

## INTRODUCTION

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### 1. THE HISTORY OF A MULTICULTURAL ACADEMIC ENDEAVOUR

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

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

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

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

## 2. THE SEARCH FOR SECURITY VS. GROWING UNCERTAINTY

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

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

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

## **2.1. Methodology and Techniques**

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

Arabian Sea without touching Indian soil<sup>1</sup>) or Narendra Modi's, *Sagarmala* Project (which aims to unite the four cardinal points of India<sup>2</sup>) and the study and compilation of secondary sources (reports, analysis statistics, government declarations, research articles etc.), devoted themselves to the task of describing historical movements, economic and social impacts, the important actors involved, their foreign policy interests and strategies, in order to later critically show the way in which the new kinds of connectivity and the failure or success of infrastructure megaprojects affect vectors such as South-South Cooperation, finance and debt mechanisms, internal growth, national security, the deepening of connectivity gaps or flow of information etc. Finally, the scholars gave recommendations or useful tips to the establishment in Latin America.

### 3. THEORETICAL MARKERS

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## CONCLUSION

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

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

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