

ITALY AND CHINA

An Evolving Geographical Perspective

edited by
Dino Gavinelli, Flavio Lucchesi

GEOSTORIA DEL TERRITORIO



FrancoAngeli

Informazioni per il lettore

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Geostoria del territorio

Il territorio è uno dei “luoghi” più frequentati dalla ricerca negli ultimi decenni, in quanto oggetto capace di fondere in un insieme unico gli elementi di interesse di molte discipline, se non di tutte.

Ma il territorio non è semplicemente il supporto fisico di una serie di elementi fra loro variamente correlati o reciprocamente indipendenti; è esso stesso un vero e proprio oggetto di ricerca unitario e complesso, che, come tale, va affrontato ed esaminato specificamente.

Ormai da diversi anni un gruppo di storici (dell'economia, della società, delle istituzioni, della cultura e di altro ancora) e di geografi umani ed economisti si è mosso seguendo questa prospettiva di studio, e ha affrontato alcuni nodi problematici che nel territorio assumono concretezza e pertinenza scientifica disciplinare. Si è così discusso, dapprima, di *regione* come quadro geografico e storico dei processi di sviluppo economico e sociale, come contesto necessario, come proiezione spaziale, risultato finale dell'azione di questi processi; si è poi esaminato, con un programma pluriennale e coordinato fra diverse unità di ricercatori italiani e stranieri, l'*arco alpino* come possibile “macro-regione” europea, esaminandone le coerenze e le disarmonie interne, ma anche i rapporti e le divergenze fra il territorio alpino, così peculiare da vari punti di vista, con le aree ad esso circostanti, prossime o remote.

Da questi studi sono scaturiti idee e suggestioni, prospettive di ricerca e stimoli all'approfondimento, saggi descrittivi, studi interpretativi, spunti per ulteriori tematiche di ricerca.

È dunque emerso, in tutta la sua importanza e complessità, un campo di studi in cui storici e geografi, ognuno per la sua parte di competenza disciplinare, ma anche per la volontà e la necessità di integrare con profitto tali specifiche conoscenze e competenze, hanno deciso di investire il proprio sapere e saper fare.

Per queste ragioni gli studiosi di tre università e appartenenti a diverse tradizioni disciplinari hanno deciso di dar vita a questa collana “Geostoria del territorio”, che consenta loro e a quanti condividono questi convincimenti e queste aspirazioni per una ricerca unitaria, comprensiva e ad ampio raggio, di trovare una sede interdisciplinare in cui pubblicare i risultati dei propri studi.

Comitato scientifico: *Andrea Leonardi* (Università di Trento), *Angelo Moioli* (Università di Milano), *Guglielmo Scaramellini* (Università di Milano), *Luigi Trezzi* (Università di Milano-Bicocca).

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**UNIVERSITÀ DEGLI STUDI
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DIPARTIMENTO DI BENI
CULTURALI E AMBIENTALI



UNIVERSITÀ DEGLI STUDI DI MILANO
DIPARTIMENTO DI SCIENZE
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E DI STUDI INTERCULTURALI

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Preface

The publication of this volume provides concrete testimony of the interdepartmental cooperation implemented in our university through innovative projects that bring together scholars from disciplines once very far, but linked today by increasingly stronger bonds. The project that is presented to the readers thanks to this volume involves scholars from the Department of Language Mediation and Intercultural Communication and the Department of Cultural Heritage and Environment, in a highly original multi-voiced analysis that revolves around a topic that today is in need of truly serious and thoughtful insights, that is the territorial situation of China. This reality is analyzed in some of its many aspects of the past and present, as well as in a bold projection towards the future, through the attentive and always watchful eyes of our geographers.

It is in this framework that the role of the Confucius Institute of the University of Milan fits. Thanks to the cooperation and support of Hanban (the Chinese National Office for Teaching Chinese as a Foreign Language, in Chinese *Guojia Hanyu Guoji Tuiguang Lingdao Xiaozu Bangongshi*), the institute was established in our university in November 2009, in partnership with Liaoning Normal University (*Liaoning Shifan Daxue*), and in these years it has constantly worked for the promotion of initiatives that aim to spread the knowledge of Chinese language and culture. In particular, the Confucius Institute of the University of Milan supports and sustains our university's high-profile research projects that, with competence and interest, revolve around China, its land, and its people.

Today, we are particularly pleased to present to our readers the result of research paths, studies, and reflections carried out by our university's geographers who wish to approach the reality of China with

methodologically appropriate tools and with the enthusiasm and passion for knowledge emerging from their writings and reflections.

It is therefore a rich and multi-faceted volume that is, we believe, not so much a point of arrival as it is an initial starting point for a long and fascinating journey through the mutual understanding of our countries.

Confucius Institute of the University of Milan

Alessandra C. Lavagnino
Jin Zhigang

China Facing the World, Italy Facing China: Developing Geographical Realities and Prospects

Dino Gavinelli* and Flavio Lucchesi**

1. A geographical overview of China at the time of globalization: past inheritances, present transformations, and future prospects

From a geographical point of view, China can, in any occasion, be studied as geometric space, natural environment, region with its historical significance, socio-political and economic system, cultural place, material and immaterial relations that unfold on different levels, and territory that is narrated and projected outwards. This variety of approaches immediately brings to mind the dimension of complexity and makes one reflect on the different categories of physical, human, political-economic, social, urban, and cultural geography, which are capable of providing tools for interpreting such a giant, the size of which largely exceeds the realities of the European nation-states inherited from history. Indeed, all varieties of geography are involved in the attempt at reconstructing the undoubtedly very articulated dimension of contemporary China in a holistic way, the projection of China in the world in obvious and material terms (Made in China products and their impact on the production systems in the rest of world, the global Chinese diasporas, the increasing flows of Chinese tourists abroad), as well as in less obvious terms (political prestige, growing economic and military influence, the criminality of Chinese mafia organizations

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This contribution is the result of a joint process of research and contemplation by the two authors. For attribution purposes, the first paragraph was written by Dino Gavinelli and the second by Flavio Lucchesi.

and secret societies, the submerged and informal productions managed according to an ultra-liberal vision).

China is, for its spatial and demographic dimensions, one of the most important actors on the contemporary world scene¹. Even in the past, China constituted, for many centuries, one of the most advanced centers of cultural, scientific, and technological progress, and significantly influenced the development of much of Asia (Bouée, 2013). For a long time, its socio-economic and territorial system was based on the imperial administrative structure, traditional agriculture and livestock farming, and the Han civilization, before encountering some discontinuities and many changes in the modern and contemporary eras. A first episode of discontinuity occurred between the eighteenth century and the first half of the twentieth century, in a context of strong demographic growth, with a violent intrusion of the western powers into the Chinese traditional socio-territorial context. The actions of these powers forcedly introduced modernization, defined bilateral relations that were unfavorable to China with European countries, Japan, and the United States, occupied portions of territory, and strongly weakened the imperial system. This forced and traumatic entrance into a globalization of a western nature also led to the fall of the empire, the creation of the republic in 1912, and a first modernization of the former “Celestial Empire”. The second discontinuity occurred in 1949, with the defeat of the nationalist troops of Chiang Kai-shek (Jiang Jieshi, 蔣介石), the victory of Mao Tze Dong (or Mao Zedong, 毛泽东), and the creation of a communist-style People's Republic. This did not weaken the central power which, conversely, relied on the cultural and religious values inherited from the past and the decentralized socio-territorial structures to lay the foundations for a socialist development of the state, to implement a planned economy, and to review bilateral and international geopolitical and diplomatic relations (Yan, 2011; Heriberto, Cardenal, 2013). In the meantime, large internal modernizations had been initiated in all sectors of society, culture, and economy, and China had expanded militarily and ideologically, also towards the outside. In this sense, as a dynamic land power, it conquered Tibet (1950), supported the Asian communist parties politically and militarily (in the 60s), North Vietnam (1965-74), the Khmer Rouge of Pol Pot in Cambodia (in the 70s), the military junta of Myanmar (former

1. China with its 9,572,900 km² is the third largest state by area in the world, surpassed only by Russia (17,075,400 km²) and Canada (9,984,670 km²). From a demographic point of view, however, China is the most populous country on the planet.

Burma, a British colony until 1948), and North Korea (where no forms of dissent or opposition to the autocratic political regime in power are allowed). China's international prestige gradually increased, especially in the eyes of the many African countries that achieved independence in the 1960s and 70s and those states that were seeking a "third way" between American capitalism and Soviet totalitarianism (Mackerras, 2000; Fumagalli, 2009).

A country closed to external inputs and western influence for more than three decades, since the 1980s Communist China has launched reforms that have challenged the previous policies, decreed the end of the construction of a socialist society, and initiated a post-Maoist transition period (De Troia, 2010) that lasted until the events of the spring of 1989, culminating in the protests of Tiananmen Square in Beijing. These events reminded the Chinese people and the world that there exists only one policy and a single economy in China, the socialist market economy, promoted and supported by the Chinese Communist Party (Halper, 2012). The remarkable ability of opening up to foreign businesses and experience thus led to the gradual introduction of a number of economic reforms in order to support private initiative and free competition. Innovation and reorganization also affected other areas such as employment, housing, consumption, and urban modernization, laying the foundations for a new society and a redesigning of the territory. In the last decade of the twentieth century, the importance of China on the world stage was strengthened by the acquisition of the last European possessions in Asia, those of Hong Kong (a colony of the United Kingdom up to 1997) and Macau (under Portugal until 1999), characterized by strong economic and financial dynamism².

The impetuous process of production modernization has not always been painless (Lavagnino, 2012), but it has led to the emergence of new professional figures, the presence of highly qualified personnel mainly coming from the most developed countries, the development of imports of raw materials and trade with foreign countries, China's entry into the World Trade Organization (2001), the promotion of financial and insurance activities, the increase in financial revenue thanks to the proceeds of a growing number of tourists visiting China, the possibility for many Chinese to travel and study abroad, the modernization of

2. In the agreements signed with the two former European colonial powers China guaranteed broad autonomy to the two territories, committing to maintaining the socio-economic and political system that is currently in place for 50 years.

scientific research, the widening of road and rail networks, and the upgrading of infrastructures in the last decades. Today, all these elements are improving the standard of living of millions of Chinese citizens (Miranda, Spalletta, 2011).

The aforementioned advances are significant and evident in all sectors of society, culture, and economy. Currently, China is a rapidly emerging country, one of the major players in the market and the political world, as well as a possible diplomatic-military antagonist for the USA in the future (Sanjuan, Trollet, 2010; Aglietta, Bai, 2012).

From a purely geographical point of view, the above-mentioned aspects have meant the exploitation of the abundant resources available in the country, the profound transformation of large portions of the Chinese landscape, the re-questioning of regional hierarchies, and the emergence of new territorial imbalances. In particular, the eastern regions that overlook the Pacific Ocean have been the most involved in the impressive process of industrialization, tertiarization, modernization, and urbanization, through the creation of Special Economic Zones (SEZs) where firms, banks, and services can operate outside of the constraints imposed by central government planning. These areas have expanded and increased in number over time, bearing witness to the gradual and growing integration of China into the dynamics of worldwide globalization. These growth poles, essentially urban, located in proximity to the maritime littoral zone and arranged almost uniformly from the North Korean to the Vietnamese border, have reached a level of development similar to that of the most advanced countries, while agricultural and more internal areas of the country experience a situation of backwardness and progressive marginalization. The latter have lost the traditional role of leadership within China's economic system and that ideological aura that they had gained during the Maoist era (Lavagnino, 2010). These logics of local development have led to a pronounced splitting of China's territory, with varying levels of modernization and integration into the world's economy that might be able to create, in the long term, processes of territorial decomposition and re-composition that are dangerous for national unity. To prevent the development of such scenarios, the central government has initiated policies of territorial rebalancing to facilitate the development of the areas crossed by the Yangtze River and the western regions. This has not deterred large masses of poor peasants from flooding into cities in search of work, attracted by prospects of a higher income and social promotion (Racine, 2013). The city has thus become

the main factor in the weakening of a rural world which is split among: agricultural spaces integrated with specialized productions and intended for the urban consumer market; industrialized rural areas, integrated with urban economies and the regional, national, and international market, and where the production and transport infrastructures are multiplying; marginal agricultural fields, intended solely for the cultivation of basic products and self-subsistence, weakly related to market economies; remote rural areas, poor, badly connected to the city and to the market, and for this reason marginalized. The cities, conversely, have become the undisputed protagonists and showcases of the contemporary Chinese development. Their transformations are manifested physically in the renewal of the urban landscape, the downsizing of large portions of traditional neighborhoods, the creation of business centers with ever taller skyscrapers and towers, and the appearance of suburbs where the less affluent social classes and industrial activities concentrate.

The return of China as a protagonist on the global stage has consequences not only within the borders of the former Celestial Empire. The overseas Chinese diaspora, in fact, is also increasingly perceived by Beijing as a component that can contribute to the development of the country, to the increase of the power and influence of China in the world, and to the spread of its positive image. The policies aimed at engaging the Chinese people abroad unfold through processes of enhancing the Chinese identity and the common cultural heritage, facilitation of investments and travels in China, and the defense of the rights of the Chinese communities in other states (Sanjuan, 2012; Bouée, 2013).

It is difficult to delineate with certainty the future of a China that has vigorously entered into the geopolitical and culture landscape of the third millennium. In the field of domestic policy the major problems that the current Chinese leadership (and that to come) will face are those related to deforestation and soil erosion, the proper management of water resources, the reclamation of the many areas polluted by the uncontrolled growth of factories, buildings, and infrastructure, regional imbalances, local development, and social equality (Guermond, 2007). In the field of foreign policy, it will first be necessary to understand which role China will be able to play as a land and maritime regional power in Asia and the Pacific, and, more generally, as a geopolitical world actor. Then, it will be necessary to look at how the economic and political confrontation with the United States will evolve, as well as the strategic cooperation initiated with Russia and other emerging countries. The role as an

economic partner for the European Union and many countries of Asia, Africa, and Latin America is also important. Finally, one must consider the ongoing dispute with Taiwan, the “other” China, the rebel island that has been hosting, since 1949, the opponents of the Beijing regime, the so-called “nationalists”, and their descendants, and that enjoys political and military protection from the United States and their allies (Dal Borgo, Gavinelli, 2013).

2. Transformation and continuity in the “Chinese way” to modernity: different keys and reading scales in a complex systemic framework

The aforementioned considerations highlight the many areas of research for which China can be of great interest as an object of geographical analysis. With regard to the studies carried out in Italy, I would like to note that in the context of regional geography research cultivated by members of the former Institute of Human Geography of the University of Milan, which became the Department of Geography and Environmental Human Sciences, today the Department of Cultural Heritage and Environment, Asia has certainly been a intensely investigated continent: among others, it is worth mentioning the important double volume written in 1993 by Giacomo Corna Pellegrini and published by UTET.

Also, it is appropriate to cite the AGEI “East Asia and Oceania Workgroup”, strongly promoted by Corna Pellegrini as well, who, a decade ago, asked his colleague Mario Fumagalli to succeed him as the director. Since then, the latter has also dealt with this part of the world, managing, among other things, the editing of two major works that represented it as part of a complex geo-economic system of a global scale (2009, 2013).

These are just a few of the works devoted in the last years to East Asia in general and China in particular: indeed, the interest of Italian researchers towards this area of the planet has matured, especially in more recent years, involving scholars of many other disciplines, interested in investigating and evaluating the many and sometimes contradictory aspects of its social, economic, and cultural modernization and modernity (Mitter, 2009). This resulted in an extensive written production and the organization of several conferences, which have seen the cooperation not only of geographers but also linguists, political scientists, historians,

sociologists, economists, and experts in international relations (two titles among the most recent are, for instance: “Inside the ‘China model’. Political framework and economic development” and “Asia between past and future. Conference in remembrance of Enrica Collotti Pischel ten years after her passing”, held in Rome in November 2010 and in Milan in November 2013 respectively).

On the thrust of this dynamic and growing interest, Dino Gavinelli and Flavio Lucchesi thought of involving fellow Unimi geographers in a investigation that focused on China, through which everyone could apply their own research interests to this specific case, providing a set of new and synergistic contributions aimed at deepening the knowledge of this country. The help and cooperation of sinologist Alessandra Lavagnino, who, also in her roles as Director of the Interdepartmental Center for Research on Contemporary Asia and Co-Director of the Confucius Institute of Milan, backed and supported the initiative with great enthusiasm and professionalism, made it possible to organize a Study Day held at the University of Milan on November 25th, 2013.

This volume contains the proceedings of the said meeting, during which topics related to different branches of geography were addressed: from historical to economic, political, cultural, population, tourism, urban, and regional geography; all bearing in mind, in some cases, China’s relations with Italy, in order to establish a framework to be read based on different perspectives and scales.

A large contribution by Flavio Lucchesi opens the volume. It examines which representation of China was given between the last decades of the nineteenth century and the outbreak of the First World War, in the *Bollettino della Società Geografica Italiana* (Bulletin of the Italian Geographical Society), the first geographical magazine in Italy. The attention paid to every type of news available led to the consultation of highly heterogeneous materials: from records, “agency news”, sidebars, short updates (often taken and translated from scientific texts published in other European countries), to reports, proper articles, and real essays written by travelers and Italian or foreign scholars with different backgrounds, who went to such a vast and distant region to explore unknown territories, calculating their exact geographic location, describing the lives of the people, and evaluating resources which may be of interest for trade with the West. With regard to the latter topic, for example, among the consulted writings there is an abundance of news on the economic wealth (from agricultural to minerals and

industrial products), markets and trading centers, as well as regarding the possibilities of import and export activities.

Long journeys made on foot, in wagons, on horseback, by boat, and by railway enabled geographers, geologists, surveyors, meteorologists, naturalists, and military personnel to visit both the coastal areas and the countryside and mountains of the interior, often traveling upstream along the rivers or crossing areas that were particularly inaccessible, and often carrying out observations and measurements, taking photographs, and collecting archaeological, historical, artistic, and bibliographic documents. The maps and illustrations that are sometimes present enrich a fairly exhaustive depiction of the most relevant aspects of the physical and anthropic geography of the country.

The descriptions bequeathed to us also describe many cities: from the big centers like Beijing and Shanghai, to regional capitals such as Changsha and Chengdu, and militarily strategic locations such as Lushunkou. Ethnographic reports on languages, traditions, and religious beliefs of the diverse populations are also quite frequent; sometimes attention is paid to cultural practices related to everyday moments (from the types of housing, to the way of dressing and eating), and there are also pieces of news regarding conflicts and political disputes, such as the consequences of the defeat in the war with Japan, or the xenophobic Boxer uprising.

The attitude of the Chinese towards the world abroad also raises a lot of interest: emphasis is placed on the cautious yet progressive modernization and greater accessibility of some provinces both in terms of adapting the infrastructure (telegraph network, electric lighting, railway links), and in terms of opening up an increasing number of ports to European countries, Japan, and the United States. This helps to delineate the image of a country whose vast size, various natural realities, history, centuries-old culture, and economy liable to an exceptional expansion, stir up in travelers a mixture of interest, fascination, respect, and, in the most careful observers, awareness of the enormous potential both in terms of internal economic development and trade on an international scale.

This geo-historical approach introduces and helps to better understand the successive contributions of the book, which, while in some cases reconstructing the recent evolution of the discussed topics, focus strongly on the contemporary aspects, presenting themes which, as we have said, bare witness to some fundamental geographical aspects related to China and its relations with the rest of the world, and more specifically with

Italy. In particular, Mario Fumagalli examines the more recent phases of China's economic development, which requires increasingly newer sources of supply of raw materials and energy, as well as market outlets for its products. Among the many problems connected to this, it is necessary to mention the presence of large internal imbalances (from the distribution of the population itself), the need for adequate transportation systems, the crisis of exports (in turn linked to the increase in wages and competition from other emerging countries), widespread corruption, and the weight of a powerful yet somehow inefficient state industry, which is above all, highly polluting.

Thus, it can be argued that the Chinese economic system is at a turning point: condensed mainly in eight rich coastal regions where the concentration of resources and manpower dominates, and in spite of some important attempts to achieve territorial balance in favor of the western regions, it appears to be already showing signs of slowing down (for example, in the annual GDP growth rate). The risk of falling into the so-called "middle income trap", previously experienced by other Asian countries, has led the government to develop the "383 Plan", which aims to maintain stable development by absorbing labor and adopting a series of reforms to reduce the difference between income and consumption: the increase in funds for the social security system, the possibility of transferring social services, and the liberalization of interest rates on deposits.

The growth model adopted so far, based on priorities such as low labor costs, the undervalued domestic currency, tendency towards exports, limited domestic demand, and a strong propensity to save, has begun to change in the direction of increased demand for consumer durables. What is more, this has affected only a part of the population, which is why the government is now facing the problem of rebalancing the distribution of wealth with, for example, a major reform of the pension system. But, to this end, new reforms and experimentations are also taking place, such as the opening of the Shanghai Free Trade Zone, which, soon followed by other areas of free trade, will lead, for a few years, to the reduction of many constraints that have traditionally influenced some fundamental economic and social sectors. Moreover, we shall not forget the recent governmental inquiries against corruption in large state-owned enterprises, starting with the oil sector.

In addition, while the explosive growth of the Chinese economy in 2009 led to China becoming the world's largest exporter, surpassing Germany,

its dependence on foreign countries, with regard to energy sources (oil, natural gas, coal), foodstuffs (soy and other grains), the components of high-tech products, and finished quality products, is always stronger. This has contributed to the indispensable development of a dense global network of communications, by land, sea, air, and telematics.

Of particular interest are the opportunities that this set of phenomena opens to the Italian economy. In this sense, the productive specialization of the Italian manufacturing system makes our exports to China focus not so much on the products of mechanical engineering (although the role of component engineering is significant), but rather, and above all, on goods belonging to the fields of fashion and interior design: on the one hand, our luxury brands are considered true status symbols, and, on the other hand, the so-called “affordable luxury” (meaning mid-level yet good quality luxury), rigorously Italian, is experiencing growing success. The wealthy Chinese want the original product and not its copies, which they produce themselves. Italian tourism in China deserves special mention, as it will be discussed further on.

The new Chinese leadership led by Xi Jinping places emphasis on the concept of the “Chinese Dream”, focused on confidence in the future and the ability to rejuvenate: observers study and monitor with great interest (and not without some doubts) whether this is realistic and concrete, or rather empty and utopian.

Strictly connected to this is the topic concerning the recent and “overwhelming” growth of Chinese cities, which, despite being in some ways connected to the broader phenomenon of the current establishment of world and global cities (equipped with a wide range of activities and functions, including the rarest and most innovative services in the quaternary sector), also presents highly-characterizing peculiarities. In this regard, Ghilla Roditi and Eleonora Mastropietro point out how, within the lively picture of the development of metropolitan regions and transnational urban networks that drive the current dynamics of world economic relations, the Chinese case constitutes a reality increasingly followed and studied in recent decades by specialists from different disciplines, led by experts in social sciences (among which geography or related areas of research are included). In particular, the urbanization in China has begun to animate the debates in the international arena since the 1970s, to then record a clear and progressive increase of references in the 2000s, further increased again after 2010.

As a matter of fact, the so-called “slow urbanization” that characterized the country until the beginning of the 1980s was followed by a process of opening to the outside and economic development that in a few decades profoundly transformed Chinese society, bringing about, among other outcomes, a relentless influx of population to urban areas, primarily located along the east coast (as a result of industrialization and the creation of special economic zones) and in the inner provinces (following the construction of new towns on the basis of a project planned and pursued at the central level).

This complex and varied process of urbanization has therefore attracted the interest of specialists, who have predominantly dedicated their studies in recent years to the investigation of issues such as the existing relationship among Chinese cities, global cities, urban networks and processes of globalization; the issues related to urban expansion, sprawl, and new towns; critical issues related to pollution, equity and social justice, and the level of quality of life.

The examination and interpretation of these areas of investigation have revealed two main opposing aspects. On the one hand, the “external projection” of the large Chinese urban regions, aimed at spreading a new image of international competitiveness, one that is highly focused on great events as a showcase for the branding and spectacularization of a renewed and very modern urban landscape. On the other hand, the undeniable critical internal aspects linked to: the speculation in construction that has affected the real estate bubbles of the so-called “new towns”, air and water pollution, problems of a social nature, and, more generally, the conditions of quality of life in a scenario that is somehow undoubtedly confirmed as one of the most significant ones in which to analyze the most current phenomena of the global urban panorama.

At this point, among the possible derivations the common thread of these considerations leads us to reflect on how China, this giant behemoth that draws the attention of the world with increasing force, has approached, and approaches, international relations. Antonio Violante dedicates his attention to addressing this sensitive and complex issue, pointing out that the People’s Republic of China, born from the communist revolution in 1949, knew from the very beginning a dynamism on the international level that broke a centuries-old isolation inaugurated in the fifteenth century by the Ming rulers. In the West there is a widespread perception that China reopened to the world with Deng Xiaoping’s reforms in the seventies; in truth, reasons of a mainly political nature had previously