road proposal that he extended in October of that year, in the Indonesian Parliament, with the maritime strategy of the same project.

On May 8, 2015, the launch of the BRI was followed by the economic program called “Made in China 2025”, announced by the State Council, as a tool to consolidate China on the path of high industrialization. And in the months of October 2017 and March 2018, the CCP and NPC, respectively, operate a profound reform of the organization of the power in China, through a Constitutional Reform that consolidates Xi Jinping as the Chinese *Grand Emperor* indefinitely and without any limitation.

The new China, the China of the third decade of the 21st century, as it has already been said, cannot be analyzed under the parameters of the First Great Reform and Opening of 1978 operated by Deng Xiaoping. With all the successes, but also with all the challenges and risks of the great changes operated by Xi Jinping since 2013, the People's Republic of China forces us today to explore it, to understand where it is heading for in 2050, at least through the three new structural changes operated by Xi

as of 2013, namely: BRI or the Geopolitical Reform, Made in China or the Economic Reform, and the Reform of Power or the Constitutional Reform.

E. BRI OR GEOPOLITICAL REFORM

From the Deng Era to the Xi Era

Deng Xiaoping advised his team in the eighties, facing the start of the Pacific opening, not to boast about their capabilities; that they wait for their time, and that they never show themselves as leaders in the face of the global competition. His dictum was respected and the Chinese economic re-launch and rise followed for almost four decades through a diplomacy of discretion and an apparent adaptation to institutions and to the established Western global order.⁴⁰

However, the Chinese economic miracle and the geopolitical decline of the United States, in particular, and of the West, in general, among other reasons, influenced China's reservations and those of Xi. So, they considered that the time of modesty had ended and that the moment had come to show another attitude and to take the leadership flag of the future and to propose to the world the construction of a Chinese Dream; to show a people gifted with an exceptional creativity, creator of the great Chinese civilization, with the ability to continue expanding and strengthening their development path, advancing boldly and without hesitation (Xi Jinping, *The Chinese Dream*, 2014, p. 35). Within China's new attitude before the world, of debatable consequences within and outside the Asian country, is where the first consideration of

⁴⁰ "To observe and analyze calmly, to secure our position, to deal with issues with confidence, to hide our capabilities and wait for the right moment, to be good at keeping a low profile, never lead a claim, to carry out operations of modest nature". The strategy of the 28 characters to deal with the changes, articulated by Deng Xiaoping in the early 1990s shortly after Tiananmen. In Cardenal, Araújo, 2011.

the BRI began, which is created as a mega geopolitical strategy of multiple objectives, which as a whole must fertilize the consolidation of China as the global hegemon of the 21st century.

To this day, the BRI is an infinite multiplicity of topics, countries, projects, investments, challenges, oppositions, cultures, regions, civilizations, regional powers, trade, infrastructure, energy, demography, markets, and many more issues than during its gestation phase, which presents itself as a huge challenge to the rational interpretation of what it is today and of what it may become in the next three or four decades during which the completion of its installation is forecast. Notwithstanding, this lack of clarity from both the creators of the BRI and the users, and the bystanders who are interested in the subject, has not been an obstacle for the world to show itself restless and amazed given the uncertainty of a megatrend that is torn between the great transformation of the global world of today, or the failure of a political group that launched China with great audacity to the takeover of the global leadership in 2050.

The BRI numbers are impressive. At the start, nearly 70 countries from Asia, Eastern Europe, and Africa participated, involving 70% of the world's population, which also make up 55% of the world's economic output and, in a relevant manner, 75% of the planet's hydrocarbon reserves.

In the times of Xi, the BRI, the Second Opening towards the West, no longer refers to a selective and timid opening like the one of 1978, in which the search for productive investments was privileged in exchange for an extremely cheap and abundant labor force. Nor does it refer to that gradual process of assimilation to a global institutionalization in which, to date, China takes part in nearly 400 international treaties. It is no longer the strategy of a country that tries to learn from the uses and customs from abroad to assimilate itself with its own characteristics. The apprentice of the global order, the one who spoke with suspicion from its backwardness, is gone. Given its global economic significance, where China is the first or second trading partner of more

than 120 countries, or its contribution to world economic growth (32%), which is higher than the sum of the developed countries (ECLAC, 2017), China, through the BRI and its complementary strategies, paints in time a hegemony for the middle of the century; at the same time that it tries, given the Brettonian decline, to reconstruct the global order from the platform of Chinese Orientalism.

In this sense, the BRI, despite the discourses and contradictory definitions, tries to be the basis of a new time inaugurated from the vision of the *other*, of that Oriental being that was lost before the subjugation of the Western conquest from the 16th until the 20th centuries. Under this new time and vision of Xi, little by little emerges, among the official discourses, the opinion of a new generation that no longer sees China as the West's star pupil, but as a power with the capacity, strengthened in the last 100 years, that today allows it to become a leader of the international community destined to promote the process of a globalization that will build a new, safer and more prosperous world. (Lei, Liqiang, 2017, p. 19).

Some official media in China join this interpretation, noting that under the presidency of President Xi Jinping, the country is moving forward. That Xi is more ambitious and innovative in international politics than his predecessors and is convinced that China must develop a diplomatic policy that allows it to benefit from its role as a great power (People's Daily, October 1, 2014). Meanwhile, some academics also point out that China is using its rising influence to redesign the global economic governance (Lee Jong-Wha in Hong, p. 15, 2016). David Arase holds that China is using its great power in Asia to launch with the BRI a geo-economic and geopolitical agenda that generates a "community with a *common destiny*" "that maintains an asymmetric dependence with China". For Yong Deng, "The new Silk Road clearly reflects China's ambition to create through a Sino-centrism, a new Asian order" (David Arase and Yong Deng in Hong, 2016 p. 16,).

China's proposal, on the other hand, is defined as an *initiative* and not as a *strategy*, with the idea that it can be built by all its adherents. As an open and inclusive initiative that contributes to the economic development of all its participants. A proposal which, as Xi points out, does not keep anybody out, nor is against anyone. That makes it a path for peace, for prosperity, for innovation and advancement of the civilization (Shicheng, 2018). A proposal that still today is presented in confused and nebulous terms. That as of its discursive launch in Kazakhstan, has gradually been taking shape and structure. First, through the formation of a work team and a Web page in 2015, two years after its launch. In the same year, with the publication of a core document that is presented as the mandatory reference to explain what is the BRI, entitled Vision and Actions on Jointly Building Silk Road Economic Belt and 21st Century Maritime Silk Road, which was prepared by the National Development and Reform Commission (NDRC), in coordination with the Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Trade. Furthermore, in 2015, the first Working Protocol was signed by China in Kazakhstan, called the Production and Investment Agreement, which included a total of 52 projects in various areas such as mining, energy, manufacturing, chemical industry, infrastructure, transportation, etc. Along with the previous documents, there is also the Investment Work Program signed by China and Pakistan, which, because of its advances in design and operation, is considered as the flagship program to guide the work and negotiations of the rest of the countries that are negotiating an agreement with the Chinese government.

Already in 2012, Xi Jinping announced a new thought for a new era. Five years ahead, the launch of the mega BRI strategy and the advances achieved to date already marks a before and an after in the strategy that China has been attempting since 1949.

Strengthened in the economic success of the last decades, Xi breaks with the idea of a prudent China and moves towards an intelligent discourse of global leadership with 70% of the world's population and half of the global economic GDP. With this posi-

tion, in its rhetoric, it surpasses the United States by offering to the world a new alternative for economic development, for which it offers investment, credits, and technology, which China does not condition in exchange for reforms to the political or economic systems of the BRI countries.

China's new offer unfolds the terms of the first opening to its western side. By doing so, the BRI bifurcates China's development towards the problematic autonomous zones of Tibet, Xinjiang, and Mongolia; directing the road of infrastructure to the difficult mountain and desert areas of Central Asia (CA); to the regions of the three forces, or *demons*, of separatism, terrorism and extremism; to the long distances of a geographical area that before the BRI still seemed hidden from the eyes of the world. An initiative that because of its atypical nature and audacity, five years after its launch and implementation, still lacks a geopolitical response from the United States and the main Western countries such as Germany, France, Italy or England, who in the face of the untimely nature of the initiative, the most they have done is to adhere, as founding partners, to the financial scheme of the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank in 2014 and 2015 (AIIB).

The BRI finds its first explanation in the impulse of a new Chinese leader, who vis-à-vis his time, did not consider that the comfortable inertia of success was enough. A leader who risks his heritage and political future, and invites the world in general to join a great call for the development and prosperity of the world economy, for the construction of a more just and reasonable global governance system, that helps to build a new future for mankind; objectives that as Li Xixia points out, go beyond a new world trading system and settle in a new proposal of cooperation and global order. (Li Xixia, 2018). For that reason, the essence, the first interpretation of the BRI is geopolitical. In it, the first efforts to define it and understand it must be redoubled.

The BRI and its global circumstance

China, as George Soros points out, has become the winning nation of the global process, but along with it, the Asian country also stands out for its ability to sense and influence the formation of the new global processes and systems.

In 1978, its intuition led it to implement a selective and gradual opening that protected it from any shock mechanism that the West tried to impose; as in the case of Russia, which at its opening in 1991, orchestrated mainly by American specialists (J. Sachs), generated a cost of 4.5 times its GDP the first years, a larger amount than what it lost in the Second World War. Unlike the eighties, the opening that China is attempting today towards the West is a bold proposal in geopolitical and geo-economic terms, putting on the table of all Asian countries an infinite range of economic options that are difficult to reject. In this regard, China extends the wings of a new regional, continental and global leadership on the Asian continent, which tries to replace the hegemony that the United States has exercised over the area since the end of the Second World War, at the same time that it places the first stones for the restoration of the Middle Kingdom (Zhongguo), the millenarian Sino-centric scheme that operated in East Asia until the 19th century.

The United States

The complexity of the BRI proposal in this respect breaks the pre-existing regional molds, just as it boldly faces the complex geopolitics of an area of ancestral roots that today coexist in a belligerent tone. In a special way, it challenges the historical presence of the United States in the Asian region.

The Pax Americana that has governed East Asia since 1950 to date has been eroding, among other reasons, before the increase of the economic strength of China, which has recorded an annual average economic growth of 10% in recent decades.

Along with this, the multilateral control agencies that the United States designed for the area have not worked according to the established objectives. For example, the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation Forum (APEC), launched with Australia and Japan in 1989, has become bureaucratic and China has now stormed into it. On the other hand, the Trans-Pacific Partnership Agreement (TPP) that it proposed as a Free-Trade Agreement to seven Asian nations and signed in 2016 was cancelled by Trump on the first day of his mandate in 2017.

In a fundamental way, there is also the fact of the *commercial complicity of the West with China*, as well as the region of East Asia as a whole, through which they have been together participating in a simulated economic model since the seventies, where the West contributes with financing, technology, and relocation of processes, in exchange for the precarization of cheap Asian labor. As of the 1970's, this confusion and the shared economic interests have led to a kind of simulated geo-economic stability, which now blows up, in light of its contradictions, with the US-China trade war. Beyond what arises from this dispute, the result is that the United States lost power and control in East Asia, which was taken by China to become the economic model to follow in the region and the most important trading partner of most of the countries in the area (approximately 40% on average).

In Central Asia (CA), and Asia Minor (AM), for example, the natural influence zone of Russia, the United States has ventured with little fortune given the setbacks in Iraq, Syria, Iran, Afghanistan, etc. Nevertheless, aware of its strategic importance, in 2011 through Hillary Clinton, it launched, from Kabul, the idea of an economic corridor toward the main CA countries, which was called the American Silk Road. Not only the United States, but the West in general, during the last two centuries, has tried to keep hegemonic control over the region because of its strategic relevance. In particular, the United States has tried to carry this task since the second half of the 20th century (Frankopan, 2015). Despite this, its recent failures in Central Asia and Asia Minor

and the new successful role of China in the area have eroded the armor of an American hegemony of which today there are many doubts, despite the fact that some specialists, such as Zeping, affirm that, “The US will use its hegemonic system, established since the Second World War in trade, finance, currency, and the army, to stop the rise of China” (Bloomberg Businessweek, p. 38, August 23, 2018).

Russia

It is not exaggerated to point out that along with the challenge that the BRI has in settling itself in Asia as a strategic geopolitical project of China and confronting American dominance, there appears at a similar level the figure of a Russia with which the Chinese country shares 4250 km of border, which since the 17th century has been the cause of conflicts and invasions between the two nations, the last as recent as 1969.

To the foregoing, we must add that the BRI project core, as it was 2000 years ago for the old Silk Road, is represented by five CA nations (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan) that represent the heavy door through which all kinds of connections and dealings will have to pass between East Asia (China) and Asia Minor and Europe.

The transit in this region of complicated geography has never been easy. Along with its orographic difficulty (Karakorum, Himalaya, etc.), there has always been a political and social instability that is difficult to face. To this, it is necessary to add that as of 1922 the former Soviet Union has been incorporating little by little into the five Asian nations, which it controlled until 1991, the date of its dissolution. However, Russia continues to exercise de-facto domination in the area, with a military presence, which it plans to expand and maintain until the middle of the century, so it has not been easy for Russia to accept the leading role of China, even before the launch of BRI in 2013.

The conjunctural geopolitical Russia-China understanding is a theme of wide reflection that cannot be provided given the limits of this work, but thanks to this understanding, to Chinese diplomacy and to Russian pragmatic behavior, the BRI, far from stopping in the geopolitical limits of Russia, directly crosses the country and the area through major Chinese investments that in Russia, for example, up to 2016, has about 73 strategic projects for an approximate amount of 40 billion dollars; and in the Central Asian region, where from 2005 to 2017 the Chinese foreign investment (IED) reached 920 billion dollars, while the Russian participation in the area during this period was only 29 billion dollars (Heritage Foundation, 2017).

The relationship of Russia with China can never be normal and stable. Every day the damaged pride and the fear of giving space and political control to a China that has presented itself to the five CA countries as their only opportunity for development will be debated. Their Alliance, at the beginning of the third decade of the century, will be strengthened by the joint challenge of facing the United States that is a declining hegemony. Russia, within the framework of these meetings and the disagreements with China, is betting on selling an image of shared power, even though the Russian economy is currently one-tenth of China.

Russian pragmatism, which has allowed the growth of the BRI through the main gate of Central Asia, is also supported on a two-pronged discourse. The first one, which points out that the BRI is a joint Russian-Chinese strategy where the two countries, “Are not only partners but their relationships are the backbone to build a new global economic and political system” (Mikhail Fradkov in Gutiérrez, 2018). And the second, which explains that based on the platform of the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU), convened by Russia in 2010 and expanded in 2015, with the participation of Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Russia, is that the BRI is generating the economic conditions of this new integration. “From the economic point of view —some pundits point out— there is no contradiction between these two

systems, on the contrary; the two complement each other” (Mahdi Munadi, 2018).

In the end, there are two interpretations that prevail, by way of synthesis, over the idea that Russia has about the new role of China in CA. The first, which corresponds to the feelings of alarm about the large difference that has opened in the area with respect to the new power of China and the fear that this will continue to expand in the future not only in Central Asia but throughout Asia. And the second, to believe and to disseminate that Russia has military control of the project and that China is a co-leader with an economic role.

India

The position of India is contrary to the Russian position regarding the BRI. It departs from Soviet pragmatism and re-enacts the armed conflict India had with China in 1962, regarding border limits, which India does not yet consider resolved. India has not yet accepted its formal participation in the BRI; through President Modi, it declared in 2014 its frank opposition. To this, it should be added that since 2015 India has joined a dialogue team made up of the USA, Japan, and Australia, through which they try to stop some of the Chinese initiatives in this matter, and even to launch other proposals similar to the Silk Road like the one India has proposed from the port of Chabahar, on the Iran coast, which would give it access to Afghanistan and Central Asia.

Central Asia is for Russia what the South Asia (SA) and the Indian Ocean regions are for India, which considers them its natural areas of influence and where it has built regional association ties through the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC). However, India’s largest concern regarding the BRI, is in Chinese politics with Pakistan, because of the frankly conflicting positions that the two countries maintain since their independence and separation in 1947. Another hot topic for In-

dia is the maritime BRI, which considers it a threat to its historical zone of influence of the Indian Ocean, where China is building a maritime platform that is known as the *String of Pearls*, through which it is investing strategically in the Indian Ocean ports.

China, on the other hand, invited India to participate in the economic corridor BRI, China-Bangladesh-India-Myanmar. China accepted, in principle, its inclusion, but based on its geopolitical differences it suspended the talks in 2015 for security reasons. Similarly, India has made clear its displeasure for considering, that in the Economic Corridor of Pakistan, it was treated with little respect when planning its construction in geographic zones that India considers to be in litigation since 1962.

India is not part of the BRI, but it is the second founding partner of the AIIB, from which emerges the internal debate between an India that resists the growth of Chinese hegemony in the area, sponsored by the United States,⁴¹ and another internal current that advises it not to be left out of BRI, as it would be to stay out of the future of Asia. In this regard, Deepak concludes that, “The BRI puts China at the center of the geopolitics and the global geo-economics, but it is still unclear what the strategic role is that India is expected to exercise” (Deepak, B.R in Hong, 2016).

Japan

Japan’s opposition to the BRI is more evident, given the role played by the Asian country in the region during the second half of the 20th century; especially, regarding the period that covers the sixties to the nineties, when Japan played a preponderant role

⁴¹ In October 2018, India signed an agreement to purchase arms (anti-aircraft systems S-400) with Russia for the amount of 5 billion dollars, despite the ban established by the United States, following the steps that China had taken in the same vein weeks before, testing the tolerance and its strategic relationship with the USA.

in the area derived from its economic success and partnership with the United States.

The geopolitical rivalry between Japan and China is millenary and it was translated for many centuries into the tributary role that the former had with respect to China, like many other countries in East Asia. This relationship broke down when, in the 19th century, in the framework of the Western advance in the area, China was confronted by a large number of Western nations during the period of the decline of its imperialism, while Japan took refuge in the West, *fled* towards the West to transform its economy and its institutions. The decisions taken by the two empires in the late 19th century resulted in the first Japanese invasion of China in 1894, where China was defeated and displaced from the control of the East Asia region; and then in 1931 Japan repeated the action and invaded China in the framework of the Second World War, based on its new military and economic power. In the end, Japan leaves China in 1945, but the wounds of these events have not been able to close for both sides.

To date, Japan is reluctant to recognize the new economic power of China, although paradoxically the two countries, in terms of manufacturing, share the leadership of the world factory, that is East Asia, where China is its second export partner with 120 billion dollars, and Japan, in turn, is the third client of China with 148 billion dollars (OEC, 2016). However, Japan continues to privilege its strategic relationship with the United States, despite the fact that, as already indicated, the multilateral scaffolding built by the two countries in East Asia, such as the APEC, and the Asian Development Bank (ADB), that since 1966 was launched by Japan and the United States as a financial instrument for Asian development, today, pales against financial institutions and actors that accredit the BRI.

Japan is also trying its Silk Road in Asia, as a way to defend its role in the area and thus, in 2015, promoted with 110 billion dollars the corridor Bangladesh-Bhutan, India-Nepal, with a similar line to what the BRI proposed in those countries.

International Economic Cooperation Corridors

Beginning with its strategic alliance with Russia, its invitation to the BRI and the offer of credits to India, and the geopolitical distance with Japan, main geopolitical references in the area, China constructs the new geopolitical and geo-economic architecture of an entire continent for the first half of the 21st century. Derived from this geopolitical scaffolding that will have to be observed in detail, China has six strategic vectors (International Economic Cooperation Corridors) that to date form the backbone of the BRI project:

At least three of these International Economic Cooperation Corridors emerge from its alliance with Russia. The first, which refers to what China identifies as the New Eurasian Bridge, tries to connect, via high-speed rail, the East of China to the European continent via Rotterdam, Holland, crossing 30 countries with a distance of almost 11,000 km. This project was one of the first challenges of the BRI since it constitutes a new alternative that competes with the Russian Trans-Siberian train, and of course, it was the subject of major negotiations. To join “The two Silk Roads”, the Russian and the Chinese, Alexander Gabuev, academician of the Carnegie Center of Moscow, commented that “The agreement had been the result of painful internal decisions on the Russian side” (Hong, 2016, p. 26).

The second corridor called China-Mongolia-Russia also compromises directly the China-Russia axis, because it implies a Chinese interference in a country like Mongolia, which through time has functioned as a buffer between the two countries. Actually, its value is more strategic for China, since Mongolia borders with two of its two most sensitive autonomous regions, which are Xinjiang and the Mongol Autonomous Region. In 2015, within the framework of the installation of this corridor, a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) was signed and, in 2016, the BRI Multilateral Protocol, where the three countries committed

themselves with 32 projects in 10 relevant areas of the industry, energy cooperation, customs facilitation, environmental protection, technology, science, education, among others; and in a special way, with the stretch of Mongolia from the new Eurasian train route, whose design will reduce transportation costs, delivery days and procedures, as part of the new regional transport project.

SIX ECONOMIC CORRIDORS COVERING ASIA, EUROPE AND AFRICA



SOURCE: Global Infrastructure Connectivity Alliance, 2019.

In this corridor, the suspicion is of one country against all with regard to the multilateralism experiment developed by China. However, despite starting the project with great dynamism, progress was slowed due to the weakest link: Mongolia, who has used *prudential* measures and real acts of confrontation with China, for example, inviting the Dalai Lama in 2016, despite warn-

ings that the visit would be frowned upon, which was followed by a strong Chinese reprisal that resulted in increased export costs, so the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Mongolia had to apologize to China and declare that they will *not* invite the Dalai Lama *ever again* (Minwang, 2018).

If the two international cooperation corridors of the China-Russia strategic relationship mentioned above have not been easy, the implementation of the third of them, known as China-Central Asia-Asia Minor, has not been easy either. This corridor involves the five CA countries plus Iran, Iraq and Turkey and in its BRI Protocol on Production and Investment, signed in 2015, 52 projects were included in various topics such as mining, energy, manufacturing, chemical industry, materials, infrastructure, transportation, biotechnology, etc.

In addition to the Russian-Chinese geopolitical problems mentioned above, Central Asia, always forgotten by the global geography, as a region has one of the highest indexes of insecurity, political instability, lack of rule of law, high levels of corruption, low index of human development, etc., that increase proportionately from Kazakhstan, with the best risk index in the area (21), to the highest in Tajikistan (66), which also leads the region to present the lowest levels of financial reliability and savings (Ghiyas Richard and Zhou Jiayi, 2017).

Despite the fear of the Chinese power, the CA countries see its arrival in the region with optimism and as a hope to get out of underdevelopment. China, in turn, tackles the area, first, as an inevitable step towards the rest of Asia with the idea of rebuilding a new Silk Road. And second, as a highly strategic area for its high demand for gas and oil, as a strategic complement to the agreements that China has signed with Russia along the same lines. In the case of Kazakhstan, for example, in addition to signing contracts for the construction of infrastructure worth 44 billion dollars, the China Petroleum Corporation (CNPC) controls 25% of the country's oil production and has scheduled an investment of 477 million dollars to convert Khorgas into a free

trade zone. With Uzbekistan, in 2013, it signed agreements for 15.5 billion dollars, which included the construction of a fourth pipeline and a railway line. With Tajikistan, in 2014, agreements were signed for 6 billion dollars for infrastructure and aluminum smelting. With Turkmenistan, which covers half of China's gas imports, in 2013, agreements were signed for 7.6 billion dollars, which includes the construction of a gas pipeline. In this country, the Chinese company CNPC is the only one that owns the exploitation rights over the gas fields in the Bagty-yarlyk field and also participates with the development of Galkynysh, the second largest natural-gas field in the world. Finally, with Kyrgyzstan, eight agreements for 5 billion dollars were signed in 2013, which include the construction of a gas pipeline to China (Vanguardia, Dossier, No. 60, 2016).

The fourth International Economic Corridor is known as China-Indochina Peninsula and starts in the provinces of Guangxy and Hunan in China and goes to Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, Thailand, Myanmar, and Malaysia, ending in Singapore, and this is the route that has had the least geopolitical cost for China, since it is developed in its historical tributary zone and is now organized under the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), although, in some of these nations, the Indian civilization has never ceased to be present, especially in the south.

Because of geographical and historical reasons, the Eastern countries that are included in this economic corridor are part of the first globalization of China; therefore, China has a larger economic deal with them and even a Free-Trade Agreement (FTA) that was signed with the ASEAN in 2010. As an example of the above, the intra-regional trade of the ASEAN countries is close to 25%, but when China, Japan, and South Korea are added, the integration scales up to 50%, surpassing the rest of the integration schemes with the exception of the European Union (65%). This shows the high degree of cohesion that the zone has in the production of manufactured goods, in which although China represents 21% of intra-regional exports, it absorbs 44% of the

intra-zone imports, which marks the cohesion and importance of the region with China for decades (Oropeza, 2016, p. 201). Consequently, since before the BRI, China has put its largest investment in this economic corridor and has now reinforced it with 12 new roads, 11 new freight routes, new China-Vietnam, and China-Laos train lines and an advance of 80% of the China-Myanmar railway, etc. However, despite the great economic importance of China in the *Indochina Peninsula*, some of its member countries still bear not very fond memories of its belligerent presence, such as Vietnam, which still remembers its war with China in 1979; and recently, not only Vietnam, but also Malaysia, Indonesia and the Philippines, who view with fear and suspicion the dual role of China as a partner and new regional hegemon, with respect to its maritime borders in the South China Sea.

The fifth International Economic Cooperation Corridor corresponds to China-Pakistan (CPEC), which is the only corridor that contemplates the relationship of just one BRI country with China. At first sight, it is significant that China has chosen to give Pakistan this important role, as well as the fact that it has not directly included its close neighbor, Afghanistan. To date, the CPEC, for the geopolitical and economic commitment that China makes, is the most important BRI corridor, to such an extent that it is considered as the flagship corridor, the model corridor that can guide the tasks of the other corridors, at the same time that it can signal the successful or problematic progress of BRI.

Regarding the CPEC, it is important to reiterate that its outline was made in the face of the opposition and annoyance of India, as a regional hegemon, because its original outline crosses territories still in debate with Pakistan and China (Gilgit-Baltistan), or only with China (Kashmir), in a *carelessness* that has generated the indignant opposition of India to the BRI. Moreover, the CPEC omits the declared participation of Afghanistan. This speaks to the fact that although China is taking high levels of risk in its investment strategies, for which it has been criticized, in the

case of Afghanistan, for its political instability, for its pro-American vocation (American Silk Road), China avoided mentioning it in the CPEC. The above does not mean that Afghanistan has not been invited to the BRI and that it cannot participate in its different projects.

Pakistan presents itself before China as a country of special importance for diverse reasons. One of them, because its border is near to its autonomous region of Xinjiang, where the largest Muslim population in China lives, known as the Uighurs (hui su), so, for China, it is of the utmost importance to have a good relationship with a country of 190 million Muslims like Pakistan to avoid contamination with extremist groups in the region such as Al-Qaeda, the Taliban, the Turkish Islamist Party, etc. in the Uyghur zone. Similarly, China's economic growth and political stability have been at constant risk as it is a major importer of oil with almost 12 million barrels a day in 2017, which is largely supplied through the strategic zone of the Indian Ocean and its multiple straits, such as the Strait of Malacca, of Singapore, etc. In this context, the construction of a deep-sea port on the Pakistan coast in Gwadar is for China a strategic alternative to USA and India, as well as an outlet to the sea for its exports from central and western China. To the Chinese investments in the Gwadar Port resources were added for the integration of special economic zones, industrial corridors, a railroad that connects the port with all China and Central Asia, 3000 km of roads, electricity lines, etc., reflecting a large investment and a very important work to achieve a visible economic improvement in the country, which would give greater stability for all economic and political purposes. In this regard, the CPEC has become an example of the geopolitical support that China can provide through the BRI to the rest of the associated countries. Therefore, as Ghiasy and Zhou point out, if CPEC remains successful and sustainable, it will become a clear message to other countries with investment and development problems, to become closer partners with China (Ghiasy, Zhou, 2017).

The sixth and last corridor is the China-Bangladesh-India-Myanmar corridor, which, as already mentioned, is mainly hampered by the withdrawal of India's participation since 2015, as well as by Myanmar's political instability. However, this corridor is also relevant because it includes the Maritime Silk Road project of the 21st century, which begins in Southeast China and intends to continue along the sea route to Europe.⁴²

In the 15th century, as noted, during the Ming Dynasty, China decided to renounce its geopolitics by sea, although in the year 1405 during the dynasty of Yongle Emperor, a fleet of 62 powerful ships was integrated under the command of Zheng He, among which stood out the four largest ships in the world, 120 meters long and 50 meters wide. In the 21st century, within the framework of the BRI, China intends to re-launch a maritime strategy of positioning along the Indian Ocean, a strategy that in 2004 was qualified by the United States, in research by Booz Allen Hamilton, and C. J. Pehrson, as a *String of Pearls*. In these studies the marine, terrestrial and aerial facilities are defined as the string of pearls that China has been building since the beginning of the century in order to create a geopolitical power structure in the South China Sea and the Indian Ocean, as the starting point of a new global maritime force to accompany the Chinese interests in the area against firstly The United States and India. The String of Pearls includes the port of Gwadar in Pakistan; Chittagong in Bangladesh; Sittwe in Myanmar; Sihanoukville in Cambodia; Merguy, Thilawa, Kyanksyu, in Thailand; to which we could now add Hambantota and Colombo in Sri Lanka,

⁴² In this regard, in 2010 Geoffrey Kemp commented on the uncertainty of China's role in the important region of Central Asia and Asia Minor that China had to solve the enormous geographical distance from the area given its great hydrocarbon wealth. That if China expanded its seaway through the Indian Ocean and developed new terrestrial communication routes that transited through CA and Pakistan, it could become a strategic player in Asia Minor and the Persian Gulf (Kemp, 2010, pp. 1-6). It appears that China has followed the recommendation as can be seen from the BRI strategy.

Lamu in Kenya, Port Sudan in Sudan and Piraeus in Greece, where China currently holds 70% of the operation (Vanguardia, Dossier, No. 60, 2016).

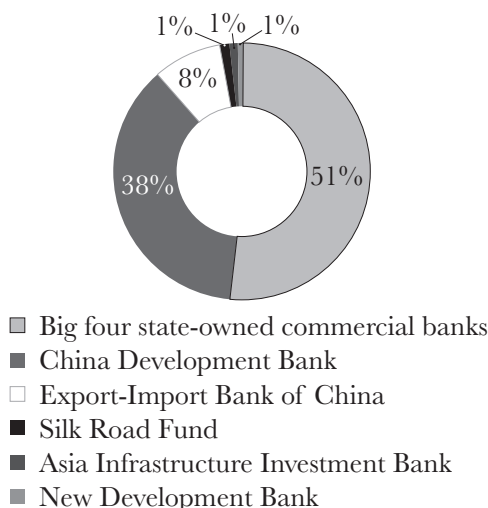
BRI or the economic resources of the integration

In financial matters, the BRI project is also an anti-paradigmatic initiative for the global order, both because of its size and because of the wide range of projects and institutions it comprises.

While today the BRI does not integrate a new formal paradigm of partnership, the inclusion of new topics in the trade of goods such as energy, science, technology, infrastructure; the broad levels of funding and the cultural or social issues with which it is complemented, provide a broader vision of the regional development efforts of the 21st century.

Despite the diversity of sources, which provide contrasting data, to date, BRI financing has offered large quantities to the countries with which it has initiated operations, through a very wide battery of institutions and financial bodies, which, as was already mentioned, involve the AIIB, Silk Road Fund, The new China Development Bank, which were created expressly for the BRI. At the same time, the China-ASEAN Inter-Bank, China Investment Corporation (CIC), the Development Bank of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), as well as all the Chinese state banks. Up to 2016, in financial matters, the BRI providers that contributed the most were the four major Chinese State Commercial Banks (SOEs) with 51%. The second source of funds includes the China Development Bank with 38% and the Export-Import Bank with 8%. Given its recent appearance as of 2015, the Silk Road Fund and the AIIB registered 1%, respectively (Deloitte, 2018).

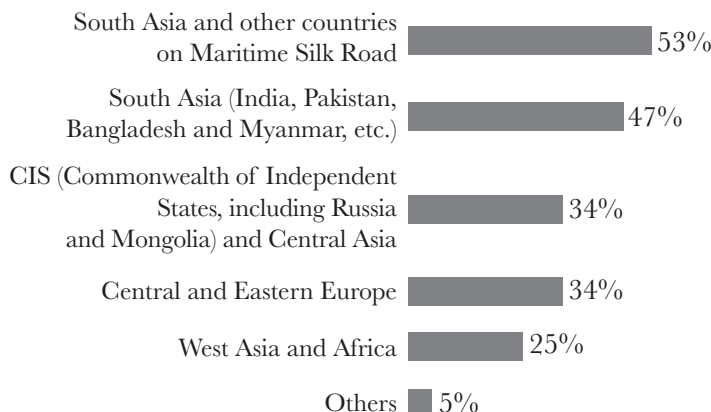
FUNDING FOR BRI BY SOURCE: OUTSTANDING
LOANS OR EQUITY
INVESTMENT AT THE END OF 2016 (\$ BILLION)



SOURCE: Deloitte, 2018.

Also, according to the Ministry of Commerce, the FDI that flows to the BRI averaged 14 billion dollars annually during 2015, 2016 and 2017, prioritizing the China-Indochina Peninsula corridor where only the SOEs invested 53% (2016); to the Bangladesh-China India-Myanmar corridor 47%; to Central Asia, Russia, Mongolia 34%; and to Eastern Europe 34% and Africa and East Asia 25%.

BRI INVESTMENT DESTINATIONS FOR SOES



SOURCE: Deloitte, 2018.

The BRI and its results

The BRI is a geopolitical earthquake of great dimensions that as of its launch, whatever its result, will change the standards conceived, at least in the Asian continent.

Like all the great transformations of China, the BRI presents itself as a global intuition of great encouragement, that in order to imagine it, first feeds on its own antecedents, and then along the way, it continues assembling its structure under a pragmatism with traditional Chinese characteristics.

Deng called first opening of China an *experiment*. The BRICS were officially launched in 2009 after eight years of being an exogenous idea of Jim O'Neill. Something similar happens in the case of the New Silk Road. From an ancient idea that was always present as part of a historical archive, it was reinforced with parallel ideas that were already being discussed in the geopolitical agenda of Asia, such as the Japan's Silk Road Diplomacy proposal in 2004, which already included the five countries of Central Asia; The Turkish Silk Road in 2008, which joins in 2016 with

the BRI. Even a Chinese *Marshall Plan* that in 2009 launched the State Administration of Taxation, which as of 2013 has been repeatedly denied as part of the philosophy of the BRI. The Russian Silk Road that was already commented upon, and in 2011 the American Silk Road that the United States proposed from Afghanistan.

In this respect, the BRI begins from these influences, but in its global launch, it was born from a political intuition when Xi Jinping came to power. Since then, it has been building, day by day, the progress that it has reached to date. For this reason, after five years, the versions, explanations and figures of the BRI change and differ with respect to each of the sources consulted, although this has not been an obstacle to recognizing the dimension of its size, the infinite number of its objectives and the enormous potential of its geopolitical and geo-economic repercussions on China, Asia and the world in general. For China, the BRI also seems to be the possibility of reediting, under the conditions of the 21st century, a new role inspired in the hegemonic role that it maintained under different conditions until 1839, when the arrival of the Western maritime powers, initiated by the invasion of Great Britain in the so-called Opium War, ended its millenary regional tribulation and the central role it played in the area.

Given the multi-diversity of the BRI proposal, currently, its objectives are multiplied and confused with respect to the source from which the information was taken. As was anticipated, China talks about an initiative rather than a strategy, in order to *build it together, enjoy it together* and *get to know each other*, managing an open position that moves away from the idea of an imposition. Similarly, the proposal is presented as international cooperation, as more reasonable and just global governance; as the construction of a community where the future of humanity is shared, which is an open invitation to a new geopolitical order (Munadi, 2018). Meanwhile, President Xi points out that the BRI is an open and inclusive *development brand*, as well as a global public good fostered by all parties. During his speech at the BRI Forum in May 2017,

Xi explains the BRI as a path to peace, to prosperity, as a path to openness, to innovation and civilization.

For the Second Forum held in April 2019, in front of 150 countries and international organizations signing the Belt and Road Cooperation initiative, President Xi before the BRI simile as a leafy tree with strong roots, confirmed that this new integration scheme responds to the global call for a new governance system, where people find a place to live better. Xu Shicheng summarizes the BRI as a facilitator for the opening of markets and the increase of trade and investment; as a “New thinking and a new project to perfect the global governance” (Shicheng, 2018).

The BRI breaks with the characterization of the regional integration of the 20th century and its consequent foundation of Article 24 of the World Trade Organization (WTO), inviting the Asian community, but also the rest of the world, to a new partnership scheme, pragmatic, with Chinese characteristics, that breaks with the limitations of Article 24 itself and unfolds its wings in an uncertain flight, but suggestive, where national and regional assets can be added no longer just through the exchange of goods and services, but also of all other economic activities; imagining new scenarios and possible developments.

And this is, perhaps, the greatest contribution that the BRI has made to the West, beyond the results it can achieve, of a neo-liberal dogma where the economic growth was only imagined through foreign trade based mostly on free trade agreements, with asymmetries and dominance of origin, which have limited the development and exchange of the countries towards new and better scenarios, more in line with a 21st century where the vision of the GATT of 1947 and even of the WTO of 1994 have been surpassed.

The Chinese intuition on this point breaks the paradigm, although it barely draws, through the main lines of BRI, the new structure that China offers to replace it.

In principle, it clearly states that, “The BRI goes beyond the global trading system in the implementation of objectives of the me-

chanisms and principles, at the same time; it is an *exploration* of a new model of global cooperation and governance, which not only seeks the development and prosperity of the world economy but also proposes a more just and reasonable system of global governance” (Xixia, 2018). Based on this clarification, in its operation, then, the BRI accepts a line of Hard Law or binding International Law, to which it does not resign within the framework of an inclusive pragmatism; at the same time that opens the door to commercial figures of Soft Law, or non-binding, as a possible tool in the new geopolitical BRI system.

Under this broad formal framework of possibilities appear Memorandums of Understanding (MOU), Production and Investment Agreements (Kazakhstan, 2015), Multilateral Agreements (China, Mongolia, Russia, 2016), 50 Cooperation Agreements, 56 Special Economic Zones or Brokers in more than 20 countries, up to the signing of more than 15 free trade agreements from China with about 24 countries in 2017; in addition to 11 FTAs in negotiation and 11 more where the talks are just starting. Within the Soft Law Agreements, because of its importance, the Agreement signed by China with the Asian European group 16+1 stands out; the BRICS could also be included, as well as different resolutions, declarations, agreements, etc., that are of lower rank but are already in operation (Xixia, 2018).

As can be seen, China does not renounce the WTO international order but does not accept setting up its new global lines of trade and development exclusively under its conceptual framework, opening a debate on what should be the economic regulations for a new world that is more demanding and complex. Under these new BRI paradigms, the Western offer does not appear as a strategy that will be able to compete in vision, scope, financing, formality, etc., with the comprehensive offer of the new Silk Road, and the dogmatic legal criticism will not be enough to rescue the Western trade schemes, which continue to maintain the same vision and ambition of the developed countries of the previous century.

Certainly, the architecture achieved by the European Union is still a required Western reference, because of its results and the consideration of its asymmetries and support of all its participants, despite its current crisis led by the Brexit phenomenon. But the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), now in its new version called the United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA, for its acronym in English), and the Trans-Pacific Partnership Agreement (TPP), in its new version known as The Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP or TPP-11), among others, since its blurred re-negotiation as of Trump's arrival to power, distance themselves from these new inclusive initiatives of high levels of financing, which, in principle, offer greater room for maneuvering through the economic reality of most of the participating countries.

Regarding the results of the BRI (2014-2017), it has currently been signed by more than 100 countries and international organizations, according to Professor Shicheng. Furthermore, China has signed BRI Cooperation Agreements with more than 40 countries and international organizations. China has increased its trade with the BRI to 3 trillion dollars and has invested close to 50 billion dollars. 56 zones of economic and commercial cooperation have been installed with more than 20 countries. Chinese companies have paid 1.1 billion dollars of taxes with BRI 180 thousand jobs have been created outside of China. The AIIB handed over 1.7 billion dollars and the Silk Road Fund 4 billion dollars (Shicheng, 2018).

In addition to the foregoing, China has granted 10 thousand government scholarships; and will add 100 billion yuan to the SRF and will incentivize the SOEs with a new credit of 300 billion. The NDB will be endowed with 250 billion yuan and the Ex-Inc Bank with 130 billion yuan for infrastructure projects, productive capacity, and finance. In the next three years, in summary, China will contribute with about 8.7 billion dollars to BRI. In particular, a food aid of 2 billion yuan will be offered to the

neediest BRI countries; 1 billion dollars to the Assistance Fund for South-South Cooperation. 1 billion dollars for projects that will benefit BRI countries and it will launch 100 *happy homes* projects; 100 for poverty relief and another 100 for health care and rehabilitation (Shicheng, 2018).

Up to 2019, the BRI is unfinished, confused, with lights and shadows. Most of the participating partners are invaded by hope and interest, at the same time by confusion, suspicion, fear and internal division.

They worry about their bulky debts, the quality of the investments, the strong corruption of their ruling classes, where in some cases; it is estimated that it amounts to between 10 to 30% of the credits. They are also concerned about what the ultimate goals of China may be.

Notwithstanding the above, the vast majority do not want to be left out of this great and imaginative wave of a new continental development that for many of these countries appears to be the only alternative.

For China, for Xi Jinping, the success of the BRI in the coming years, together with its economic and legal reform, are the only guarantees for their permanence in power to be prolonged during the third and fourth decade of the century, and thus the Chinese dream of a hegemonic China by 2049 may be fulfilled, 100 years after the Revolution and installation of the People's Republic of China.

F. THE ECONOMIC REFORM. MADE IN CHINA 2025

At the end of the seventies, China had to build everything. Its growth in relation to its GDP was erratic with sharp falls and irregular increases that, in the period 1966-1976, led it to register an average annual growth of 4%. Forty years ago there were no FDI flows, which began to appear in a significant way from 1985 onward. Its trade was so weak that it was placed in the 34th position of the world ranking, and its exports represented only 4% of

its GDP. In short, when its first reform process and opening took place in 1978, no political or economic actor believed that a country of 956 million people with extreme poverty levels of above 60% was a threat. Nobody believed that there could be a Chinese miracle (Oropeza, 2006, p. 274).

Over the next four decades, the global economic community did not believe either, each disbelief in its time, that China could manufacture motorcycles, vehicles, trucks, high-speed trains, airplanes, aircraft carriers, satellites, etc., and now China is a leader or prominent manufacturer of each of these goods or products.

Facing the third decade of the 21st century, the global economic and political community, especially the United States and the West, are once again asking themselves whether China will be able to ascend to the only economic leadership that it needs, which is the high-technology services of the of the fourth and fifth Industrial Revolution, to which some classic thinkers like Montesquieu or Weber, etc., argued that the Chinese civilization was not prone to science, which was one of the determinants of Western domination; or of the modern criteria that China was not capable of overcoming its cheap manufacture; or those who now think that it will not be able to displace the technological leadership of the United States or of the main European countries. And the essential question on the subject is again the same that was posed since the first decade of Chinese economic success. Why couldn't China do it if the internal and external conditions to achieve it remain basically the same?

Since 1978, China practices an economic model that grows and is updated, but that does not change in its nuclear structure. It corresponds to that of a powerful Developing State baptized by China as Market Socialism, which Deng Xiaoping would always explain as the experiment of combining both Capitalism and Socialism, both necessary to achieve his goals, which today seem to be, to turn China into the most developed hegemonic nation of the 21st century, based on its industrial manufacturing and intelligence services leadership.

China, in the second decade of the century once again *intuits* and *interprets* the global winds, and understands that the economic success of yesterday does not guarantee today's success, and that it is not enough to continue with the strategic instruments of its first opening as its selective and gradual globalization, nationalist management of the FDI that arrives in the country, the modernization of special economic zones, a high-priority industrial policy, the alignment of a broad and powerful Development Bank at the service of industrial development, fiscal and financial incentives, etc., that led it to displace the United States in 2010 as the largest country in manufacturing production. For this, its last sectoral economic battle, now the most relevant at the global level, is to reach and overcome the technological advance of the United States.

Faced with such challenges, China decides to move away from the comfort of its important economic triumphs and transits towards a new strategy, called Made in China 2025, that it launched in 2015, (MCh 2025) through which China concentrates most of the actions that it considers will not only give it a new impetus to its growth, but based on a vision and a civilizing dream, it believes can place it as the leading nation of the century.

The spirit of the new strategy can be explained primarily, within the vision that Xi Jinping has been building since his arrival to power, which is reflected in the speeches and documents that he has been publishing since that date. For example, in his participation in celebration of the XIX Anniversary of the National Congress of the CCP (October 2017), where he commits himself to the people to provide a *better life*, a happy life; pointing out that for this, China has to become a country of innovation, reinforcing its task in scientific and technological research in order to break into new technologies, where China penetrates with technological innovations that improve the living standards of the Chinese people. He adds to this that innovation is the strategic force to promote development, as well as the strategic underpinning to build a more modern economy. In particular, Xi

emphasizes that “We will promote basic research in applied sciences, to increase our achievements in science and technology projects, prioritizing innovation that generates key technologies, that break technological boundaries and modernize technological engineering; in short, that breaks technological paradigms” (China Daily, October 20, 2017).

By way of accompaniment of this vision, China launches its 13th Five-Year National Plan on Scientific and Technological Innovation (2016),⁴³ through which it accompanies 15 Preferential Programs in Scientific and Technological Innovation. In the same year, the Three-Year Implementation Plan of “Internet Plus” Artificial Intelligence (AI) appears; although in a significant way, because of its breadth and new vision, in 2015 China launched the Made in China 2025 Plan, as the new paradigm that unfolds and accompanies the strategy of its Second Reform and Opening to the West, which together with its Reform of Power (Constitutional Reform), as was already indicated, form the strategic triangle towards its success and geopolitical and geo-economic domination by 2049.

Certainly, Made in China 2025 is not the first scientific and technological program. In fact, since the first opening of Deng Xiaoping, he placed the issue as one of his four major priorities. However, the difference with this launching is that the services of high technology are privileged (Industry 4.0), without forgetting the traditional industry, setting the objectives of three scenarios in time, where, in 2025 it will seek to reduce the differences with other countries; in 2035, it seeks to strengthen and empower its position, and by 2045 (2049), it plans to be the world leader in the production of technological goods and services (Plan Made in China 2025, ICEX, 2016).

As in previous programs, the Plan selects 10 winning sectors, where electronic equipment, agricultural machinery, new

⁴³ In 2005, it approved the National Medium and Long-Term Program for Science and Technology Development (2006- 2020). And since 1978, science and technology have been a priority for China.

materials, energy saving, new energy vehicles, numerical control tools, robotics, medical equipment, advanced technology maritime equipment, railway equipment, aerospace equipment, and information technologies stand out. To reinforce this launch, it plans to build 15 innovation centers nationwide by 2020 and 40 by 2025.

However, where the plan moves away from previous exercises and is part of Xi Jinping's new policy is that in this project, Deng's *prudential* policy disappears and vectors of sensitive issues that were previously biased or that were denied are exposed publicly. The first is the recognition that the plan aims to integrate a national content of 40% by 2020 and 70% by 2025, in spite of confronting the WTO narrative. At the same time, the plan proposes that by that time, Science and Technology contribute to a GDP growth of 60% and investment in the sector reaches 2.5% of GDP. In order to achieve the national content, the protection and subsidy policies that, in their own way, were inaugurated together with the Chinese opening in 1978, are reiterated. Most especially, the strategies that also directly and indirectly make Chinese Statism ostensible for the implementation and achievements of the Plan's objectives appear. There is talk of *legal pressures* through the important National Development and Reform Commission regarding global actors in China, to favor technology transfer. There is also talk of pressure for the signing of Joint Ventures in technological matters. Requirements and constraints of the internal market in exchange for technology. Pressure for low prices in technology commercialization, for the facilitation of qualified human resources, for the manufacture of technology in China, etc. In fact, quasi-institutional issues in Chinese performance since the 1980's, but which were always denied and even a number of Western specialists overlooked in their analysis of the Chinese development miracle.

According to a *New York Times* research article (How this US Tech Giant is Backing China's Tech Ambitions, 2018), the United States evidences the application of these policies, noting that

American companies, “Are being forced to transfer technology, sign Joint Ventures, lower prices and help with their specialists”, to the Chinese areas of artificial intelligence and semiconductors. That Qualcomm, a leading company in the construction of high-tech chips, through the NDRC, received a fine of almost one billion dollars, and its participation in the Chinese market was conditioned to a decrease in prices and a larger transfer of technology to Chinese partners. For this, the Chinese government offered land and financing to be associated with the Chinese company Huaxintong, as well as with the company Thundersoft (drones), based in Beijing.

Another article from the *New York Times* (China Seeks Global Control in Technology, *Reforma*, 2018) reiterates the Chinese policy of demanding associations or transfer of intellectual property, “As the price of admission to the second-largest economy in the world”. Even in collusion with American companies (Advanced Micro Devices, microchips license) they are trying to circumvent the new restrictions of the American government on the transfer of technology. Sensitive Chinese government technology systems such as banks and laboratories still use Intel and Qualcomm chips, and Microsoft and Oracle software, which they consider as a weakness of its national security. To solve it, China established a fund for the manufacture of semiconductors of more than 100 billion dollars, 150 billion dollars for artificial intelligence and 3000 million dollars for advanced manufacturing.

To the foregoing, it should be added that within this comprehensive strategy of formal and informal technological positioning, the Chinese strategists Qiao Liang and Wang Xiangsui since 1999 talk about an *Unrestricted Warfare*, where they include as part of the possible technology grab the use of financial and technological hackers through Internet browsers (Jalife-Rahme, *Reforma*, 2018).

Western manufacturers, as they did forty years ago, look to the Made in China 2025 Plan with distrust due to the open and strong will of the State to carry it out through all formal and in-

formal channels, with great pragmatism and huge public financing. Bradsher and Mozurmarch summarize it as, “China’s desire to gain control over the most profitable segments of the global production chain” (2018). Y Lewis, Vice President of the Center for Strategic and International Studies (USA), sums up China’s informal participation saying, “Everyone fears reprisals. Nobody wants to lose the Chinese market” (*The New York Times, Reforma*, 2018).

The battle for the digital supremacy, as *The Economist* calls it (March 2018), or how it could escalate: The economic battle for the global hegemony of the century, is a central part of the trade war that was already declared to China by the United States through the Presidential Memorandum of March 22, 2018, based on section 301 of the Trade Act of 1974, which is derived in general from the accumulation of trade inconsistencies between the two countries since the nineties, when the huge trade deficit of the United States with China began; and in particular, it focuses on the technological war between the two countries.

Within the framework of this trade war, together with the Presidential Memorandum, the United States is strengthening the surveillance of Chinese FDI towards US companies through the Foreign Investment Risk Review Modernization Act (FIRRMA), where it includes, in a special way, the resources granted to start-ups in areas of national security. It especially monitors the new Risk Funds in which China has focused its financial triangulation to invest in the development of industrial technology in America. The Department of Defense (USA) estimates that China has contributed with 13% of the total of this type of investment (*The Economist*, August 2018). Added to that is the expanded powers of the Committee of Foreign Investment (CFIUS), to block the takeover operations of American companies when it represents a threat to national security, not only in the defense industry as it operated previously. As an example, in March 2018 this Committee blocked the hostile takeover bid of Qualcomm (*Reforma*, June 8, 2018).

“If it is accepted as a starting point that we are in an intense power struggle with China and Russia —says John Janser of the National Defense University— then we should think about guaranteeing the innovative base, making the industrial base feasible and taking everything to scale” (*Financial Times*, July 2018).

In the framework of this historic debate over the technological-economic supremacy that will undoubtedly define positions and strengths in the coming decades, as it does now, China already has placed 9 companies in the Top Twenty Internet leaders, led by Alibaba (6) and Tencent (7); the rest are American. On innovation (2018), China ranks 17th worldwide and climbs five places over the previous year (place 22). In terms of innovation (2018), China is ranked 17th worldwide and it climbed five places with respect to the previous year (place 22). The United States lost two places in the same period, going from place 2 to 4. To date, China has 4.6 million graduates in science and technology, and the United States has one-eighth that amount. In 2016, China installed a record of 87,000 robots, more than the United States and Germany combined. In 2017, China’s investment will exceed that of (43%) USA (38%) in artificial intelligence. Similarly, China is already the second generator of scientific publications (293 thousand publications 2000-2015), after the United States (354 thousand publications 2000-2015). It is a leader in patent registration in deep learning, artificial intelligence, and second in automatic learning, after the USA. By 2025, China plans to generate three-quarters of its own demand for industrial robots and more than a third of its demand for smartphone chips. In terms of electronic commerce, Porter Erisman, adviser for Alibaba points out, “If you want to understand the history of electronic commerce, study the United States, but if you want to understand the future of electronic commerce, study China” (*The Economist*, March, 2018/ *The New York Times*, *Reforma* 2018, *Vanguardia* Dossier No. 70, September, 2018).

Certainly, the Economic Reform is linked to the Chinese Geopolitical Reform. For this purpose there is, among other alli-

ances, a Digital Silk Road through which China tries, with about 35 satellites, to connect at a distance of one meter or less the geography, the routes, and the geo-references of 30 BRI countries that to date have signed with the Chinese company Bei Dou (Big Dipper), which is in charge of building the digital communication route for 67% of the Asian population that is not covered. Xi pointed out with respect to this silk road of communication, nanotechnology, artificial intelligence, big data, etc., that it will help to create, “A community with a shared destiny in cyberspace” (*The Economist*, June 2018). Similarly, the millenary capital of the silk trade, Xi’an, is being promoted as a *Silicon Valley* in western China.

Finally, on 5G technology, which will define the technological leadership of the 21st century, Ren Zhengfei, leader and CEO of Huawei declares with no little pride: “Our 5G technologies are at least two years ahead (of the United States) and will be the world leaders for a long time” (El País, 2019).

G. THE REFORM OF POWER. CONSTITUTIONAL REFORM OF 2018

In the month of October of 2017, in the context of the celebration of the XIX Congress of the Chinese Communist Party, the figure of President Xi Jinping was elevated to the highest levels of Chinese power in modern times.

In an unexpected turn, according to the progressive political tendency that Deng Xiaoping had inherited, from a principle of political separation between the CCP and the government and towards a greater assimilation of the Rule of Law and the democratic order, at the end of the Congress the figure of President Xi was declared *Emperor for life* and his thinking rose to the level of President Mao Zedong and the Theory of President Deng Xiaoping, who were considered until then as the only political guides since 1949.

Reinforcing this, during the celebration of the Congress, the reform of the constitution of the CCP was decided, which has happened a few times since its approval in 1982, in order to reflect within its legal body, “The thought of Xi Jinping, of a Socialism with Chinese characteristics for a new era”, which remain as the guide of the party and the State.

Given the historical change registered in the party, in March 2018, during the celebration of the XIII National People’s Congress, the Fifth Amendment to the Constitution of the People’s Republic of China was made. In a relevant manner, among the changes that were made, is that the leadership of the CCP was raised, once again, as the central foundation of political power, and its secretary Xi, as the nucleus of this center, by amending Article 1 of the Constitution to highlight that, “The Socialist system is the basis of the People’s Republic of China, and the CCP leadership is the characteristic of Socialism with Chinese characteristics”, principle that was in the preamble of the Constitution of 1982, on the idea of generating an authority of the Rule of Law over the political power and not the other way around, as is evident by the change. Also, in a special way, the National Supervisory Commission was created, which covered a large part of the Constitutional Reform. This powerful committee against Corruption, which until 2017 had sanctioned a million and a half people, was constituted with the Confucian idea of moral control of the power of both the party and the government. Where, this committee will be supervised by the Permanent Committee of the NPC, where Xi is the supreme figure. Likewise, the power of judicial review was removed from the Supreme People’s Court of China, transferring it to the Permanent Committee of the NPC and to the CCP, where Xi is the General Secretary of the Party.

In a most transcendent manner, the last paragraph of Article 79 of the Constitution was modified, thereby eliminating the limit to the presidential five-year terms with only one re-election. This leaves the door open to an indefinite term of the constitutional power in a political reform that tends toward the consolidation of

a figure, Xi Jinping, and a political group, in the framework of the construction of the *Chinese Dream* and its objective, the great repositioning of the Chinese nation, through the achievement of a rich and powerful country that fulfills both the revitalization of the nation and the happiness of the people, as the ultimate goal (Vanguardia Dossier No. 70, September, 2018).

The result of this reform, which is made from the perspective of the reconstruction of the political power, achieves, in fact, the highest concentration of power in the figure of President Xi, who as of March 2018 became the new Emperor in Life of China, by concentrating the following legal and symbolic attributions:

1. General Secretary of the Communist Party of China
2. Chairman of the Central Military Commission
3. President of the People's Republic of China
4. Core of the Party
5. Ling Xin, maximum leader
6. Zuingao Tonge Huai, Supreme Commander
7. Dang Zhong Yang, Center of the Party

The Legal Reform of 2018, because of the depth of its changes and the impact of its consequences on the forms of construction of Chinese power, is a subject that requires further investigation. Inside China, the Reform is still part of a deep reflection that tells of the return of a power that is inspired by the millennial mirror of a neo-Confucianism, that despite its detractors, is still present in the forms of its politics and in the culture of the Chinese people of the 21st century, which seeks its modernization with its own characteristics. From a power, that based on its expressions still prefers order to social freedom, ethics, and morality over the law, and meritocratic political totalitarianism (Confucian mandarins) instead of democracy. Changes that the West cannot translate properly in the light of a unique thought and methodology that does not know or that denies, the presence of other *political forms* beyond its own truth.

The reconstruction of power in China through its Constitutional Reform of 2018 is a topic of great depth that does not admit easy opinions nor the immediate application of absolutes in any sense. Therefore, over the next few years, the significance of its consequences inside and outside China should be observed at length, with the greatest care.

For the purposes of this work, it should be noted that the construction of a powerful, monolithic and central presidential figure in the person of Xi Jinping, should be seen as one of the three central strategies adopted by China in the pursuit of its long-term objectives, in the face of a Western democracy in crisis and lacking direction. In the political field, a central power without a doubt, in imitation of a totalitarian legacy with Asian characteristics, through which it tries both to show its *ontological* supremacy and its economic efficiency, with regard to a Western economic institutionalism that still does not resolve its State-Market dichotomy.

Furthermore, as part of this comprehensive strategic vision of China, the concentration of political power could be understood as an essential complement that facilitates both the positioning of an BRI that was planned for 20 or 30 years and a Made in China with goals for 2025, 2035 and 2049, which the Chinese vision considers easier to achieve through a solid, stable and permanent political power, that accompanies and supports the measures throughout the first half of the century.

The legal reform of power, like the BRI strategy and the economic reform of the conversion of services will have to travel, of course, through the inescapable proof of its results and its permanence over time.

H. FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The Chinese offer of informal association launched to the world and in particular, to the Asian continent, under the acronym BRI (One Belt One Road), breaks with the regional paradigms estab-

lished since the postwar period, and because of its size and possible implications, poses the starting point of a new global economic and political order with Asian characteristics, in general, and Chinese characteristics, in particular.

Its installation is explained in the geopolitical phenomenon evidenced at the beginning of the century, of a China and East Asia on the rise, and a Western decline shown by the main European countries and the United States.

Similarly, the BRI offer is part of the re-launching of the Chinese economic and political project (Second Opening and Reform), that from a measured and tolerant policy regarding its role in the global order established by the West (Deng policy), through the BRI, it starts to lead a more active role, which, in its unveiling, tries to raise new flags for a globalization with Chinese characteristics (Xi policy). In that sense,

The BRI goes beyond the global trading system during the implementation of objectives, of mechanisms and of principles; at the same time, it is an exploration of a new model of global cooperation and governance, which not only seeks the development and prosperity of the world economy, but also proposes a more *just and reasonable* system of global governance (Xixia, 2018).

Under this perspective, the possibilities of the analysis of the BRI expand and multiply geometrically, hindering its explanation, which ranges from a new regional trade proposal, to the possibility of becoming a geopolitical and geo-economic strategy of unsuspected dimensions, which could have as its ultimate objective the repositioning of China as a hegemonic leader in the middle of the century. Furthermore, within this last objective, it could include the cultural and civilizational recovery of an always present Orientalism that was relegated in the last two centuries (small parenthesis from Huntington) in the face of the Western subjugation of the former Asian powers such as China, India, Japan, etc.

Six years after its launch, the BRI also moves freely between a geo-political megatrend and an amorphous mechanism under construction, which has not yet been defined in structure, content, and direction. Likewise, its current narrative is divided between the celebration of a new economic and political global order, such as a high-risk investment scheme, located in a fearful and timid Asian geopolitical framework.

The interpretations of the BRI will tend to be more objective as its juridical, economic and political structure advances, which will allow the establishment of its true frontiers and possibilities.

However, given the numbers in terms of countries (70), world GDP (52%), world population (70%), global oil and gas reserves (75%), etc. its first explanations do not admit reductionism. In that regard and beyond the degree of success of its goals, the BRI scheme would have to be positioned as the spearhead of a Second Chinese Reform and Opening to the West, as a strategic movement of complementation with respect to its first Reform and Opening towards the Pacific in 1978, which to date is exhausted, not to sustain a moderate economic development of China, but to give China that final impulse to an Asian project that unlike the seventies, now seeks the leadership of a new global order with Chinese characteristics.

In the logic of this approach, the Second Reform cannot be seen only through the BRI, but because of its importance and strategic value, both the Economic Reform led by the Made in China 2025 program, as well as the Reform of its Political Power which came about in 2017/2018 through its Constitutional Reform should be included in this impulse.

These three reforms, each within the framework of its competency, are now a fundamental part of the new Chinese project of the 21st century, with which it is betting on its hegemonic leadership by the middle of the century.

Within a global disorder and a world in transformation, the Chinese proposal appears as an articulated option, waiting for a better response and interpretation from the West and peripheral countries.

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CHAPTER IV

GLOBAL DISORDER AND CHINA-UNITED STATES CONFRONTATION

GLOBAL DISORDER AND CHINA-UNITED STATES CONFRONTATION

A. INTRODUCTION

In the first decades of the century is atypical with regard to its recent predecessors; however, it forms part of mankind's same course, which began with the Industrial Revolution in the middle of the 18th century. Moreover, surely, with a broader vision, it is part of an era that began in the second part of the second millennium of the modern era (1500 A. D.). In this era, the West was able to bounce back and to rescue a presence and leadership regarding East Asia, after more than a millennium and a half of economic, although also civilizing, dominance on the part of India and China.

There are many factors involved in the economic, political, social, and technological developments of the 21st century, and it is difficult to cover them in an essay of this type. Nevertheless, in the following sections, we will try to comment on the more important points that we believe are directly affecting the realignment of the global world, in which we recognize, firstly, a true change of geopolitical and technological era due to of its size and dimension.

Similarly, within the framework of this global development, a first explanation of the geopolitical confrontation that China and the United States will stage in an uncertain debate about the hegemony of the 21st century will be attempted.

B. THE GLOBAL DISORDER. GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

The global order has never existed. It cannot exist, owing to the fallible character of human beings and as a result of the different

societies in which they dwell. As compensation, since the beginning of the time, a yearning has always prevailed, an aspiration that things will go well for the majority of people, and of societies.

Although the global concept is recent, in historical terms, the idea of the collective and its smooth functioning has been a constant feature of every human group. Nevertheless, in this formal construction of the term that has grown over the last few centuries, especially since the Treaties of Westphalia (1640), with regard to the existence of a *global order* increasingly regulated and accepted, in the last decades a widespread impression wanders around the world that what worked reasonably well as an *established international order* is collapsing quickly. This generates a feeling of helplessness and concern, not only about the solution to the global problems of the present, but also, in a special way, regarding how the world will solve the challenges of the middle and the end of the century.

This feeling, more and more visible since the first decades of the century, is not new. In fact, its current expression is an accumulation through time that starts during the mid-seventies. In that axial phase where many of the decisions and events that began to break with the last formal antecedent of the *global order*, Bretton Woods (1944), were produced, which after seven decades of existence demands a reengineering that articulates all the geopolitical and technological water under the bridge during the last years of world history.

The global society of the early 20th century saw war after war, genocide after genocide, as in 1914 and 1945. What had been achieved since the important agreements of Westphalia and the negotiations of the Congress of Paris (1815), among others, collapsed once again before the clash of the geopolitical interests of the time, which again incurred in one of the most serious mistakes of world coexistence—this being, to resolve their conflict of interests through the resource of war, which had been reduced through international agreements that had been reached earlier.

In the face of the loss of the restraint of the different interests of the global actors, the one hundred million deaths registered during the two world conflicts (Steiner, 2006) demonstrated both the precariousness of the global order of the time, and the important civilizing advances achieved by western society. However, at the end of the two wars, the trauma of unbridled violence disguised as *legitimate* national aspirations also generated a dialectic of greater depth with regard to the need for more comprehensive and sustainable global agreements.

The European Union, in its most finished expression, is one of the important consequences of the trauma of 1914 and 1945. It is also evidence that, for everyone, there are other paths. The signing of the Bretton Woods agreements (together with the Rome Treaties in Europe's case, among others) emerged as a bold proposal to reorder what was orderable, to subscribe to a new starting point from which emerged for the first time, in dimension and content, an offer of institutions, accepted by the majority, and that could promote a more equitable and inclusive global development for the majority. From this feeling of world recovery, the United Nations Organization (UN) is re-launched in 1945; in 1947, the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) is signed as a regulatory principle of the new international trade among nations; in 1944, the World Bank (WB) is established, as a support bank for the growth of the world economy of the time; just as the International Monetary Fund (IMF) arises in 1945, which completed, in financial matters, an innovative scheme of guidance and regulation of a supposed global economic development. Certainly, this institutional platform was never perfect, and it was not able to move away from the interests of the winning countries of the armed conflict. However, the progress of its content and the multinational participation marked a historical referent with respect to what has been achieved in this area during the last two thousand years of the history of mankind.

Bretton Woods, which was the philosophy of a new agreement regarding global relations to support the economic and

trade development of the of the time, and the United States, which emerged as the big winner of the armed conflict (Pax Americana) and held approximately 50% of world's economic product (GDP) and the same proportion of the world manufacture, became the two supports of a Western order that prevailed in a reasonable manner until the end of the last century.

These agreements showed the viability of their postulates before the notable success of a global economy, which from 1950 to 1974 grew close to an average of 5% per year, just as its trade climbed in the same period to the record of 7.4% average per year. (Ocampo, 2017). In a special way, the wild liberalism of the late 19th and early 20th centuries led Keynes to say that, “The decadent international but individualistic capitalism, in the hands of which we now find ourselves after the war, is not a success. It is not intelligent. It is not beautiful. It is not just. It is not virtuous. And it doesn't deliver the goods” (Frieden, 2007, p. 305), was changed by a Social Capitalism that in most nations influenced an increase on social benefits of workers and society in general. In their most prominent cases, such as that of the Baltic countries and Western Europe, they built a true *welfare state* that went beyond pre- and post-war social demands. Even the United States built a *New Deal*, and the Latin American countries, in general, operated a renewal of public policy with a more inclusive character for most of its workers and populations. In the case of Mexico, where, in a prominent way, the Revolution of 1910 and the Constitution of 1917 were developed, the social imprint stood out as a remarkable antecedent of the time.

Broken the British cycle and its Pax Britannica, as well as the first and second stage of the Industrial Revolution that was imposed as a world order from 1750 to 1914, Bretton Woods emerged as the new global agreement and the United States as the new dominant hegemony. In particular, a more humane and committed capitalism prevailed with the society of the time, which showed, against all odds and theories of the time, that global integration, economic development, and social commit-

ment, were viable and possible. These policies were the constants of a new era, that, as noted above, have been weakening since the seventies in the face of the renouncement or the transformation of what has been achieved.

Is it true that there is chaos in the global order? Can it be said that there is a widespread fear and discontent with the path that the world is currently following? Do Modern societies feel threatened? Is there a crisis of the future, but also of the present? The foregoing are not new questions, but what cannot be denied is that from a whispering at the outskirts of the neighborhood, from an intellectual topic, the subject (general feeling) has become increasingly embedded in the global community, which, under different approaches but with the same destination port, shows signs of a great discontent with what it lives, but worse yet, with what is feels is yet to come. However, what in East Asia is a murmur, in the West (European Union, United States), Latin America, and much of the rest of the world, the unrest has already taken on overtones of concern, discouragement, and fear due to a reality that it cannot finish describing, nor manage to solve.

Chaos in the global order of the 21st century. Fear, says Bauman, of the insecurity of the present and uncertainty about the future. Insecurity and uncertainty resulting from the helplessness of having no control over the affairs of the whole planet (Bauman, 2010, p. 166). Lipovetsky, also confirms that this stage of the 21st century is characterized by the fear of the *crisis of the future*; fear of the technocracy and the disintegration of the political utopias of the time (Lipovetsky, 2008, p. 69). From a more concrete perspective, Judt points out that something in the world *is wrong*, adding that,

Poverty is an abstraction, even for the poor. But the symptoms of collective impoverishment are around us. Highways in bad condition, ruined cities, fountains that are sinking, failed schools, unemployed, poorly paid workers, and uninsured people: Everything suggests a collective failure of will. These problems are so

endemic that we no longer know how to talk about what is wrong, much less to try to solve it” (Judt, 2013, p. 26).

Bauman again argues on the subject, reiterating the general disenchantment that prevails in the world about the future. He summarizes the fact that 90% of parents in France and 53% in Australia, as an example of the aforementioned, estimate that their children will be in a worse position than them by commenting that,

With such a 180-degree turn, the future has been transformed and has ceased to be the natural habitat of hopes and the most legitimate expectations to become a nightmare scenario: the terror of losing a job and social status associated with it, the terror of having our home and the rest of our property and possessions confiscated, the issue of starving, powerless, as our children fall without remedy through the downward spiral of the loss of welfare and prestige, and the fear of seeing the skills that were so hard to learn and memorize stripped of the little market value that they may have left” (Bauman, 2017, pp. 16 and 17).

The exit of England from the European Union (Brexit), the secession threat of Catalonia in Spain, the arrival of Trump to the presidency of the United States, the disorientation and political neo-populism and the emergence of a Western economic neo-protectionism, are just some of the symptoms that measure the temperature of a historic time that tells us that something is amiss, even though it holds that, as various specialists claim (Bregman, Mahbubani, Ridley; etc.)

The last two centuries have seen an exponential growth in population and prosperity in the whole world. The per capita income is now ten times that of 1850. The average Italian is 15 times richer than he was in 1880. And the global economy? It is now 250 times larger than that of the Industrial Revolution, when almost every-

one everywhere remained poor, hungry, dirty, fearful, ignorant, sick... (Bregman, 2017, p. 12).

All these data and more are useless. They do not serve to acquiesce billions that, despite the achievements of each social segment since the Industrial Revolution, feel offended and dissatisfied with what they have and with what they would like to have. Likewise, and perhaps more importantly, a sense of unworthiness and fear about the future hangs over the accumulation of all that has been achieved.

May you live in interesting times wishes the Chinese proverb. Morris concludes: "We have the misfortune of living in difficult times" (Morris, 2014, p. 667).

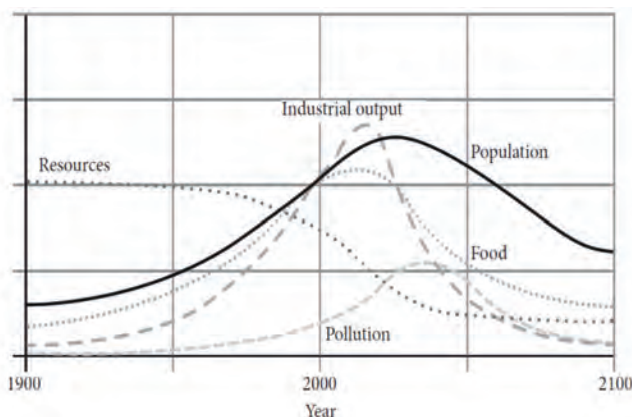
C. THE GLOBAL DISORDER. SOME OF ITS CHALLENGES

Problems are accumulating for the global society of the moment. Paraphrasing Judt we could say that something is amiss.

The decline of global leaderships, the rise of new relevant actors, the change of geopolitical eras, the clash of cultures, of civilizations (mega-trends) etc., there are too many issues that complicate today's society, both for the analysis and the elaboration of a proposed way out.

If this was not enough, the new vectors that summon society, such as the decline of the industry as the dominant economic sector, the technological substitution and consequent global unemployment, the end of the Carbonic Era, the depletion of raw materials and natural resources, the deep economic inequalities and the challenge of ecological sustainability, etc.; are parts of an overexposed agenda that demands the wisdom and the commitment of a humanity which boasts its *triumphal* arrival to the new millennium.

WORLD TRENDS



SOURCE: Finantial sense

Will we have to get used to the *New Normal* as defined by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD)? Will we live the *New Mediocrity* described by the International Monetary Fund (IMF)? Will we float in the *secular stagnation* that Larry Summers reveals to us? Or, in the Mexican case, will we be condemned to live in the *stabilizing stagnation* to which Suárez Dávila alludes?

The starting point to all these issues does not seem to be very strong in global terms. In the face of the referent that everything is according to the color of the glass with which one sees, the 50% of the world population that lives with 1% of the world wealth is not very optimistic in this regard. The other 1%, which controls 50% of GDP, will surely have a different opinion, as well as the 10% that enjoys almost 90% of the world wealth (Credit Suisse, 2015). Such an unequal world is not a reliable platform to solve the global discontent, especially, since in terms of population, it is estimated that we will reach 10 billion people in the middle of the century, which, just as the 7.5 billion people today, surely will demand equal or higher economic conditions.

The first consideration aimed at the solution of these global challenges will have to distance itself from the false debate between the pessimism and optimism of the ideas and accept with full sensitivity that we live in complex times, new times, that require specialized, continuous efforts, in constructing the alternatives to the solution of a global disorder that already today faces belligerent conflicts, (Syria, North Korea, Somalia, etc.) global dissent, or even the risk of its own extinction (Anthropocene), which pales those expressions that indicate that this world has already resolved this type of problem on previous occasions.

In the framework of these overflowing challenges, it is healthier to accept their dimension and complexity, in order not to dismiss them (remember Trump's position on climate change). To accept that they are not only real, but as part of their own decomposition process, they currently also respond to decivilizing profiles and social erosion in their cultural and moral aspects, which complicates the path of their solution.

The problems of our time, from this perspective, could be structured in two distinct stages that are already testing the talent and capacity of global society to solve them. The first, which was born with the century and will last until mid-century, will be characterized, as is already the case, by the clash and outcome of the two mega trends that are major concerns today, which are the ascending predominance on the part of China with regard to the United States (the Chinese inevitability) and its direct consequence, the transfer from the Atlantic to the Pacific eras (Asian inevitability), also as a result of a long debate which will continue to be discussed every day, but whose most important consequences will already have been implemented by 2050. The clear geopolitical trends that these two changes face today in favor of China and East Asia, will be exposed to the dynamics of their own efforts, as well as to the radicalization or belligerence that the displaced actors, like the European Union and the United States, assume.

GLOBAL DISORDER

2000-2050	I. Mega-trends	
	<p><i>A) The Chinese Inevitability</i></p> <p>Displacement of the United States from the political leadership of the 21st century</p>	
	<p><i>B) The Asian Inevitability</i></p> <p>From the Atlantic to the Pacific Displacement of the West as a dominant geopolitical Era</p>	
2000-2100	II. New Global Tendencies of the 21 st Century	
	<p>1. End of the industrial Era</p> <p>2. Technological substitution</p> <p>3. World unemployment</p> <p>4. End of the Carbonic Era</p> <p>5. Demographic explosion</p> <p>6. Depletion of Natural Resources</p>	<p>7. Climate change</p> <p>8. Citizen empowerment</p> <p>9. City of the future</p> <p>10. Economic inequality</p> <p>11. Migration</p> <p>12. High financial concentration</p>

SOURCE: Own Work.

The second stage, that comprises from 2000 until the end of the century, must solve urgent issues never solved before, such as the great global unemployment caused by the decline of industrial development and manufacturing,⁴⁴ which along with the technol-

⁴⁴ “The Third Industrial Revolution is the last of the great industrial revolutions and will lay the foundations of the infrastructure of the collaborative era that is currently emerging. Hundreds of thousands of new businesses and hundreds of millions of new jobs will be created during the forty years of the construction of the TIR infrastructure. Its completion will mark the end of a two-hundred-year commercial saga, characterized by industrious thought and operation in business markets (and managed by a massive workforce), and the beginning of a new era marked by collaborative conduct, social networks and a workforce composed of technical personnel and specialized professionals. During the next half-century, the centralized business operation, which is characteristic of the first two industrial revolutions, will be progressively subsumed into the business and conventional practices distributed by the Third Industrial Revolution, while the traditional hierarchical organization of economic and po-

ogy substitution by 2030, for example, already threatens us with the possible loss of 2000 million jobs around the world (Millennium Project, 2017). As an example of the foregoing, the jobs susceptible to this loss would represent figures of 47% in the United States, 39% in Germany, and 35% in the United Kingdom (OECD). Similarly, in the coming decades, we will be witnessing the end of the carbon era, which would end nearly 300 years of industrial development, which started at the beginning of 1750 along with the First Industrial Revolution. This period will be culminating either due to the depletion of cheap oil or for reasons of environmental survival, which should lead us to a new period of cheap and clean renewable energy.⁴⁵ Also, the population

litical power will yield its place to the lateral power organized in a nodal form throughout society” (Rifkin, 2011, p. 18).

⁴⁵ Rifkin predicts that the oil industry, one of the most important of the First and Second Industrial Revolution, the transforming base of countless industrial sectors, will live its last battles in the next four or five decades, to pass, then, to its minimal expression and to disappear as a strategic weapon of domination. The end of the Carbonic Era, that sooner or later will have to be abolished; the technological substitution that Keynes anticipated and Rifkin reaffirmed; a persistent pollution, that is now intolerable, will be, among others, the reasons for the oil industry’s decline, which together with the industrial sector as a whole, are doomed to leave their place to new economic and energy expressions, that will change the source of wealth and the relevance of the nations. Due to culture or necessity, the oil industry has before it the last opportunity to generate development, jobs, and growth during the decades to come. The sector that came to replace the employment and development of the agricultural sector a quarter of a millennium ago, product of its own success, will be reduced to a point where it will be unable to determine empires, as it did in the 19th century (Great Britain) and in the 20th century (the United States), nor will it ever be again the great employer of the online production that originated and gave meaning to the Second Industrial Revolution. The nations that have known how to manage the advantages of this revolution during these 250 years will have a last opportunity to accompany it throughout this third and last stage to generate development and employment (Rifkin, Marsh, Pisano, Shih, etc.). Those countries that did not have this opportunity, or did not know how to seize the moment, or even denied its industrial importance as Mexico did, will have a more difficult path to be beneficiaries of this latest wave of energy conversion based on hydrocarbons. In any event, the next decades will be the last for the

explosion that we will still be living until 2050, as was mentioned before, will reach close to 10 billion people during the coming decades, will lead us to an unprecedented path of permanent challenges, like arriving at the year 2030 with an average of 70% in the middle class, which will be demanding more satisfiers and energy units for a new population of three billion people. Similarly, the demographic challenges will be radicalized by the middle of the century, where more people will be 65 years old than 15 years old (Millenium Project). The Earth needed ten thousand years to reach its first billion inhabitants. The second billion were born just 130 years later. The last billion people only needed 12 years. On the other hand, speaking of the material resources of that population and their expectations, today, if the whole world population could be served with resources similar to those of the people of the developed nations, the global consumption would have to be multiplied by eleven, which would represent a hypothetical number of 72 billion inhabitants. If this simulation of the average consumption of the West is maintained (meat, fish, water, energy, plastic, wood, etc.) in 2050, we would be speaking of a commercial consumption of 105 billion people for the more than 9 billion human beings (Smith, 2011, p. 36). In any scenario, there are insufficient resources on the Earth for the total population to be able to reach the current consumption standards of the United States, Germany, or England.

With regard to natural resources, currently four-fifths of the Earth's surface (excluding Antarctica) is already subject to the direct influence of human activities, and some studies foreshadow scenarios where the conventional oil or cheap oil, would have a supply horizon of 40 years, natural gas of 60 years, iron of 72 years, copper of 35 years, zinc of 24 years, silver of 14 years, lead

industrial era of oil, the last station on a long journey. For those who live it, in addition to multiplying their income and development, it will endow them with a better transformative culture in order to place themselves in a new economic era, that whatever it may be, will entirely change the instruments of past success (Oropeza, 2015, pp. 459 and 460).

of 22 years, nickel of 21, etc. (Smith, 2011, p. 383). In any case, one does not have to be psychic to know that there are already problems in energy resources, water, fishing, forests, herds, and agricultural production. Markedly, the climatic change which was produced mainly by the Industrial Revolution and its poor management, especially on the part of its first *winners*, England and the United States, and now by their potential successors, China and India, appears within these new 21st century vectors, due to the transcendence of the consequences which could lead to the extinction of human beings. Within the global vectors of the century, there is nothing of greater concern than the possible consequences of climate change. From Tokyo to Paris, the advances adopted by the global society for a climate change solution are limited and insufficient and require a real effort in the matter.⁴⁶

As for the cities of the future, ECLAC points out that more than 80% of the world population will live in cities by 2030. In the case of Latin America, it will be 90%, with the consequent problems of vehicular congestion, economies of scale underutilization, housing deficit, inefficiency of resources, pollution,

⁴⁶ The three-degree syndrome that is the result of the irresponsible use of hydrocarbons within the Industrial Revolution, is a conundrum that from a simple concern of idle scientists, as it has been treated during the last fifty years, has now become a scientific truth that, going beyond books, has found the validity to prove itself in the climatic phenomena that every nation is suffering from in a different way, such as hurricanes, tornadoes, rising sea-levels, and the disappearance of layers of aquifers, snow, and Arctic runoff. In this global warming syndrome that begins to be treated as credible, it seems that a simple variation of the current temperature between 1.5° and 3.5° C, may lead to the mass extinction of plant and animal life in less than one hundred years, and that the recovery would take millions of years. In this predicament, carbon dioxide has been declared as the primary culprit and the Industrial Revolution as the medium that has made it possible. The preindustrial carbon dioxide levels had never exceeded 280 parts per million (ppm) in the last 50 thousand years and the current industrial levels have already surpassed 387 parts per million in 2009; should this tendency continue, it could lead to an increase of not three but five degrees in the temperature of the Earth's surface by the end of the century or the beginning of the next one, causing the disappearance of human beings (Smith, 2011; Rifkin, 2011), in (Oropeza, 2015, p. 456).

among others. Thus, urban planning appears urgent. Along with this, the ECLAC adds, the citizen awareness will also increase exponentially. The increase in educational levels, use of Internet, civil rights, the new computational culture, the price decrease in this area (a penetration of 90% of wireless technologies is estimated by 2030) make it possible to expect a greater demand for the attention to political, social, and economic rights in the new generations (ECLAC, 2016, p. 34).

As can be seen in the light of this brief sketch on the challenges of the century and the global disorder, there are good reasons for this disorder, given the unprecedented nature of the challenge. Nevertheless, the global society through the United Nations Organization (UN) and other international bodies such as the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) have already begun the analysis and development of proposals for the solution of these new global vectors. However, as long as its new dimension and the demand for a global response are not recognized, its political, economic and social influence will continue to be part of the discontent.

D. THE GLOBAL DISORDER. THE ASIAN FACTOR

The geopolitical crisis that we live in did not begin today, nor did it arise from the 2007-2009 economic crisis nor at the beginning of the century and the millennium. In this sense, the proximity does not help surmise what is happening in the global arena. As Morris recommends, historical anthropology is of great help in understanding the changes of a century as atypical as this.

1. *The Axial Change of the 70's*

At the end of the *glorious 30 years*, as the first three decades that followed the post-war period were called because of the success of their results, the roots of the present problems began to spread.

After 1950, amid its first economic problems, the United States abandoned the gold standard in 1971, among other things, because of its inflationary and budgetary problems brought about by the Vietnam War. This was one of the causes of the first global economic crises. Similarly, the abundant trade deficit that now worries president Trump so much, had its starting point in 1971, when the decline of the U.S. trade balance, which has not stopped for a single moment through these nearly 50 years, began. In 2016 alone, it lost 734 billion dollars with the world, of which 532 billion dollars corresponded to Asia, (350 billion dollars were lost with China); 165 billion dollars to Europe and approximately 8% to Mexico.

During this period, the decline of the economic and industrial growth rates of the developed world also began, within the framework of the first oil crisis of 1973-1974.

Significantly, the emergence of new lines of economic development began in the theoretical framework, such as those headed by Daniel Bell, Hage, Block, Powers, etc;⁴⁷ who postulated the

⁴⁷ Daniel Bell, in an outstanding work of his time (*The Coming of Post-Industrial Society*, 1973), warns a hypersensitive society in advance about the phenomenon of industrial change. That, the era known as the Industrial Revolution was nearing its end, and a new post-industrial era dominated by the services of the Information Era (trade, finance, health, education, etc.) would become the trigger in a new pairing between science and technology that would become the trigger for development. That, a new era, supported by the industrial change to electronics, miniaturization (nanotechnology), digitization, and software, in its various expressions, already warned of a new global society dominated by intelligence and technological knowledge, which would displace the mechanical, electrical, and electromechanical work of the Industrial Revolution. Regarding his vision and his proposal, although he clearly pointed out since the beginning, in the title, that it was an era yet to come (which Bell himself, in follow-up documents in 1999, placed as from the 21st century onward), quite a few decision makers —such as Václav Havel, Margaret Thatcher, or the former president Clinton himself— as well as an entire academic current on a global level, celebrated not only the notice of change, but the dismantling of their own industrial structures. In this regard, with great timeliness, Marsh comments: “For everything that has been said regarding the world moving to a «post-industrial» era, the factories at the beginning of the 21st century are producing consider-

preeminence of the information services era over industrial activity, which influenced the vision of the public policies of the time in a relevant way. These, in a false debate, opted to privilege the new economic world of intelligence, which was certainly correct, except that the new policy not only passed the industry and manufacturing duties to second place, but in a degree of major carelessness, placed them at a sub-level of internal development and public support.

Along with that, Social Capitalism, a current that had managed to impose itself on a good part of the global society at the end of the wars, which operated, as was mentioned earlier, a larger economic and commercial exchange throughout the world together with the application of a wide range of social policies, faced with the beginning of forgetting the Holocaust and the propulsion of the economic cosmopolitan elites (as Nye calls them), allowed the resurgence of a school of economic thought that was present since the critical years at the end of the forties. The will for a more just world had shifted it to a second plane.

The economic thought of the Society of Mont Pelerin headed by Friedrich Hayek, Mises, Lippman, Erhard, and many others, reappeared in the seventies as the foundation (Dogma) of a new public policy that forgot its post-war economic commitments, moving the State away from its social responsibility. In this regard, Sachs laments,

Fortunately for me; I was educated on the merits of the mixed economy during my years of study (1972-1980), by intellectuals of great standing who guided the American economy after the Second World War. This era of economic thought that extended from 1940 to 1970 was called the Paul Samuelson era, the genius economist from MIT who personified the economic pro-

ably more goods than before. In the year 2010, the manufacturing production was approximately 150% greater than in 1990, 57 times more than it was in 1900, and 200 times higher than the production in 1800" (Marsh, 2012, p. 15) (Oropeza, 2013, p. 217).

fessional during the height of American global leadership. More than any other economist of his time, Samuelson provided the intellectual foundations for the modern mixed economy that operated in the United States and Europe after World War II. The crisis of the 70s —Sachs adds— opened the door to systematic attacks on Samuelson's mixed economy theories, which held both the economic boom and the post-war social commitments, giving way to a new school of thought led by Milton Friedman and Friedrich Hayek, who introduced the market economy to substitute the mixed economy (Sachs, 2012, p. 30).

Ronald Reagan (1981-1989) in the United States and Margaret Thatcher (1979-1990) in England, as is known, were the main political instruments, who, sheltered under a new post-industrial *era* and under a new neo-liberal economic dogma, began to dismantle the mixed economy and the responsibility of the State with the society, raising a live-and-let-live attitude, that radicalized since then and through today the contradictions of an economic model that is now accused, with more than a small degree of cynicism, of being inequitable and insufficient by most western economies.

2. *The Opening of China During the 70's*

That was happening during the 70's of the last century in the Western world, which by that time seemed an omnipresent and universal reality, because of its political and economic weight. However, at the other end of the world, a forgotten China, exhausted by the social problems of its meager economic growth, also at the end of the seventies, made the historic decision for the first time in more than 2000 years of the Chinese Empire, to break its walls and go out in search of economic solutions to its serious internal problems. Mao had died in 1976, leaving behind him millions of deaths from the famines that resulted from the failure of the *Great Leap Forward*. Significantly, his planned-econo-

my project was not successful in solving in a sustained manner the primary needs of the ever-enormous Chinese population. Deng Xiaoping was the Chinese artifice of that historic moment. First, he was pressed for short-term economic solutions relating to food, clothing, and housing, and did not hesitate to turn his gaze towards the Western world of his time and insert himself into it successfully. He imposed a new and unknown neo-liberal economic reality, the emphasis on the *Chinese characteristics*, through which China has managed to impose itself to the Western economic dogma at every turn since the end of the seventies.

The importance of the convergence of the Western structural changes during the 1970s, along with the Chinese opening, lies in that the moment unites them to cancel the best of the post-war social changes, which were formal work and social benefits. The foregoing, in the face of the Western abandonment of its mixed model economy on one hand, and, on the other hand, the needs of a pauperized China, which at the time of its opening and in the face of the high degree of its weakness, offers the world of industry and manufacturing 900 million new workers who, for a plate of rice or 30 cents per hour, were ready to restore the status quo of labor precariousness that prevailed throughout the world until Bretton Woods and that had been disarticulated with the postwar changes.

At that time, the economic world lost good judgement and commitment to social policies, and just as they were strengthened in a widespread manner from 1945 to 1970, since 1978 to date, they have been exposed to a clear deterioration, sometimes gradual and often drastic. This is currently presented as one of the main causes of the global society's discontent.

From this historical juncture, the West betrays the West in its social commitment, contributing to the financing, technology and relocation of its manufacture to China (but also to East Asia) by not considering it relevant for a new post-industrial world. At the same time, it decides on its displacement to Asia in search of maximum profits through the precarious Chinese-Asian work-

force. China, for its part, acts and decides within the framework of its social contingency and the thought of Deng Xiaoping, who since 1980 pledged to provide food, clothing, and housing to his entire population during the last third of the 20th century (which he fulfilled) and to provide during the first half of this century, as it seems he will do, a developing country income to his enormous population of 1400 billion inhabitants.

The global consequences of these decisions on employment and social benefits in the industrial sector are that 75% of the manufacturing workforce in the world is currently monopolized by China with 50%, and by India, with 25%; similarly, by developing nations, mainly Asian, with 84%, and by developed countries, with 16%. In terms of salaries, the result has been that the jobs and labor income of the West and the world in general have been progressively pauperized becoming part of a global matrix that erodes the labor social benefits, to the detriment of the Western standards. As a secondary effect, this global employment logic also contributes to the increase of informal labor throughout the world, which in the case of Latin America has an average of 50% (2015, ECLAC).

It is true that a good part of China currently has similar or higher wages than Mexico, and that about 80% of its formal workforce has social benefits. However, it is also true that a large proportion of its central and western population is still far from this economic reality, in that still confusing universe of the many Chinas within China. However, this factor is already irrelevant, because this systematic practice of Asian precarization has been extended to the majority of the population of East Asia and, in general, to the developing world, which, under the same model of exploitation, does not hesitate in trying out the path of their development through meager wages and null social benefits for their people (Vietnam, Bangladesh, India, etc.); now used not only by the Western multinationals but also by the Asian consortiums themselves.

The problem of this reality of precarious manufacturing wages (that, in the case of a longer duration, counts on a reserve of more than 1 billion inhabitants in Africa or 1.2 billion in India, etc.), is that it plays as a permanent factor of inhibition for the increase of real wages in both the West and Latin America, either in a real way (because that number of jobs can be effectively transferred to Asia under precarious conditions) or induced (which threatens workers with relocating, as blackmail to prevent the increase of their salaries and benefits). This mechanism, which fully broke down the spirit of Bretton Woods, is one of the strongest reasons today (one would have to add the variant of the technological substitution from 2000 onward) for the loss of the salary gains of the Western societies and of the per-capita indices of these countries, such as Greece -22%, Portugal -5%, Spain -7%, Italy -11%, but also France -1% and England -4%, have seen the decrease of their income in recent years (Indexes P/C 2007-2014, ECLAC, 2015). In the case of Mexico, wages have lost 75% of their purchase power during the last 30 years. And in the United States, for example, the average annual household income from 2007 to 2014 lost 4.6%; and 25% in terms of the average annual salary in the same period (Godínez, De Los Ríos, 2015).

The Asian precarization is not solely responsible for the breaking of the Bretton Woods social commitments and its economic and trade consequences in the world, but there is no doubt that it is one of its most important causes.

3. The Consolidation of the Asian Model of Development

China was not the direct author of the Asian Development Model (Market Socialism), nor was it its core strategy, which was based on the creation of Special Economic Zones (SEZ). What the Chinese case did was to demonstrate the pre-existence of a development strategy with Asian characteristics, mostly confucianism, which had already been implemented by other nations

within the area, in the face of the spectacular economic performance and the significance of its enormous population.

From this perspective, Japan turns out to be the author of this hybrid development model that emerged in the 19th century as a response to the hegemonic escalation of the Western nations of the time.

In the framework of the appropriation of the Asian people by the West, which begins with the arrival of Vasco de Gama to India (1498), whereas the latter country is defeated by the English invader, China bends but never surrenders to the cluster of Western powers that invaded it on multiple occasions since the Opium War (1839-1842) throughout the 19th and 20th centuries. Japan, unlike India and China, decides to avoid confrontation and, on the contrary, seeks its assimilation with the Western wave via, first, the internal ordering of the politics under the responsibility of the Meiji Dynasty in 1867, which ends with the division of the power of the feudal lords who had prevailed to date; and second, through an intelligent decision to copy the enemy's main strengths. This strategy of assimilation was mainly encompassed by two main areas, which were considered to be of the greatest relevance by the first modern Asian statesman, the Emperor Meiji Tennō (1867-1912), who immediately upon his ascent to power ordered the study of the Western institutions by means of direct contact with the European powers. In the political arena this produced, as the first result, the Japanese Constitution of 1888. In the economic arena, his awareness led him to understand that the economic difference between the West and Asia of his time was industrial knowledge, which he also adopted as a main line of his period. In 1877, he organized the first major industrial fair in the first park built for the effect in the locality of Ueno, which was only the first of a long list of industry fairs sponsored by the Japanese State. This significant exit policy was accompanied by an appropriation of Western knowledge through all the means at its disposal: the purchase of technology, hiring specialized foreign personnel, copying technology, and of course, though a broad

internal campaign of education that originated, overall, that at the end of the 19th century Japan was already considered an industrial power, and that in the first half of the 20th century, in an unfortunate calculation of its success, Japan decided to invade China twice and suffered its failed participation, as an Asian hegemon, in the Conflagration of 1939.⁴⁸

The only point that the above means to highlight is the important appropriation of Western industrial knowledge by Japan in such a short period of time, rising with it from a pre-modern nation to an industrialized world hegemon. Similarly, what is highlighted is the pairing of the appropriation of the Western industrial knowledge by a different culture and idiosyncrasy, which during the combination of political and economic activity results in a development strategy with its own characteristics.

Much has been speculated about this. First, denying the possibility of the scientific existence of an Asian development model. Then, pointing out that although the subject can be discussed, its authors transit from Alexander Hamilton, passing through List and expanding with Bismarck. Without denying the influence of these and other sources of a model that clearly has focused on the stamp of a development based on the industrial and scientific concern that predominates in the West since the first industrial revolution, what makes it different and gives the particularity of Asian comes not from the Western political institutions which it adopts, but from that millenary vision of the Asian power and its relationship with its society, where for more than 2000 years, the political forms have stood for secularism, at the same time as for its verticality and different degrees of authoritarianism. Where the balance of its power goes back to the millenary Confucian association of ruler-subject, where for the governed, it is an unquestionable duty to respect the State, as for the ruler-State, the permanent care of the subject's well-being is an inalienable re-

⁴⁸ For more information consult: *Japan. A legal and geopolitical vision in the 21st century*, Oropeza García Arturo, Instituto de Investigaciones Jurídicas, 2019.

sponsibility. This matrix of political power is what explains the naturalization certificate (adoption) of the Asian Development Model and its main differences with regard to the Western model, especially that the latter, as has been mentioned, has always been, but even more in recent decades, inserted in an interminable debate between the State and the Market that still does not have an appropriate response neither in the dogmatic nor in the application of Western public policies, and that day by day, increases its role of pending subject as Sachs, Judt, Mazzucato, and others decry. This happens in the face of an Asian Development Model that always has had an answer to this political-intellectual controversy, concentrating all its energy and strategy on obtaining a development where the State has never doubted the importance of its participation.

In this regard, Japan, and of course Taiwan (formerly Formosa), Korea, Singapore, China, and the other countries of East Asia with wide Confucian influence, did not need to learn the protectionist role of the State from Hamilton's fundamental papers (1757-1804); nor they had to read from List (1789-1844) his thesis on the National System of Political Economy, where he also explains the importance of the role of the State for the development of an industrial plan and the economic growth of any country. Nor is it required to research the management of protectionist postures to favor the growth and development of the industrial activity adopted by Bismarck since the seventies of the 19th century, within the framework of the barely emergence of the German State (1871). China did not have the need to do so, not only as a starting point for the good development of a national industrial project, but as a *permanent* and *sustainable* policy for its success, which is its main difference with regard to the West, because since the period before the modern era, the books of Confucianism that governed the operation of the eastern public policy already existed. The Great Learning, Doctrine of the Mean, Analects by Confucius, and Mencius, among others, dominated since the 5th century B.C. and at various times during the Chinese civilization,

as basic texts in the imperial tests, where the public official was taught about responsibility and good government of the State, understanding that to mean everything from the love and example of the State over its governed people, to the indissoluble bond of respect and responsibility between State and governed, where the superior, the State, has an obligation to protect the inferior, and this in turn to be loyal and to be respectful to the superior, the State, as the natural order of things.

Over the centuries, the participation of the Asian State in the good governance and success of this practice has had ethical overtones, of permanent custom, and not of a temporary mechanism of support for the takeoff of any public project. Thus, the prevailing State-Market dilemma in the Western arena is not an issue that is part of the public concern of the modern Asian State, which is transformed into one of the major differences between the Eastern and Western tasks in the global economy. This has been one of the main reasons for the prevalence of the former over the latter. Deng Xiaoping resolved all these questions, which are not very clear to the Western Dogma, when he declared on the subject that, “There is no fundamental contradiction between Socialism—that is, the economic participation of the state—and a market economy”. He added that it was wrong to claim that the market economy only exists in a Capitalist society; summarizing on the Chinese position that, “Currently, there are two models of productive development. To the extent that each of them serves our purposes, we will make use of it. If Socialism is useful to us, the measures will be Socialist, if Capitalism is useful to us, the measures will be Capitalist” (Oropeza, 2008, p. 45). That is, as much state as it suits us and as much market as possible. In this regard, Huntington concludes, “East Asians attribute their spectacular economic development, not to the importation of Western culture, but rather to the adherence to their own culture. We are succeeding, they say, because we are different from the West” (Huntington, 1996, p. 109).

The Seventies, we insist, is an unfinished territory that has not been explored completely where many of the original causes of the global disorder that we acknowledge today are found.

In that decade, most of the structural changes, which broke with the original idea of Bretton Woods of a more integrated world with a high degree of social commitment, were decided. Unbridled Capitalism retakes control of things since the late seventies, and today its results respond to most of global dissatisfaction. The betrayal of the postwar world with a social commitment was perpetrated from the moment that in the framework of the first opening of China (1978), large capitals arrived to pay no social benefits and to cover starvation wages.

Together with this, the otherwise successful incorporation of China into the global economy in the late seventies, through the wide exercise of a heterodox lead development model, with Asian characteristics, have led, among other causes, to the breakdown of formerly generally accepted economic paradigms, such as the geopolitical leadership of the United States, as well as the cycle of a Western Atlantic era.

The paradox of this loss of the West regarding East Asia, is that the Chinese miracle, and now the Asian, was made with the financing, relocation, and technology that came from Western cosmopolitan elites, which in their short-term Market vision, lost their supremacy before the Asian civilizations' vision of State.

E. THE CHINA-UNITED STATES DEBATE

1. *Huntington Rides Again*

The good intellectual consciences and the most reserved opinions of the time, received with a certain hubbub the 1993 publication of an article that later became a book in 1996 (*The Clash of Civilizations*) by Samuel P. Huntington. It was understood as a provocative reading because it talked about the possible clash between the relevant civilizations of Asia and the West, without

discarding the religious element as part of that confrontation. In the central part of his approach, he warned of the economic and geopolitical return of those Asian civilizations, and in particular, the Chinese.

Beyond the speculation of a work of perspective, which risked the vision of new and disturbing scenarios, Huntington's book is rich in content that cautions the West in general, but the United States in particular, about the delicate situation that they held during the nineties regarding the vertiginous rise of the new East Asian and Chinese civilizations.

In this regard, Huntington wrote,

It seems plausible that during the greater part of history, China has taken the largest economy in the world for granted. The diffusion of technology and the economic development of non-Western societies during the second half of the 20th century is currently producing a return to the usual historical pattern. This will be a slow process, but by the middle of the 21st century —Huntington predicted— if not before, the distribution of economic product and the volume of manufacturing production among the major civilizations is likely to resemble that of 1800 —predicting categorically that if nothing was done in this regard— the two hundred years of fleeting Western parentheses in the world economy will be over (Huntington, 1996, p. 103).

If this was not clear enough, he commented that in 1919 Woodrow Wilson from the United States, Lloyd George from England, and Georges Clemenceau from France determined the fate of the countries of the world.

One hundred years later —he said— no group of statesmen could exert similar power —adding that— in the event that any group comes to exercise it, it will not be formed by three Western countries, but by the leaders of the central States of the seven or eight main civilizations of the world —adding that— the successors of Reagan, Thatcher, Mitterrand and Kohl will have Deng Xiaoping, Nakasone, Gandhi, Yeltsin, Khomeini, and Suharto as rivals

—adding to avoid any doubt that— the era of Western domination will have passed into history (Huntington, 1996, p. 107).

A quarter of a century ago, the United States, just like the rest of the West, did not understand this and other signals that clearly warned of the advent of new Asian geopolitical actors led by China, which would threaten its economic dominance and global leadership in the 21st century. Huntington was not the first to talk about the American and Western weakness in the third part of the 20th century. Already, other less eloquent voices had talked about the American weakness and the risk to Western dominance (Mac Ewan, Cypher, Cusminsky, etc). Notwithstanding, Huntington's voice was one of the clearest of his time, although he did not manage to make himself heard in terms of a geopolitical reaction by the leaders in charge of the United States and the European Union. Today, to China's satisfaction and the concern of Western nations, the confrontation is very advanced in economic and geopolitical terms, and it is the cause of the major seismic movements of the global disorder of our days.

2. *China's Inevitability*

The western world reacts late to the issue of China. It arrives late and understands little about its appearance on the global stage. Having the idea of an eternal Western cycle, Europe and the United States forgot the history of the millennial Asian predominance (China and India), and they confused the first Chinese opening of 1978 with the opportunity to multiply profits through the casualization of the labor force in Asia, believing that East Asia and China could fulfill a simple assembly-line role, which they could suspend or cancel when deemed appropriate.

In the context of this *confusion*, the West forgets its post-war commitments, and in the face of the Chinese decision to join the trade and the global economy through the *strength* that remained after the Maoist period, which was its huge supply of cheap la-

bor, the West decides to fall into the global trap of taking it and in doing so, it breaks with the logic of global development that prevailed from the 50's to 70's of the last century and its philosophy of social commitment. At the end of the day, this abdication affected both the precarious situation of the Asian workers (who did not care about their micro-salaries or the absence of social benefits or the destruction of the environment) and, in the end, their own workers and the middle classes.

Now, when on many occasions, it is mentioned that globalization is the culprit of global disenchantment, of the decline of benefits and jobs in the West, it is worth remembering that globalization is not synonymous with precariousness and that the relocation caused by this motive, mainly in East Asia, but not only in East Asia, is one of the main causes of what we now understand as the Asian Inevitability; that is, the Western weakening, of Europe and the United States, and the systematic strengthening of China and East Asia.

Throughout the 20th century, since the fall of its last empire in 1911, China begins the difficult path of its reconstruction after a decadent period that is characterized by the dominance of the Western nations.

The recovery after the imperial glories was not easy. An endless process of military and social rearrangement kept it busy until 1949, when the revolution of Chairman Mao triumphed. However, neither was it later, because the communist path taken by Mao during his period failed to solve the primary needs of the Chinese people. At that time, neither in China nor abroad was it thought, as happened, that in just four decades after those famines and economic failures, China could be competing today with the West in general, and the United States in particular, for the hegemony of the first part of the 21st century.

Just as there is no historical antecedent that beats the speed and conditions of the dissolution of the former Soviet Union in 1991, there is also no example in economic history that rivals

with China regarding the time of its economic and geopolitical recovery.

The *miraculous* recovery of China is preceded by more than two thousand years of civilizing success. In particular, those that correspond to its last 1800 years of world hegemony. Furthermore, one must add the sensitivity of a generation of statesmen (Deng Xiaoping, Jiang Zemin, Hu Jintao, Xi Jinping, etc.) who understood the peculiarities of a new time to whose creation, China, by the way, did not contribute. The incorporation of China into the global economy in the 1970's was a huge challenge with a high degree of complexity, where any mistake would have had an impact on the scope of the results that we are now celebrating. As is known, this was not the case. On the contrary, the correct diagnosis of a time of change and the progressive role that it best suited China to choose, have been the constants of its actions during recent decades. At the same time, the lack of understanding of China and the absence of a fortunate strategy to deal with it in economic and geopolitical terms has been the Western constant.

A measured, progressive, selective opening, where despite its multiple economic constraints, China decided on the West. These were the strategic lines to orient the first external flows according to the Chinese interests. A selection of preferred economic zones, of chosen sectors, with their own times and movements, were imposed at all times to Western investors. In particular, it *demand*ed from the start to the majority of the Western economic actors the transfer of technology and association with Chinese entrepreneurs in exchange for accessing the appetizing Chinese market, and with that it changed its destiny from being the great assembly plant to the great factory of the world. The foregoing was strengthened by the extensive and informal (piracy) technology takeover on the part of China over all industrial sectors of its interest.

In this way, the assembly plant, in a historical leap, transformed itself into national manufacturing where China actively

participates with 50% of the content of everything it produces, in its capacity as the largest exporter of the world; and where 50% of the manufacturing companies belong to the State. If this was not enough, in 2013 China put in place a program to increase its national content (Made in China 2025) through which it expects to reach 70% in all its manufacturing by 2025. Therefore, when one talks about the Chinese miracle, we insist, one would have to consider the West as one of its main authors.

The war for manufacturing in this economic cycle is over and was won by China. This is evident since 2010, at that time China retook the leadership of global manufacturing, which it lost in 1880 when it was overcome by the United States. Today the Asian country holds more than 25% of world production, while the United States, in frank decline, participates with less than 15% in this area.

In recent decades, it would seem that the constant regarding China has been to bet on two possible scenarios; which are more of a wish, than the result of a realistic analysis on the nature and implications of the Chinese miracle. The first, very useful at the end of the 20th century (Fukuyama, Gordon, Guiddens, etc.), was that China, by the very inconsistency of its economic strategy, would collapse irremediably before the new millennium. The other bet, which varies in time and circumstance, is that China would not be able to manufacture vehicles, trucks, high-speed trains, airplanes, boats, etc., for lack of technology, and because the innovative Asian nature was inferior to the Western one. As it has been recording success after success, achievement after achievement, China is today the main producer of the majority of these products, as well as many other lines of manufacture of low, medium, and high technology.

In the face of the Chinese economic success and the escalation of the debate over its economic inevitability over the United States, the action has moved to the last step that China needs to conquer, which is that of intelligence services. Regarding this, just like 30, 20, or 10 years ago, part of the Western opinion

argues that China does not have the capacity to overcome the Western progress in this area, and in particular, the leadership of the United States. And, just as in previous decades, they have used denial or lack of credibility as the best strategy against the Chinese approach. For its part, China, through a systematized project, detailed in times, objectives, and movements, as it has done since the “Four Modernizations” of Deng Xiaoping, already has plans to reduce its differences in high-technology services by 2025, as well as to strengthen its position by 2035, in order to become a world leader by 2045, and the greatest technological power by 2050. Under this long-term approach, China expects that science and technology contribute to 60% of its GDP, and that 2.5% of it is intended for research and development, which would lead it to be the nation with the highest rate of participation in this area.

To achieve these goals, China is already planning to build 45 Innovation Centers by 2025, as well as reaching 2020 with an average of 100 robots per 100,000 workers. Similarly, it expects to reach the year 2025 with an automation of 84% using numerical control and with a digitization in design tools of 64%. All of this, while seeking the development of national innovation capacities and promoting the formation of talents (Made in China, 2025).

Regarding the upgrade of the national content, it will be achieved by means of three strategies: through the replacement of technology, the Chinese domination of emerging industries, and the “pressure or motivation” on the leading Western technological actors to *share* their technology. This last strategy, advertised by China without apology, seeks to repeat the same formula of opening from the late seventies, that is, to offer the *seduction* of its millions of consumers in exchange for technology.

In this sense, China remains clear (a clarity that the West refuses or does not consider convenient to understand) by not hiding the terms of its strategy. Through its Made in China 2025 plan, the Asian country warns of the pressure that it will apply to the relevant Western technology players through its National

Competition Commission (NDRC), so that they agree to *collaborate* on its project of appropriation and development of high technology. This plan is systematized in various actions, among which stands out the modality of technology transfer; the pressure to negotiate low prices for the purchase of technology; the demand for qualified foreign human resources, and the manufacture of high technology in China with Chinese partners, among others.⁴⁹

Within this last great debate regarding the fact that China will not be able to access the high technology levels held mainly by the Western countries, as the last stronghold of their economic hegemony (without counting the military aspect), it is worth highlighting that this strategy, far from being a future project, is already part of a current public policy that has been generating concrete results in the ambitious Chinese path toward knowledge services.

As an example of this strategy, it is worth mentioning cases such as Qualcomm, which is a North American company and a world leader in the manufacture of chips and semiconductors. First, it was accused by China of dumping and fined one trillion dollars through the N.D.R.C. Then, China negotiated with it and *motivated* it to lower its prices and to manufacture in the southeastern region of the country, in marginal economic areas. Similarly, regarding the same company, Qualcomm, China has *motivated* it to transfer technology and manufacture jointly with local companies such as Huawei, Tencent, etc. China also *motivated* the company Hewlett Packard (H.P.) to train Chinese companies and transfer technology; as with I.B.M to manufacture mainframe equipment in the country; as with INTEL, to manufacture high-end mobile chips; as with Google, to perform search

⁴⁹ In the following link, the text of the Made in China 2025 Plan can be seen, available only in Chinese: Made in China 2025, available in: <https://wenku.baidu.com/view/5a9dc25384254b35effd3410.html>.

Similarly in: <http://www.icex.es/icex/es/navegacion-principal/todos-nuestros-servicios/informacion-de-mercados/paises/navegacion-principal/el-mercado/estudios-informes/DOC2016671546.html?idPais=CN>.

censorship; as with Apple to remove unauthorized Apps, as well as the installation of four research and development centers in various parts of the country, etc. All of this in the face of, “intelligent”, use (*dixit* China) and not illegal force from the power of the Chinese market.

According to the same 2025 plan, the strategy will seek to strengthen 10 strategic technological sectors, namely: electrical equipment, agricultural machinery, new materials, new energy vehicles, numerical and robotic control tools, information technology, aerospace equipment, railway equipment, maritime research and high-technology boats and medical equipment.⁵⁰

Despite the importance of these projects and their technological sectors, there is really nothing new in this strategy. China has done it since 1979, when it approved the Equity Joint Ventures Law to negotiate with the first economic actors of the moment. In exchange for their investment in China, it *motivated* them to transfer technology and in many other cases to the acceptance of 51% of Asian shareholding, as is the case of some Western assemblers. This practice was born during the first Chinese opening, when the West was a giant. At that time, China had no financial resources or technology, and on the contrary, as Jiang Zemin stated at the time, his greatest concern was to provide food three times a day to the nearly 900 million people who at that time comprised its population. Furthermore, there is nothing new regarding the Western approach; since then and until now, its position has been to accept this type of negotiation terms. The same happened with regard to automobile factories and auto parts during the eighties, as is now happening with high-technology products or services.

⁵⁰ The Asian market currently has technology-stock fever. Mirabaud Asia Ltd. points out “Anything that is Asian and technological seems to be a pretty powerful formula”. The shares of technology companies traded in the Asia Stock Exchange (OPI) have increased by an average of 141% during 2017, against 25% for initial public offerings in the USA, and 13% in Europe (Reforma, November, 2017).

In light of this, and the repeated debate on whether this time the intelligence and Chinese backwardness will not be able to ascend to the exclusive world of High-Quality Products Service, as was said at the time about the automotive industry, aeronautics, or others, the question would be, “Why can’t it be achieved?” if the essential parts of its strategy remain the same. And in this case, as in the last four decades, while China addresses development as a State strategy, a long-term geopolitical positioning, for Western companies, as in 1979, their contact with China is no more than a new market action, of business, through which they seek to satisfy the appetite of their shareholders. They do not care that in the end, when each one of these sectors has appropriated the technology and has reached the 70% of national content, they will suffer the decline of their level of sales in the Chinese market. At the end of this *encounter of civilizations*, what remains is the strength of a State project that transits through a market socialism seeking political and economic leadership, facing a Western CEO who only wants to increase the percentage on his sales to achieve a juicier annual bonus. As for the new commercial war waged by President Trump since 2018, as long as it is not articulated from an alternative of global institutional-ity, in coordination with the European Union, beyond the strong threats or sanctions, they will be more lively than structural limiting the strength of your results.

In 1980 the difference between China-US economic GDP was multiplied by 14. It was a pre-Chinese world and none of the developed nations took the Asian country seriously nor with the proper strategy. During the nineties, the same thing happened, and although China was already growing at an annual average of 10%, the West, in the face of the fall of the Berlin Wall and the dissolution of the Soviet Union (1991), occupied by the story’s end, still naively conditioning China’s access to the World Trade Organization. In 2001, at the signing of the Protocol of Accession to the WTO, and after 20 years of

uninterrupted 10% average Asian increases, the West started to notice that Asia existed and that China was rising alarmingly.

Despite this, the reaction is the same, lethargic and insufficient. It is immersed in the complicity of precarization, which has become more focused and sophisticated. As an example of the above, the cheap labor is no longer in the Pacific, but in the middle or western China. Or the state supports provided by the Chinese government, like the case of the special economic zones of the eighties, now through the Free-Trade zones created in 2013; or, by means of the special support for the technology companies such as Qualcomm, to which it has provided tax and infrastructure support at no cost; subsidies and credits for new technology plants, just as it did for the motorcycle and vehicle factories in the early 1980s.

Just 40 years have passed from 1978 to 2019, but in historical and geopolitical terms, China, the civilization of yesterday, rises with the most credible geopolitical project of the 21st century, facing a European West that continues to seek the lost path, in a framework of political occurrences and low economic growth. The United States, in its most unfortunate political version, not only lives the loss of direction, but suffers a process of marked regression in light of the leadership of a president who has amply demonstrated his global ignorance.

All this operates directly in favor of the concept of an *inevitable*⁵¹ Chinese hegemony and a gradual Western weakening

⁵¹ Certainly, the Chinese retirees show up as its inflated debt, its long-lived population by 2050, its inequality, the terms of its westernization and its ecological challenges, among others. However, the successful inertia of its future, both political and economic, are two engines that will hardly suffer a setback in the short-term. The 19th Congress of the Communist Party of China (CPC) held in October 2017, was a sign of consolidation of what was achieved and of strategic power for what remains to be achieved. Paradoxically, from the same Congress may emerge the first spark of instability of China against China. President Xi Jinping, in an overflow of power, throughout the Congress open the door of an infinite re-election that breaks with the political orthodoxy imposed by the creator of the Chinese miracle, Deng Xiaoping.

in which, in a best-case scenario, as Zhang Jun, Director of the Department of International Economic Affairs at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of China, said China did not take a step forward, but the US, and we could add Europe as well, have taken a step back.

The relationship between the United States and China, given its geopolitical importance, (in the case of China always, and of the United States since the 19th century) has been an intuitive leap in the distance. In the case of the North American nation, it was transformed into concrete actions in the Asia-Pacific region (Japan 1854, Philippines 1899) until the deployment of troops in Chinese territory during the Boxer Rebellion (1899) and during the Second World War. The birth of the American hegemony within the framework of the Asian decline shaped a clear favorable outcome for the former. To date, opinions are divided. Even important authors within the field disagree on the reasons for the confrontation and its outcome. Huntington, as already reported, elaborates a comprehensive analysis that substantiates the decline of the United States with respect to China over the first half of the century. After that, Sachs points out that the new headman is China. Rifkin abounds on the American weakness with a serious analysis of its economic crisis. Hobsbawn, who for decades has been explaining in detail why Americans are no longer interested in world leadership and prefer their national tranquility, adds in a special way. Krugman says that the United States is on the verge of facing a debacle with the Great Wall and, Zakaria, in light of the strength of the numbers that show the advanced disenchantment of the American people with their institutions (1964-75%, 1979-50%, 2008-30%, 2010-19%), concludes that this time the pessimists could be right. Of course, Nye leads the opposite opinions, with that ever-deliberation of what is American, but with a not always concealed tolerance regarding China's global intentions. Mazarr, separately, with a denial stance rather than analysis, states that the United States "cannot" renounce its role as the main sponsor of the international order.

Fukuyama, based on the experience and the failure of his analysis previous to the year 2000, where he announced the breakdown of China, indicates that it is not yet too late for the recovery of the American nation. Ghemawat and Hout, based on extensive field studies on the last battle of services between the United States and China, argue that unless Washington makes serious mistakes, there is no reason to think that the American country will lose its technological advantage.

To date, and faced with the necessity of a geopolitical reference to move toward the year 2050, an accumulated weakness of the American country prevails, before an Asian force that does not rest in its race towards geopolitical leadership.

The above, far from being an issue of morbid curiosity, is very important to the global world—to know the individual or collective lines of association that should be providing a reference to geopolitics—, but also to trade and to the economic development of the time. In this regard, the American position does not help. It continues to play with the duality of speaking as the world leader and acting as a decadent developed nation. At the same time, China does not adhere to any greater insight, while it shows its overflowing interest in becoming not only the main economy, but also the new world, at the same time as it shuns any geopolitical commitment to the new world order. This double absence of the relevant actors upon the always desirable order and global peace is one of the fundamental reasons behind the *lack of solution* regarding the weakening of the Bretton Woods institutions, and for the re-launching of a more reasonable and inclusive project for the population that inhabits the planet today.

Clearly, the matrix of global disorder lies in the breakup of its equilibrium in the face of the decline of the United States and the sudden rise of China. This movement of hegemonic plaques, in such a short historical period, is what has caused the gap in the established order and the consequent uncertainty about its pos-

sible rearrangement, which has not yet been defined since their trends have not been exhausted.

Its major problem, perhaps, is that the commonly accepted change of rules that accompanies the breaking of the equilibrium has unprecedented conditions and does not augur an easy landing. The clash of hegemonies, unlike previous events, is not between two Western powers, but appear two cosmogonies in the arena, two economic models, and two different political models, which battle beyond GDPs or the exchange of goods. Never in the history of mankind, because of its present dimensions, has the world faced this type of confrontation between the powers of the time.

What exacerbates this confrontation is that the 21st century also does not resemble its immediate predecessors. New technological forces, the end of industrial cycles, carbonics, unsuspected populations, and threats of extinction, are particular attributes of the closing of a high scale cycle that demands the civilizational maturity of the global society, and of its possible hegemonies.

3. *The Asian Inevitability (East Asia)*

In his important work, *Why the West Rules—For Now* Ian Morris states, “In the short term, the guidelines established over the past suggest that the transfer of power and wealth from the West to the East is inexorable”. “The transformation of the old Eastern nucleus into a periphery of the West in the 20th century allowed the East to discover the advantages of its backwardness, and the latter of these —the incorporation of the vast and poor Chinese labor force into the global capitalist economy— is still developing”. And he closes the comment saying that, “The transfer of power and wealth from the West to the East in the 21st century is probably as inevitable as the movement in the opposite direction, from East to West, in the 19th century” (Morris, 2014, p. 700). Iglesias, on the other hand, while talking about the Latin American perspectives within these new global tendencies states that, “Nobody, on the other hand, denies the vision that the 21st cen-

ture is the century of the Pacific and looking there is fundamental” (Iglesias, Lagos, 2015, p. 67). Ferguson notes, “By persisting in the current growth rates, China’s economy could surpass that of the US in 2014 in terms of national purchasing power, and in 2020 in terms of actual dollars” —adding that— “In fact, in some respects the Asian century has already arrived” (Ferguson, 2012, p. 404).

Morris, Iglesias, Ferguson, Huntington, and Sachs, are already part of a large group of internationalists who, in one way or another, envision or accept the “Asian inevitability” in the 21st century. In the name of Asian thought, Mahbubani strongly suggests, “Few in the West have grasped all the implications of the two most salient traits of our historical period. First, we have reached the end of the era of the Western domination of the world history”. “Secondly, we will see the large-scale revival of Asian societies” (Mahbubani, 2013, p. 29).

The debate will remain open before the rush of some to flaunt hasty titles, and the rush of others to be friends with the denial of change—that of those who seek the supremacy of the dividends and of those who, in the interest of not losing them, will oppose until the end. Despite the foregoing, the accumulation of economic and political facts in favor of the Asian advancement and the Western weakening already support the theses regarding the Asian inevitability as the global force that is increasingly defining the economic and political future of the time.

The high Asian growth rates from the 50’s to date, first by Taiwan, Korea, and then Japan; in the 60’s, Singapore; China in the 70’s; and today, in general, by most of the East Asian economies that have been generating annual increases of between 5% and 6% on average, contrasts with the low increments of between 1% and .5% obtained since 2000 by most Western countries. In terms of per-capita income, while China accumulates figures above 175% (2007-2014), in the same period, as already indicated, European nations have seen their participation diminish over the last 15 years. The contribution to the world economic

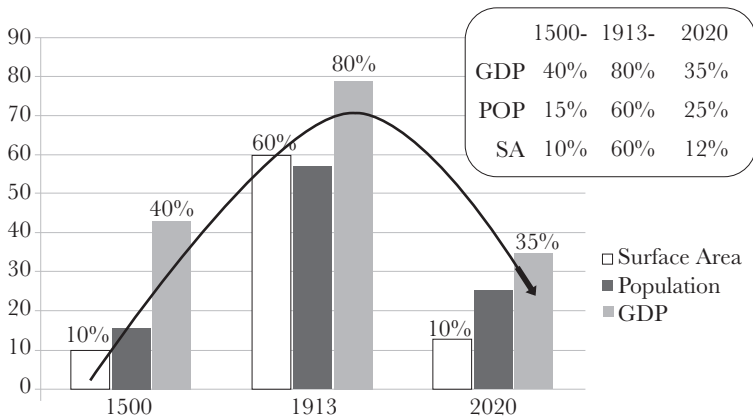
growth of the developed nations, from an average of 50% during 1991-1995, has fallen sharply to 28% (2011-2015), while China and India during the same periods scaled from 16% to 40%, exceeding the Western economic effort in this area (ECLAC, 2015). Significantly, the most representative economies of the West have not been able to recover through 2015 the investment coefficients that they had before the last economic eruption of 2007-2009, showing real decreases of up to -30% by Italy, the United Kingdom with -8%, France with -5%, Germany with -3%, and The United States with -1% (ECLAC, 2017). Nor are the data good in terms of productivity.

In the best-behaved economy of the OECD, the United States, the productivity per hour worked grew by only 1.3% per year between 2005 and 2015, while it grew at 3% per year between 1995 and 2005. During the twelve months between the second quarter of 2015 and 2016, that productivity has fallen 0.4%. Labor productivity, at the end of the second quarter of 2016, totaled three consecutive quarters of decline, the longest cycle of decline since the 1970's (Fleming, 2016). In turn, total factor productivity (TFP) grew by only 0.2% in 2015, while the same variable showed an annual expansion of 1.1% in the two decades before the crisis (ECLAC, 2017).

The list of liabilities could be more exhaustive, but in geopolitical terms, Asian supremacy over the West could be summed up in Europe's strong return (the United States since the 18th century) to the levels of population, territory, and GDP that it had 500 years ago, meeting Huntington's prognosis of the "short parenthesis" of the Western triumph in the modern era.⁵²

⁵² Regarding its territory, in 1500 China had 10% of the world's surface; in 2020 the West will have approximately 12%. With reference to the population during the same cycle, from 15% it would reach 25% of the world population and regarding economic power, from a rise of 40% in 1500 that reached 80% at its best moment (1913), it will reach 35% in 2020 (Ferguson, Sachs, IMF).

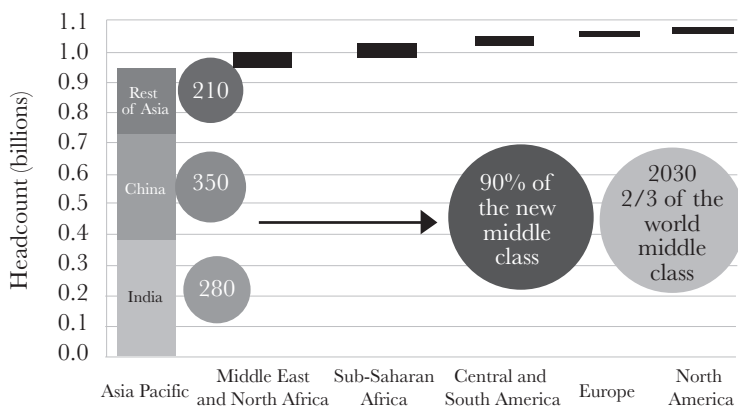
THE ASIAN INEVITABILITY



SOURCE: Ferguson, Sachs, IMF.

All this Western deterioration from the seventies to the present, in favor of the East Asia region in general and China in particular, has translated into the economic rise of these countries and the social improvement of their populations. From a study by Homi Kharas (2017) on the middle classes, the transfer of wealth from the Atlantic to the Pacific can be clearly deduced. The study tells us that from 2015 to 2022, 90% of the new middle class in the world will be generated in the Asia-Pacific region, which will be distributed with 350 million people benefited in China, 280 million in India, and 210 million in the rest of East Asia; and by 2030, two-thirds of the world middle class will correspond to the Asia-Pacific region. In exchange, from 2015 to 2030 the percentages of middle class participation in the United States will go from 11% to 7%, and Europe will also decrease from 24% to 14%.

REGIONAL CONTRIBUTION TO THE MIDDLE CLASS IN THE WORLD (MILLION 2015-2022)



SOURCE: Homi Kharas, 2017.

While the data of the last few decades speak of the success of the Asian economic model with regard to the West, its strategies for geopolitical positioning ratify this trend.

As an example of the above, the United States and Europe, as already stated, have not been able to build an agenda with China or the Asian region. They remain absorbed in the complicit association for the precarization of the human resources of the region. They have not been able to discern a proposal that changes the matrix of things, as one that is the main sources of the distributive inequality and general disenchantment of the time and is supporting through the enrichment of its cosmopolitan elites the drainage of resources to Asia through its bulky trade deficits. This Western paralysis, which directly results in the failure of its economic development and future projects, has led the European Union towards a threat of dismantling, which puts at risk that which has been achieved to date. In the United States the scenario is not better. In regard to the economic, the fall of the standard

of living of its population during recent decades⁵³ has generated an irritation that resulted, in the political, with the election of a controversial president, who lacks the appropriate attributes to build agreements for a new development project not only for the United States, but for its region and the world at large.

In terms of integration, the West is going backwards. In the case of the European Union, the France-Germany pair has shown its incompetence to re-launch the region's project, which, in the face of its economic erosion, is prey for a political disagreement that hinders its route to the future. The departure of England from the Union, the fifth world power, has been an upheaval to the integration project that is far from being solved, and that, on the contrary, has been a source of motivation to open new secession concerns as are the cases in Belgium, Scotland, Catalonia, Italy, etc. Its opposition to finalizing the Transatlantic Treaty of Trade and Investment (TTIP) with the United States, is far from being a posture that promotes the best development alternatives towards the future, but rather, is like the Brexit and the Catalanian problem, a return to the past in an attempt to escape a reality that it does not like, but cannot manage to resolve. In the case of the United States the attitude is not better. Their middle classes, prisoners of their own dissatisfaction that results from the loss of purchasing power and economic level, flee to

⁵³ It should not come as a surprise that the sharp rise of inequalities has destroyed the popular confidence in the competition and probity of the economic, business, and political elites (Wolf, 2016). As has already been mentioned, these are trends that have been coming for a few decades and have been exacerbated by the financial crisis. For example, the average income of the lower 90% of American households remains stagnant since the early 1980's. In real terms, the income of the average household in 2013 was 8% lower than that of 2007 and almost 9% lower than the maximum reached in 1999. The average income among full-time workers is actually lower in real terms (inflation-adjusted) than that of 42 years ago, and in the lowest part of that income distribution, real wages resemble those that were held 60 years ago (Stiglitz, 2016). So, in the last 35 years, while real wages declined by approximately 6% for the lower 10% of the distribution pyramid, and grew by just 5/6% for the average worker, they jumped by more than 150% for the highest 1% (Tyson, 2015), (ECLAC, 2017, p. 17).

populist regions that offer them false solutions, engaging superficial political actors who do not know how to identify successful solutions for a new profitable development. The cancellation of the Trans-Pacific Partnership Agreement (TPP) by President Trump in January 2017 was a clear sign of an American political generation that does not understand the globalization flows of the 21st century. Similarly, his opposition to the TTIP, just like the Europeans, and his systematic attack on the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), which practically serves its best part to the interests of the United States, is another example of the lack of clarity in the analysis about the nature of the global problems that he faces and his inability to rethink them towards a 2050 goal. Significantly, both the US and Europe continue to evade the central cause of their economic decline and the loss of their leadership, which is China, along with East Asia. The United States, as an example of the foregoing, from 2000 to 2015 lost about 4 trillion dollars with China. The European Union for its part, from 2012 to 2016 has registered a trade deficit with the Asian country of about 700 billion dollars (Comtrade, 2017).

Stephen Bannon, as part of his departure from the presidential cabinet (August 2017), gave an unorthodox explanation on this lack of action by the United States with regard to China. First, he recognized that the American nation is at *economic war* with China, predicting even that it was at risk of losing it in five or ten years, if it did not act. He also spoke of the fear that the White House officials have about China (*they are wetting themselves*), considering it as the reason why the United States has not been more effective (Reforma, August, 2017).

China for its part, with a disguised smile and having discovered that the West is the West's worst enemy, with a sensibility that its leaders have not lost since its first geopolitical and economic opening in the late seventies, makes a new historic decision in 2013 and announces a *second grand opening*.

The first Chinese opening, as we know, was its inclusion into the global process of the era, oriented toward the Pacific,

which offered them the greatest chance of success (1978). This time, an already empowered China (second-largest economy in the world, first in exports and manufacturing) no longer joins a global process led by the West, but it is taking the banner of globalization. It invites 70 countries representing 70% of the world population (10 ASEAN countries, 7 from South Asia, 9 from Central Asia, 2 from Northeast Asia, 21 from Central Asia and Eastern Europe, 2 from Africa, Australia, and 15 from Asia Minor), 55% of the global GDP and 70% of the global oil and gas resources, to a new partnership project that from the start breaks with the paradigm of trade as the central theme of the association, scaling the proposal to a vision that privileges, along with the commercial component, science, technology, infrastructure, finance, education, ecology, and a topic of social sensitivity called “people to people”, which addresses the social issues of their members.

While the United States offends the world in general, and its neighbors, in particular, breaking with its main regional and geopolitical partners by cancelling its global positioning strategies (TPP and NAFTA), China, with greater sensitivity for identifying the time in which it lives, takes the leadership of globalization, and in the framework of a second opening toward the exterior, launches an offer to most of the world to work together in search of an inclusive development with characteristics more appropriate to the 21st century. The result of this proposal, which is of course a strategic line of power to consolidate the Chinese and Asian leadership of the century, still needs to show its legitimacy in the years to come. China, through 55 billion dollars, is already advancing with concrete development projects in Kenya (electric railway), Pakistan (power plants, ports), Greece (Piraeus Port, Athens-Budapest-Belgrade high-speed railway to cover the silk railway route) etc., within the framework of the One Belt One Road Initiative (one integration-one path) also known as the New Silk Road. Together with the above, China founded the financial arm of this program in 2015. The Asian Infrastructure Invest-

ment Bank, where India appears as the second partner, began its operations successfully with a capital of 100 billion dollars. In a relevant manner, despite the opposition of the United States that refused to participate in it, the incorporation of Western countries like Canada, France, England, Germany, etc. in frank support to the viability of the project and the leadership of China stands out.

Together with the One Belt One Road initiative China offers a broad global partnership, in a geopolitical impulse without embarrassment, where the BRICS scheme (2009) integrated by Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa continues to play a strategic position in its international policy. Significantly, the 16+1 Initiative (2012), composed of 16 nations of East Asia plus China, is also running successfully. It is one of the first antecedents of the One Belt One Road scheme. To this, we will have to add the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (1996) which was expanded to eight members (China, India, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan, Russia, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan). These, overall, were the geopolitical precursors of the second Chinese opening. Notwithstanding the foregoing, it continues with an intense activity in other relevant schemes such as its formal integration with the 10 Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN+1), (ASEAN+3), (ASEAN+6 or RCEP), as well as with the 21 APEC countries, or the multiple Free Trade Agreements that it continues to sign with different countries around the world such as Chile, Peru, Costa Rica, New Zealand, Singapore, Pakistan, among others.

As can be derived from this brief analysis, the Western geopolitical inertias, especially those corresponding to the United States, suffer from an absence or a misguided interpretation of the future. The Asian inertias and in particular, those that correspond to China, on the contrary, are building a solid framework for long-term positioning.

The result of this inevitable debate over the space of the new era leadership, whatever its definition in decades to come, far from being the beginning of a new *reign*, will represent the start-

ing point of a new global society that if it aspires to survival, will have to work together to solve the new global vectors that, as already stated, threaten its future.

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