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El factor chino en la nueva era del G20

Jorge Argüello Presidente de la Fundación Embajada Abierta

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(Citado por Dang Dai, 11 de agosto de 2017)

América Latina debe diseñar una estrategia para relacionarse con el Gigante Asiático y la cumbre de 2018 en Argentina será una buena oportunidad para avanzar en esa dirección

El aislamiento de Estados Unidos fue la nota saliente de la última cumbre del Grupo de los 20 (G20) en Hamburgo, con fuertes implicancias para América Latina tratándose de la potencia hegemónica del continente, pero la región debería atender también a otros cambios en la relación Centro-Periferia en la que sigue encuadrada, si desea hacer valer sus intereses en esa nueva instancia global de negociaciones creada en 2008.

Como parte de una nueva era del G20, en Hamburgo fueron relevantes la pérdida de peso de la histórica alianza anglosajona Washington-Londres, fruto de la Administración Trump y del Brexit; una revitalización de la influencia de la Unión Europea (UE), apoyada en el eje franco-alemán; y todas las potencias emergentes y medias, más Rusia, sosteniendo un consenso básico sobre asuntos financieros, comerciales o medioambientales.

Sin embargo, el nuevo actor principal es China, una nación gigante inmersa desde hace cuatro décadas en un cambio económico de magnitudes y velocidades sin precedentes en la Historia moderna (su PIB se duplicó en la última década), y destinada a liderar una II Revolución Industrial de alcance global, aunque continúe bajo un régimen político cerrado.

China, integrado a un Centro que ahora deben compartir con ella Estados Unidos, Europa y Japón, está saliendo de un modelo económico de acumulación y exportaciones de escaso valor agregado para entrar a otro apoyado en una sociedad de consumo, con empresas públicas y privadas absorbiendo inversiones en innovación y tecnología a pasos agigantados para escalar posiciones en una cadena productiva global muy fragmentada.

Mientras se lanzaba a esa carrera para superar a Estados Unidos como la mayor economía del mundo, China actuó como un aliado estratégico clave de las naciones periféricas con el Grupo de los 77 (G77), en la ONU, y más recientemente conformando el BRICS (con Brasil, Rusia, India y Sudáfrica), que dio origen al Nuevo Banco de Desarrollo (2015), alternativa real a las antiguas instituciones multilaterales de crédito. En América Latina, el avance chino recortó la influencia de Estados Unidos y la UE. Es ahora principal o segundo socio comercial de la mayoría de los

países sudamericanos, proyecta un intercambio de 500 mil millones de dólares con la región en la próxima década e inversiones recíprocas de 250 mil millones en energía y grandes infraestructuras regionales, desde represas a accesos fluviales y corredores bioceánicos. Esa ambiciosa salida al mundo, después de siglos de retracción, tiene su última expresión global en la iniciativa Belt and Road (Cinturón y Ruta de la Seda), un circuito que aspira a reconstruir la ancestral conexión comercial terrestre de China con Occidente y completarla con una sección oceánica en sentido inverso involucrando a tres de los cinco continentes y al 70% de la población mundial.

El nuevo protagonismo chino tiene varias claves, destacadas por el economista Aldo Ferrer en sus últimos escritos: expresa una integración política-económica nacional sin precedentes en el capitalismo; ejerce un poder negociador todavía mayor al de las viejas potencias industriales; y pasa a formar parte del nuevo Centro sin compartir su ideología dominante (ni sus ideales de Democracia liberal y Derechos Humanos, podríamos agregar).

Las grandes políticas de China son definidas por el largo plazo; por no copiar recetas foráneas al pie de la letra (evitó así un contagio fatal en la crisis de 2008); por reducir sistemáticamente su dependencia de Occidente tejiendo alianzas en el Oriente; y por avanzar en la incorporación de conocimiento y tecnología para consolidar esa autonomía, bajo una férrea guía del Estado que otras potencias no toleran.

DE UNA POTENCIA A OTRA

Tanto frente a las tradicionales potencias occidentales como ahora frente al nuevo poder chino, América Latina debe definir sus propios intereses comunes antes de plantearse estrategias y/o alianzas para imponerlos, y la cumbre del G20 de 2018 en Argentina será una gran oportunidad para ello.

La relación con China le plantea a la región desafíos ya conocidos en la Periferia, donde las asimetrías con el Centro afectan su desarrollo hace casi dos siglos. Uno es el perfil de las exportaciones a China, tres cuartas parte de ellas, primarias. Y otro es el de las inversiones directas, concentradas en actividades extractivas (90% entre 2010 y 2013).

La región necesita asegurar el derecho de sus pueblos a coparticipar de esta Segunda Revolución Industrial rompiendo su antiguo molde de proveedora de commodities. China se comprometió a revertir la “reprimarización de las exportaciones”, ahora que su clase media de 300 millones reclama otros bienes y servicios. Pero ninguna potencia de ese calibre, con semejante control político de su expansión, dejará nunca de anteponer sus prioridades.

Mientras lo intenta, América Latina puede sacar alguna lección, paradójicamente, de la experiencia china, así como de otras naciones asiáticas que encontraron sus propias fórmulas de progreso en el capitalismo moderno abiertas al mercado global pero cuidando su desarrollo puertas adentro, muy vulnerable cuando se negocian acuerdos comerciales entre naciones y bloques de

poder desigual (UE-Mercosur, por ejemplo).

En la búsqueda de su nuevo lugar en el Centro (en abril pactó la paz comercial con Estados Unidos), los gobernantes chinos necesitarán negociar apoyos dentro del G20 frente a las potencias tradicionales del Norte. A cambio, nuestra región puede sacar un rédito razonable en ello reformulando la relación asimétrica con capitales y empresas del gigante asiático, para recortar las desventajas que arrastra la Periferia de este

¿Tiene que insistir América Latina en la búsqueda de un único modelo de desarrollo común y de relación con el mundo? ¿O más bien permitirse flexibilidad manteniendo consensos básicos para asegurar una integración que la haga más fuerte e independiente? ¿Qué similitudes y diferencias deben advertirse entre la antigua hegemonía estadounidense y la que asoma con China? ¿No debería la región dejar de definirse por oposición a la potencia de turno y redescubrir una identidad geopolítica que sustente su estrategia a largo plazo?

Como resumió con sabiduría Ferrer, “cada país tendrá la China que se merece”, según cómo se relacione con ella. Lo mismo es aplicable a toda la región. Pero hay que apurarse: si China sigue creciendo así, en diez años la sede central del FMI se trasladará a Beijing, avisó su jefa, Christine Lagarde.

El cambiante balance de poder en la seguridad energética global

Hace cincuenta años Asia consumía uno de ocho barriles de petróleo. Ahora uno de cada tres. La producción petrolera asiática está estancada mientras el consumo, especialmente el de China, aumenta cada año.

[The changing balance of power in global energy security](#)

As Asia's oil demand grows, its dependence on imports brings vulnerabilities

Nick Butler. Financial Times 06/08/2017

The centre of gravity of the global energy economy has shifted. Demand and therefore trade have shifted from the Atlantic Basin to the Pacific. The immediate implications are obvious: the

oil price is now crucially influenced by trends in China; over the past few years natural gas prices have been first driven by the pattern of demand in Japan and Southeast Asia.

Easternisation of the energy business began in the 1970s. But the scale of the shift today has also altered the balance of power and risk. Economies such as China and India have become ever more dependent on imports and energy security has become an Asian issue.

The surplus of oil supply has forced prices below those of 40 years ago in real terms, but energy security is not guaranteed. Security is a function of trade and of countries' dependence on imports, which in the case of oil tends to come from places not renowned for stability.

A few facts demonstrate the risks. Fifty years ago one barrel in eight of oil consumption was accounted for by Asian countries. Last year, it was one in three, with most of the growth met by imports. Over the past decade, production in Asia has been static while consumption has grown by 8m barrels a day – led by China, which in June imported 8.79m b/d. Indian imports are also growing and Asia as a whole had a net trade deficit in oil last year of 25m b/d

And that is just the beginning. China, which has accounted for most of the Asian growth of the past 20 years, may be shifting away from dependence on heavy industry but the service sector and consumer spending are still increasing. Chinese car ownership is likely to double over the next decade, as is air travel. The Indian economy is also expanding (at 7 per cent a year for the past five years) and by about 2030 India will have 1.5bn people – a vast market.

The development of electric vehicles could limit import requirements but realistically not for at least a decade. For now, Asia's oil demand is growing.

The security challenge is clear. First, there are the Gulf choke points of the straits of Malacca and Hormuz. Some 17m barrels a day pass through Hormuz and most of the tankers then turn east. Both are vulnerable to closure or disruption by conflict or terrorist action.

Second, the exporting countries on which these economies depend are unstable. Libya, Nigeria and Venezuela are all fragile. Faultlines are visible in Saudi Arabia. Joschka Fischer, the former German foreign minister, wrote recently that the next Middle East war would stem from the conflict between Saudi Arabia and Iran. The lesson of Libya is regime change can open up deep tensions leading to a civil war that cuts off the bulk of oil supply for years.

The third and greatest risk to global energy security lies in how import-dependent countries behave in times of market stress. China has deals with some exporters, such as Venezuela, that in return for past investment give it pre-emptive rights to supplies. Such deals shrink the volumes available on the open market and therefore amplify the risk of instability and price volatility.

All this suggests a clear common interest in drawing China, India, Indonesia and others into the institutional framework established in the 1970s to try to minimise the impact of instability in the oil market. The International Energy Agency, created in 1974, has been central to this effort and despite multiple conflicts, such as in the Middle East, there has been no energy crisis.

The IEA has done much to engage with the major emerging market economies. But it is not enough that countries, including Indonesia and Singapore, have become associate members. Full membership should be extended to China, India and others. If they are not invited in, their logical response is to create their own agency and energy security arrangements, a move that would be damaging and divisive.

The writer is visiting professor and chair of the Policy Institute, King's College London

La aplicación de la Sección 301 por parte de Estados Unidos no afectará la economía china.

Estados Unidos anunció que investigará a China por violaciones en derechos de propiedad intelectual. Ese país aplicó la 301 por primera vez hace treinta años y desde entonces la economía y las exportaciones chinas siguieron creciendo.

[Section 301 probe won't shake up China's economy](#)

By Mei Xinyu Source: Global Times

Published: 2017/8/17 22:08:40

On Monday, US President Donald Trump announced the launch of the so-called Section 301 trade investigations into China's relevant laws, policies and practices for violations of US intellectual property rights (IPR). While the news went viral on domestic and foreign media, I don't think the investigation will cause much trouble for the Chinese economy.

Why? It is not because the US' unilateral use of Section 301 violates WTO rules. It is not because the unfair content of Section 301 violates objective economic rules, either. After all, Trump told reporters last month that the US could even pull out of the WTO, so it is really not a big issue if the US government merely violates WTO rules.

It is because Chinese industries and exporters have already seen enough of US Section 301 investigations. It has been nearly 30 years since the US first wielded this stick against China. Nevertheless, the Chinese economy and its exports still grew rapidly in this period.

Now that great shifts have happened to the relative economic strength of both China and the US, there is no way for China to be scared about a Section 301 investigation.

Section 301 of the Trade Act of 1974 authorizes the president to unilaterally take trade restriction measures on countries that either violate trade agreements or engage in other unfair trade practices. In 1989, China was one of the countries put on the "priority watch list" under the Special Section 301, which was extended to target IPR violations. In October 1991, the US announced a Section 301 probe against China.

The US has used Special Section 301 against China for 28 years, and in that period China's GDP and trade have expanded by leaps and bounds.

In terms of GDP, in 1989, China's nominal GDP was \$461.1 billion, and that of the US was \$5.66 trillion, 11.39 times that of China, IMF data showed.

In 2016, China's nominal GDP rose to \$11.39 trillion, while that of the US reached \$18.56 trillion, equivalent to 1.63 times that of China.

In terms of foreign trade, in 1989, China's exports amounted to \$195.6 billion, but the figure almost doubled to \$382.7 billion in 1991. It surged to \$2.1 trillion in 2016, including \$385.1 billion in exports to the US.

More importantly, since 1989, the country's import and export structure, trade balance and global market share have all undergone revolutionary changes.

Before the US started to use Special Section 301 against China, China's exports were mainly comprised of primary products and imports were mostly manufactured goods, which led to a continuous trade deficit. Yet, in 1990, China's exports of manufactured goods exceeded imports in terms of value for the first time. In 1995, China's imports of primary products exceeded exports in terms of value for the first time. As a result, China quickly developed into the largest exporter of manufactured goods and the largest importer of primary products in the world.

With these fundamental changes in China's trade structure and balance, China's share in the global commodity export market climbed from 0.9 percent in 1948 to 14.2 percent in 2015, higher than that of the US and near the peak level of the US in the early 1950s.

Despite previous Section 301 investigations, 28 years of China's economic development show that such investigations have failed to cause much trouble for the Chinese economy.

Instead China has become the world's largest manufacturer and exporter, with the world's largest foreign exchange reserves. Viewed from this perspective, this latest use of Section 301 is unlikely to shake up China's economy.

The author is a research fellow with the Chinese Academy of International Trade and Economic Cooperation. bizopinion@globaltimes.com.cn

[Sinopec busca inversores para sus campos menos rentables en Santa Cruz](#)

La segunda petrolera de China inició un proceso de revisión estratégica de los activos petroleros que posee en la cuenca del Golfo San Jorge, más precisamente en el norte de Santa Cruz, según informa ADNSUR.

Revista Petroquímica. Sábado, 12 de Agosto de 2017

Sinopec, un gigante mundial que factura más de US\$ 300.000 millones (el equivalente a más de la mitad del PBI argentino), controla más de 15 concesiones hidrocarburíferas en la provincia que gobierna Alicia Kirchner. Es el cuarto productor de petróleo de la Argentina.

En la práctica, con la revisión en marcha busca conocer el interés real de inversores en campos no estratégicos para la empresa en la región. Se trata de áreas marginales con poca producción, como El Cordón, Cerro Overo, Meseta Sirven y Cerro Wenceslado, entre otras. Son campos maduros que producen menos de 100 metros cúbicos diarios (m³/día) de petróleo, según datos del Instituto Argentino del Petróleo y el Gas (IAPG).

La revisión estratégica de los activos –un proceso relativamente usual en la industria petrolera, y más en tiempos de precios bajos– está motorizado por dos factores, uno externo y otro bien do-

méstico. El internacional: los precios bajos del crudo –analistas pronostican que seguirá en la banda de los 50 dólares por los próximos dos o tres años– torna en antieconómica la explotación de varios campos de China Petrochemical Corporation (Sinopec) en Santa Cruz. El precio de venta del crudo Escalante –un petróleo semi pesado, que sufre un descuento por calidad– no viabiliza la perforación de nuevos pozos. El elemento vernáculo, complementario con el anterior, está dado por el alto nivel de conflictividad sindical que enfrenta la petrolera china en la provincia, que termina materializándose en un incremento de los costos de desarrollo de los campos santacruceños de petróleo.

Frente a ese contexto, lo que hizo la petrolera fue preparar un data room con las principales características técnico-geológicas de las áreas que tiene concesionadas en el Golfo San Jorge.

Eso no implica que esté en un proceso de venta formal de sus activos en el sur de la Patagonia. “Es un proceso normal en la industria petrolera a nivel global, más con un petróleo que oscilará entre los 40 y los 55 dólares en los próximos años”, explicaron desde Sinopec, que está manteniendo conversaciones incipientes con algunas petroleras que están en la provincia como CGC, brazo petrolero de Corporación América, el holding de Eduardo Eurnekian, y Roch, y otras empresas petroleras interesadas.

Uno de las tantas medidas de fuerza gremial que enfrentó Sinopec en los últimos tiempos.

A lo que apunta Sinopec, concretamente, es a ganar eficiencia en cuanto a la operación de esos bloques no que integran el core business de la petrolera, a partir de la eventual incorporación de socios que –al poseer una estructura más pequeña y flexible– sean capaces de operar de forma más competitiva campos marginales de petróleo. En ese marco, si surge una oferta concreta de compra por algún activo, Sinopec está abierta a evaluar la posibilidad.

De forma subyacente, la petrolera china está encarando una estrategia más disruptiva: busca desembarcar en Vaca Muerta, en la cuenca Neuquina, para operar campos de petróleo y gas. En ese sentido, está en conversaciones con la petrolera estatal de Neuquén, Gas y Petróleo, para participar de la V Ronda del plan Nuevos Horizontes, que contempla la licitación de seis bloques en Vaca Muerta. “Sinopec es el mayor productor de petróleo no convencional de china, por lo que posee un amplio know how en la materia”, indicaron desde la compañía.

Los misioneros chinos buscan conversiones en la Nueva Ruta de la Seda

Misioneros protestantes que no pertenecen a la Asociación Protestante reconocida por el go-

bierno y que ya hacen trabajo pastoral en el Sudeste asiático, se dirigen a las zonas de la OBOR.

[China missionaries seek converts along the Belt and Road](#)

Plan to send 20,000 evangelicals to SE Asia and Mideast creates dilemma for Beijing

AUGUST 10, 2017 by: Tom Hancock in Shanghai

At a Sunday service in an underground church in Beijing, worshippers clap their hands and vow to spread their Christian faith in China, and beyond.

“Use me as an instrument, Lord, send me out in the world,” they sing. “I will go make you known. Lord send me.”

A Protestant revival in China has swelled the church’s membership to tens of thousands, and its ambitions are no longer limited to the country.

Beijing’s Zion church is one of dozens in the country to have sent missionaries overseas, as evangelical Christians follow their country’s huge infrastructure push into Southeast Asia and the Middle East, creating a dilemma for the officially atheist Communist party.

There are about 1,000 Chinese missionaries outside the country, compared with virtually none a decade ago, according to churches and academics. Church leaders hope to increase their number to 20,000 by the end of the next decade.

Those leaders say missionary activity is a natural extension of China’s Protestant movement, which has grown rapidly in recent decades and now numbers about 100m.

“When a country develops religion to a certain level it will engage in missionary activity. This is very normal,” says Cui Qian, pastor of the Wanbang Missionary Church in Shanghai.

Mr Cui’s church has 20 missionaries overseas, mostly in Southeast Asia and the Middle East. They work as Chinese teachers or at state-owned enterprises, and learn local languages, says the pastor, who recently visited a missionary couple in Lebanon.

Nearly all Chinese missionaries are from “underground” churches independent of China’s state-controlled Protestant association, which for decades have been subject to Communist party crackdowns.

That experience makes them ideal for low-profile activities in countries including North Korea, Mr Cui says. “It’s Chinese-style missionary work. We don’t build churches and we don’t need much organisational structure. We survived the Cultural Revolution. So we have experience”.

He links the missionary drive to China’s massive infrastructure initiative linking in Asia, Europe and Africa: “We have the Belt and Road policy, so there will be economic entry. Alongside the economic entry will be companies and other groups entering, including missionaries”.

Chinese missionaries were thrust into the spotlight in June when two, Meng Li Si and Li Xinheng, were killed in Pakistan by a group apparently affiliated with Isis.

They had been working in Baluchistan, a region home to an ongoing ethnic insurgency and at the heart of a \$55bn-plus infrastructure programme backed by Beijing.

The killings exposed a dilemma for China’s Communist party, which derives legitimacy from protecting its citizens wherever they may be but disapproves of religion and underground churches. Reaction to the incident from China’s foreign ministry was limited to assurances that it was “confirming reports”.

Pastor Cui says the key to staying safe overseas is “not to create religious or cultural conflict”, adding: “But we are trying to create a conflict within people’s values. It’s a mental conflict.”

Some Chinese churches are inspired by an evangelical movement from the 1940s called “Back to Jerusalem”, named after a Chinese pastor’s vision of converting populations from east China to the ancient city. “The idea is that once Christianity spreads back to Jerusalem, it will hasten the second coming [of Christ],” says Carsten Vala, a professor at Loyola University Maryland who has studied underground churches.

The movement was revived in 2000, when 36 Chinese Christians travelled to a neighbouring Buddhist country, according to its website. It reports a total of 274 missionaries working as of June in what it calls the “darkest regions of the world”, including 56 in Egypt, 30 in Myanmar and 20 in Pakistan.

Chinese churches’ most ambitious plan is “Mission China 2030”, which aims to send 20,000 faithful overseas by the end of next decade. The number, calculated in part on an estimate of the number of foreign missionaries who died in China, was affirmed at a meeting of 1,000 Chinese church representatives in South Korea last summer.

Chinese churches are basing much of their missionary activity on models pioneered by Christians in the US and South Korea, which have extensive overseas missionary networks. But the movement is becoming more Chinese.

On an upper floor of a nondescript office building, Zion, one of the largest underground churches in Beijing, boasts a plush interior including large worship rooms with stages, where evangelical hymns are accompanied by electric guitar.

In a sign of the movement's growing ambition, Mr Gao, a pastor, says the church is trying to recruit more young people to undergo short missions. “

We used to just send missionaries to [training] centres abroad,” says Mr Gao. “But later we want to train missionaries ourselves.”

Follow Tom Hancock on Twitter: @hancocktom

[La primera ciudad-bosque del mundo](#)

Dangdai—03/08/2017

La sorprendente urbe, cuya finalización está prevista para 2020, albergará a 30.000 personas, más de 40.000 árboles y casi un millón de plantas, según prevé el proyecto Liuzhou Forest City, del milanés Stefano Boeri y su estudio Stefano Boeri Architetti, que ya fue aprobado por parte las autoridades chinas.

Este complejo residencial se levantará en el norte de Liuzhou, en la región de Guangxi al sur de China. Una ubicación perfecta para cumplir el desafío de crear ciudades sostenibles, puesto que se trata de una zona montañosa en la que los árboles y las plantas podrán adaptarse sin muchas dificultades, aseguran desde el estudio de arquitectura.

”Se nos ha pedido que diseñemos una ciudad entera donde no sólo tengas un edificio alto, sino que tienes 100 o 200 bloques de diferentes tamaños, todos con árboles y plantas en las fachadas”, dijo en una entrevista Boeri a The Guardian. El proyecto está previsto para empezar a construirse en 2018 y que esté finalizado para 2020.

Una vez terminada, la ciudad-bosque tendrá capacidad para albergar a 30.000 privilegiados. La urbe absorberá casi 10.000 toneladas de CO2, 57 toneladas de contaminantes y producirá aproximadamente 900 toneladas de oxígeno por año, así que los que residan allí podrán decir que respiran uno de los aires más puros del planeta.

Oficinas, viviendas, hospitales y escuelas, etc. Todos los inmuebles estarán cubiertos por completo de vegetación. Más de 40.000 árboles y casi un millón de plantas de más de 100 especies de todos los tamaños transformarán todos los edificios de Liuzhou Forest City en bosques verticales.

Aparte de luchar contra uno de los grandes problemas de China, el país más contaminado del mundo, la flora que albergará la nueva ciudad será como un aire acondicionado natural, puesto que contribuirá a disminuir la temperatura media del aire. Además, los árboles harán de barrera contra el ruido y mejorarán la biodiversidad de las especies animales de la zona, generando un hábitat para las aves, insectos y pequeños animales de la zona.

Por otro lado, la nueva urbe estará conectada con Liuzhou a través de una línea de tren y una carretera pensada, por supuesto, para coches eléctricos. Una ciudad verde no acepta los tradicionales modelos contaminantes. Además, dispondrá de todas las características de un establecimiento urbano autosuficiente: energía geotérmica para el aire acondicionado interior y paneles solares sobre los techos para recolectar energía solar.

De este modo, parece que China por fin comienza enfrentarse al grave problema que tiene con la contaminación dentro de su territorio. Según un estudio científico elaborado por la Universidad de Berkeley, en EEUU, una media de 4.400 chinos mueren al día por la polución del aire. Unas cifras terroríficas que han provocado que el dragón dormido despierte y busque soluciones.

La respuesta ha sido este diseño pionero que, además de estar previsto para ser autosuficiente, será un hábitat para la biodiversidad de la zona y se tragará cantidades industriales de contaminación. El proyecto continúa la senda de la construcción verde que Stefano Boeri tiene por bandera después del éxito que cosechó el arquitecto con su bosque vertical en Milán. La simbiosis entre construcción y naturaleza ha llegado.

Un tren que proclama las ambiciones globales de China

Beijing avanza hacia el oeste y el siglo Atlántico da lugar a una era en Eurasia
Zbigniew Brzezinski sostuvo que quien domine Eurasia controlará dos de las zonas más productivas del mundo.

[A train that proclaims China's global ambition](#)

As Beijing pushes westwards, the Atlantic century makes way for a new Eurasian age

Philip Stephens

Financial Times JULY 20, 2017

Among this year's under-reported events was the opening of a new rail freight route. A locomotive, pulling wagons loaded with Chinese manufactures, set out in early January from Yiwu in Zhejiang province. Some 18 days and seven countries later it arrived at a goods depot almost 7,500 miles away on the eastern edge of London. The jury is out on the economics of this latest reincarnation of the ancient silk routes. That is beside the point. The journey above all else was a statement of China's geopolitical intent.

In truth, it took several trains to complete the trip. The freight containers had to be switched at various points to take account of different track gauges, and then again for the last stretch through the Channel tunnel. It is not clear how frequently the trains will run, although the operator says it is offering a service much faster than by sea and much cheaper than by air. Once a month seems to be the first target. Similar routes opened a while ago to continental cities such as Hamburg and Madrid. London, though, is a prize.

The trains, following the old silk road through central Asia, Russia, Belarus and Poland into western Europe are unlikely to have a decisive effect on present patterns of trade. The important thing is the psychological impact – a network of rail links reduces the distance between Asia and Europe. And there lies the grand design of China's Xi Jinping. The president wants to obliterate boundaries between the two continents and draw the rich nations of Europe close to China.

There is a shorthand among foreign policy types that designates the 20th as the Atlantic century. The 21st, the received wisdom continues, will belong to the Pacific. The last century saw wealth and power concentrated among the littoral states of the north Atlantic as Europe and the US reached across the ocean. But prosperity and power have travelled eastward and southwards. The phrase Pacific century seems to capture China's rise.

Only in part. True, the People's Liberation Army is building military bases on reclaimed islands in the South China sea to expand its maritime reach into the Western Pacific; and, yes, China could well clash with the US in these waters. But such tensions misread Beijing's organising ambition. It is looking westwards rather than eastward.

Mr Xi's big play is wrapped up in his "One Belt, One Road" idea – the recreation of the sea and land routes of an earlier age of globalisation. When it looks ahead China imagines an era in which the great land mass of Eurasia becomes the vital fulcrum of global power. And guess who will be the pivotal Eurasian player?

Zbigniew Brzezinski, the former national security adviser to president Jimmy Carter who until his death this year was Washington's sharpest strategic thinker, long ago grasped the significance of what he called the "axial supercontinent". "A power that dominated Eurasia", he wrote as far back as 1997, "would exercise decisive influence over two of the world's three most economically productive regions, western Europe and East Asia... What happens with the distribution of power on the Eurasian landmass will be of decisive importance to America's global primacy and historical legacy".

It is easy to see why he was concerned. Eurasia – and the historic division into two continents has more to do with tradition and culture than any physical boundary – accounts for more than a third of the world's landmass and for about 70 per cent of the global population. It is home to much of the world's energy and other natural resources.

For some the One Belt, One Road project speaks to a jumble of different objectives – some economic, some strategic. Thus a Chinese railway through Myanmar provides a route to the sea that bypasses the pinch point of the Strait of Malacca. A new port in Pakistan provides direct access to the Indian Ocean and the Gulf. Vast infrastructure projects in central Asia and Africa are designed to mop up China's excess industrial capacity and to secure sources of raw material. Beijing wants new investment channels to expand its presence in Europe.

Some of these enterprises are more successful than others – as witnessed by James Kyngé's reporting in the FT this week of Beijing's stumbling attempts to export high-speed train technology. It seems it is better at running trains than building new railways in other nations. Nor can Beijing expect to have it all its own way. At some point Moscow will tire of its place as very much the junior partner in the Sino-Russian axis. And India will not be easily pushed aside as China cuts a swath through Eurasia.

But the whole amounts to more than the sum of the parts. One Belt, One Road is China's route to Eurasian primacy. And the gods are looking favourably on the Chinese leader. The belligerent isolationism that counts for foreign policy in President Donald Trump's White House offers Beijing a free hand.

Brzezinski's worry was that without a strategy to promote its own interests through balancing alliances, the US would cede Eurasia to others and, eventually, would be left a great power stranded in its own hemisphere. Such geopolitical calculation does not loom large in Mr Trump's White House. Beijing can scarcely believe its luck. As the US retreats, China makes its presence felt. Quite suddenly, the Eurasian century has a certain ring to it.

¿Quién ganará la Gran Guerra Naval China-India de 2020?

China e India pujan por el territorio fronterizo de Doklam, en el Himalaya. En esa montaña tuvo lugar el último enfrentamiento donde India derrotó al ejército chino. Pero una futura batalla tendrá lugar en el mar. Un largo análisis de ambas fuerzas navales concluye en que aparentemente están en paridad.

[Who Will Win the Great China-India Naval War of 2020?](#)

As the two giants stare each other down in the Himalayas, the real conflict may erupt at sea.

BY JAMES HOLMESAUGUST. Foreign Policy. 7, 2017

Right now China and India are glaring at each other across Doklam, the contested ground along the Sino-Indian frontier high in the Himalayas. It was the Himalayan border that prompted their last serious fight, when China's People's Liberation Army (PLA) dealt the Indians a short, sharp defeat in 1962. But any future war might not be fought on the high mountains, but the high seas.

A Sino-Indian naval war seems improbable, for sure – but so do most wars, before they happen. It's certainly not unthinkable, and so it behooves Asia-watchers to lay out the odds now rather than be guilty of a failure of imagination should the worst transpire.

Bottom line: Don't be taken in by numbers indicating that China would steamroll India in a sea fight. Martial enterprises are seldom that neat.

China has settled its border disputes with most in the region – but it prefers to leave the contest with some of its neighbors simmering, especially India. A spokesman for China's defense ministry, Col. Wu Qian, warned Indians not to “push your luck” in the Doklam dispute. For good measure Wu added that the Indian Army would find it “easier to shake a mountain than to shake the PLA.” Beyond the present conflict, Chinese and Indian media have a long history of competing to see who can shout “By jingo!” in the other's direction the loudest.

History shows that rancor on land or in the air can easily sprawl out to sea. Or a saltwater conflict could ensue independently of events ashore. Both contestants take a proprietary view of waters off their coasts. China thinks about the South China Sea as a zone of “indisputable” or

“irrefutable” sovereignty where Beijing ought to make the rules and others ought to obey. In a similar vein, India models its foreign policy and strategy in part on the Monroe Doctrine, and thus regards the Indian Ocean as an Indian preserve.

Such claims should have a familiar ring to Americans. During its own rise to regional and world power, the United States sought to exclude powerful outsiders from the Caribbean Sea and Gulf of Mexico – its outlet to the Pacific Ocean. The Monroe Doctrine started off as a joint defense of the Americas against European imperial powers. It ended up with Washington proclaiming that its “fiat [was] law” throughout these waters, and that it could exercise an “international police power” there – meddling in fellow American states’ affairs to preclude European seizures of territory in the Western Hemisphere.

The sense that nearby seas constitute a rightful mare nostrum – ancient Romans thought of the Mediterranean as “our sea” – means that Indians and Chinese are predisposed to resent, and oppose, apparent encroachment by outsiders in these seaways. Fishing disputes or undersea drilling take on particular resonance; natural resources concentrate minds in Asian capitals. Indians look askance at China’s “One Belt, One Road” initiative, which aims to build infrastructure and aid economic development along Eurasia’s historic silk roads, land and sea.

And Chinese courtship of South Asian coastal states looks suspiciously like an effort to construct a “string of pearls,” or network of naval bases in the Indian navy’s traditional operating grounds. Most recently Beijing negotiated a 99-year lease of the Sri Lankan seaport of Hambantota, lodging itself firmly in the subcontinent’s environs, while Chinese engineers have fortified their naval station in Djibouti, in the extreme western reaches of the Indian Ocean.

In short, the kindling for marine conflict is increasingly in place while any number of quarrels between New Delhi and Beijing could strike the match. So, who would come out on top in an armed conflict? Well, the two navies are roughly comparable in aircraft-carrier aviation, operating one modest flattop apiece. That parity in numbers appears set to persist for some years, but carrier aircraft aren’t the whole of naval striking power.

On paper, the Indian Navy looks massively outgunned across the board. Consider: In 2020 the PLA navy will have 73 attack submarines, or “attack boats” in U.S. Navy slang, in its inventory. Attack boats are subs built to hunt other subs or pummel surface fleets from the depths. The Indian navy will operate 17 such craft in 2020. That looks like a 4:1 deficit for New Delhi.

China’s navy will also field an increasingly modern mix of 30 guided-missile destroyers (DDGs) by 2020. DDGs act as a carrier’s “shotgun,” using their missiles to fend off aerial, missile, or subsurface assault. They can also serve as capital ships in their own right, leading surface action groups against other fleets or shore targets. By comparison, the Indian navy will have a paltry eight DDGs. The PLA navy will have a mix of 92 frigates and corvettes, light combatants for duty in less menacing settings. The Indian navy will have 32 frigates and corvettes.

And so forth. These are overpowering numbers. They imply India will play Bambi to China's Godzilla in any maritime conflagration – and we all know what happens when Bambi meets Godzilla. Even Adm. Horatio Lord Nelson, Great Britain's virtuoso of sea battle in the age of sail, insisted that “only numbers can annihilate.”

But numbers seldom if ever tell the whole story in marine combat.

Consider several factors that will blunt what looks on paper like an insuperable edge. First, think about the human factor. A force inferior in numbers can outfight a larger antagonist through superior seamanship, tactical dexterity, and élan. It might escape annihilation. It might even defeat that antagonist's aims. The weak can win – and often have in the annals of warfare.

Do Indian mariners command a human advantage? Hard to say. There's little history by which to judge. Neither modern India nor modern China has fought a major naval engagement. In fact, the 21st century marks the first time in over half a millennium that the twin giants have both fielded formidable oceangoing fleets at the same time.

The historical databank is conspicuously bare as a result. Indian rulers proscribed sea voyages back in the 14th century, ostensibly to prevent scientists and mathematicians from decamping to Baghdad. China's Ming Dynasty broke up the world's largest and most technologically advanced navy, Adm. Zheng He's “treasure fleet,” following a triumphal series of voyages to Southeast and South Asia – including full-on gunboat diplomacy in Sri Lanka centuries before the West learned the trick.

Asian powers thus evacuated the sea a historical eyeblink before Portuguese adventurer Vasco da Gama arrived on the subcontinent, ushering in an age of Western maritime dominance that is only now subsiding. Only in recent years, consequently, have Chinese and Indian fleets started jostling against each other, mainly in the Indian Ocean but on occasion in the South China Sea. Sino-Indian maritime competition is something novel, rendering it even tougher than usual to make predictions.

My own guesswork: Both navies would acquit themselves about equally well in action. They have gone out of their way to avoid common pitfalls, such as skimping on peacetime naval readiness for the sake of saving taxpayers' money. British Adm. Sir Herbert Richmond warned that denying ships regular upkeep and overhauls, keeping a fleet in port, and curtailing at-sea exercises depletes materiel while “rusting” officers' and sailors' proficiency at navigation, engineering, and weapons. After all, sailors only learn seamanship and tactics by going to sea early and often to practice.

To most appearances neither India's nor China's navy has let rust encrust ships or crews. The Indian navy has always maintained a regular presence in Indian Ocean waters. Until recent years the PLA navy tended to stay in port a lot, getting underway only intermittently. That is

less and less true of late. China has kept a squadron on station in the Gulf of Aden for pushing a decade now. PLA navy vessels have turned up in expanses as remote as the Mediterranean Sea, Black Sea, and, most recently, the Baltic Sea. In so doing China has demonstrated its capacity to mount a naval presence in what Chinese strategists term the “far seas” beyond the China seas and Western Pacific.

What the PLA navy once lacked in training, it is striving to correct – reducing the chances of human or material corrosion. The deep military corruption that once led jingoistic Chinese Maj. Gen. Luo Yuan to make comparisons to the Beiyang Navy – the graft-ridden fleet that failed spectacularly against the Japanese in 1895 – appears to have been curtailed in the anti-corruption campaigns since 2012. The Chinese navy, like the Indian, seems ready to fight.

That’s about as far as guesswork takes us. As strategist Edward Luttwak counsels, ships and planes are “black boxes” in peacetime. It’s hard for outsiders to peek inside to see how smoothly their internal workings perform, either from an engineering or a human standpoint. Nor can peacetime maneuvers perfectly simulate the dangers, hardships, and sheer orneriness of war. A force that excels in canned exercises might be just that: a force that excels at exercises. Battle is the true arbiter of combat effectiveness and efficiency.

But if the human factor is a wash, geospatial strategy is definitely on India’s side. It’s doubtful in the extreme that any clash between Indian and Chinese forces would take place in the South China Sea or elsewhere in East Asia. The Indian Navy has plenty to do superintending events in the Indian Ocean and a bare minimum of assets to do it with. It has little to spare for extra-regional enterprises. Ergo, any probable naval war would unfold in India’s home region, where the Indian military enjoys “interior lines” and Chinese expeditionary forces must contend with “exterior lines.”

What that means in plain English is this: The Indian navy enjoys direct, relatively short routes to potential scenes of battle while the PLA navy must project forces across long, distended, potentially contested sea routes just to reach the fight. Distance favors the defender while debilitating its adversary.

Fighting across vast geographic distances imposes wear-and-tear on hardware while wearying crews. It imposes severe logistical burdens. After all, an expeditionary force must carry all the fuel, stores, and ammunition it needs to reach the scene of action and fight the battle. And fighting at a distance grants the antagonist opportunities to make mischief along the way.

The foe or its allies could harry the expeditionary force, taking up station at key geographic sites – the Strait of Malacca, anyone? – to snipe away. The PLA navy force could suffer losses. At a minimum, a forward defense would compel Chinese mariners to expend scarce resources defending themselves.

In short, powerful Indian forces reside near likely trouble spots, while China must operate along long, convoluted routes just to gain access to the region. It is no simple feat for a faraway great-power navy to overpower a rival naval power – even a weaker one – in that navy’s home waters. Advantage: India.

Which brings us to geography. India is blessed by favorable nautical geography. The subcontinent juts into the Indian Ocean, adjoining potential battlegrounds in the Bay of Bengal and Arabian Sea. Its geographical layout amplifies the advantages of the interior lines. Furthermore, New Delhi is sovereign over the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, an island chain athwart the western approaches to the Strait of Malacca. Suitably fortified with missiles, aircraft, and ships, the island chain would constitute a barrier to east-west Chinese maritime movement – enfeebling any force that ventures onto India’s turf.

Chinese strategists are acutely conscious of the potential of island-chain warfare. It confronts them every day in East Asia, where U.S. allies occupy the “first island chain” paralleling China’s coastline. Back in 1987, Adm. Liu Huaqing, the modern PLA navy’s founding father, gave an address likening the first island chain to a “metal chain” barring China’s access to the Western Pacific. Small wonder Chinese strategists have taken to describing the Andamans and the Nicobars as a metal chain inhibiting China’s access to the Indian Ocean. The same logic holds.

Geography, then, could represent India’s great equalizer against a more numerous Chinese navy. New Delhi can stage an anti-access/area-denial (A2/AD) strategy of its own, harnessing geographic features for strategic gain.

Competing strategic imperatives will encumber PLA navy operations in the Indian Ocean. The overwhelming advantage on paper is misleading. The Indian navy will never feel the full weight of those numbers. PLA navy commanders cannot simply designate the entire battle fleet as an expeditionary force and send it sailing to the Indian Ocean to do battle. Doing so would expose the homeland to a formidable U.S.-Japanese fleet poised at China’s door.

In short, like statesmen and commanders throughout history, China’s leadership must juggle competing commitments – apportioning resources to keep the most important commitments while putting lesser commitments on hold or demoting them to secondary status. Martial sage Carl von Clausewitz sets the bar high for undertaking secondary theaters or campaigns: Such an endeavor must promise “exceptionally rewarding” gains, it must not risk too much in the primary theater or campaign, and therefore strategic leaders should forego it unless they boast “decisive superiority” of resources in the primary theater. Reward, risk, resources – call it Clausewitz’s three Rs for setting and enforcing priorities.

In Clausewitzian parlance, the Indian Ocean constitutes an exceptionally rewarding theater for China. China is a net importer of energy supplies, much of which coming from the Persian Gulf.

Beijing sees vital national interests at stake in the region – else it wouldn't bother with pricey ventures such as “One Belt, One Road.”

The questions surround Clausewitz's second two Rs, risk and resources. Do China's armed forces really boast decisive superiority over the U.S. Navy and Japan Self-Defense Forces – which might make trouble in Northeast Asia while the PLA navy was away battling the Indian Navy?

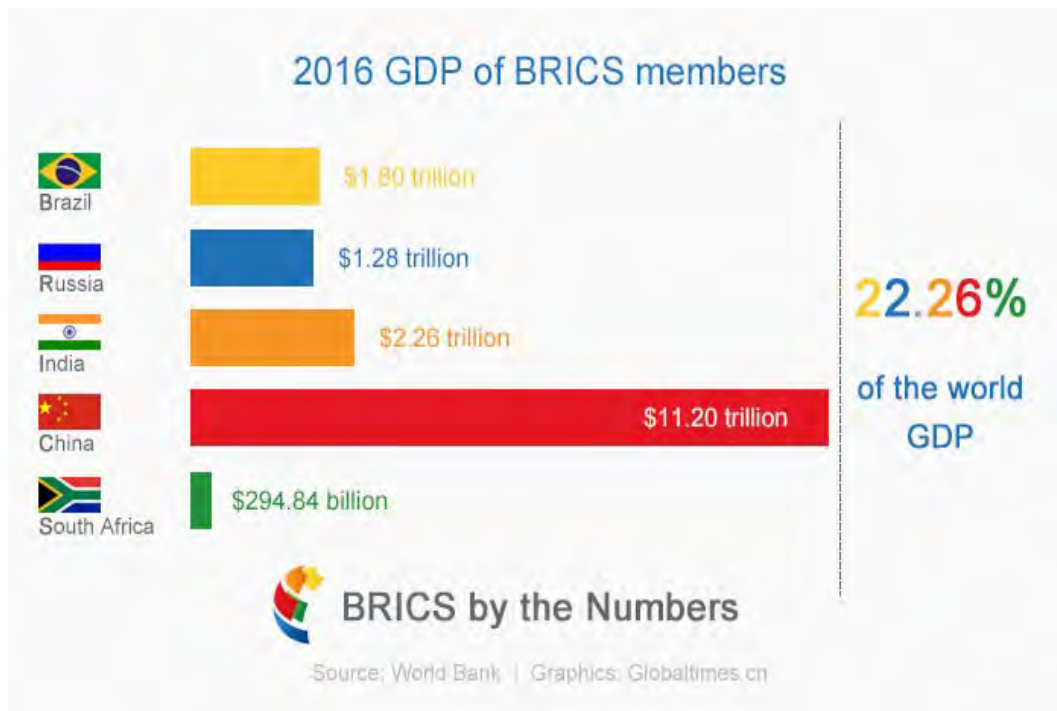
Doubtful. The strategic outlook gets a lot blurrier here. Fighting even an outnumbered Indian navy turns out to entail hidden perils for China. In all likelihood, Beijing would detach whatever fraction of the PLA navy fleet it could spare for action in the Indian Ocean while remaining on guard back home. That way the leadership could allocate resources prudently while keeping risk to a minimum. That portion of the PLA navy – not the PLA navy as a whole – constitutes the standard of measurement for Indian naval adequacy. If the Indian navy can handle the fraction of China's navy likely to venture into South Asia, then it meets the standard. If not, rough waters await.

Finally, bear in mind that naval warfare is no longer about navies alone. China's military boasts an array of land-based weaponry to make things hard on American or Asian forces steaming within reach of that weaponry. But Indian commanders can tap that same logic when fighting within reach of their own shore-based arsenal of tactical aircraft and missiles. The Indian air force, then, constitutes another implement of Indian sea power. And it's an imposing one: American aviators testify to the combat excellence of their Indian brethren. The Indian armed forces, in short, could give PLA navy expeditionary forces a very bad day if they turn all assets at their disposal to advantage.

This should all give PLA commanders and their political masters pause. Bear in mind that maritime expeditionary operations fall outside China's traditional military playbook. The anti-access strategy that China deploys in the Western Pacific comports with the Maoist way of war: It's a strategically defensive mode of war-making designed to turn the tables on a stronger foe encroaching on Chinese territory. Far-seas operations involves a role reversal. In dealing with the Indian navy, it's China that must assume the strategic offensive, carrying the fight onto a defender's ground. Offense poses a different challenge altogether, and it's unclear whether the PLA has yet devised methods for prosecuting an offensive campaign – something it hasn't conducted since the disastrous Vietnamese excursion of 1979.

So, who would prevail in the Sino-Indian naval war of 2020? It looks like a close-run thing. China has numbers on its side, but India's allies include geography, land-based sea power, and silent partners such as the United States and Japan. Maybe Bambi's not such a pushover after all.

-PBI de los BRICS, en números, según el Banco Mundial.



Editor responsable del Boletín: Julio Sevares.