

US Losing Its Naval Supremacy

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The science of geopolitics commonly makes use of the geographical dualism “land and sea”. The great world powers are thus classified as land-based powers or sea-base powers, according to their attitudes. A country that chooses to develop on land has a focus on regional growth, demarcated by the land borders of the continent, seeking to affirm a zone of influence in a given location. The powers that choose to develop by the sea tend to expand outside their continental zones, creating zones of influence on any continent they reach by sea.

Traditionally, Russia and China are classified as land powers and the United States of America as a sea power. The American nation is a historical heir to England, which for a long time reigned sovereign over the oceans. American geopolitics, therefore, is based on tactics of expansion by the sea, allowing this country to act in areas outside its continent, influencing the whole world and thus guaranteeing its global hegemonic power.

It turns out, however, that the advancement of the Chinese Navy may definitively end this American naval supremacy. This week the Chinese fleet in training returned to its base, ending a long and daring journey of more than 40 days across different regions of the Pacific Ocean, an area over which the United States has for long claimed to maintain supremacy. The mission was a complete and extremely advanced military exercise, with rescue training, cannon fire, missile launch, and ship refueling. In their fleet, the Chinese carried several equipment, such as the guided missile destroyer Hohhot, the Xianning missile frigate, the electronic surveillance vessel Tianshuxing and the refueling vessel Chaganhu.

With the exercise, China crossed the International Date Line, which delimits the West and East zones of the globe. “Crossing the International Date Line means that the Chinese Navy is active not only in the Western Pacific Ocean, but that it will gradually advance in the Central and Eastern Pacific”, said Beijing naval expert Li Jie. According to this expert, China has demonstrated that it has sufficient capacity to end American naval supremacy in the oceans in the coming years, being able to freely sail through any area, including the Atlantic Ocean.

At first, some may think that China is provoking the US with these acts. However, in reality, it is a response. For a long time, American naval supremacy created the false idea that these areas of the Pacific and Atlantic Oceans were some kind of “American territory”. This is a myth to be debunked. The oceans have their own legal status, which places them as “international territories” – areas over which no state can claim sovereignty. In addition, Washington’s maritime policies are becoming increasingly aggressive in the last years.

Not long ago, the US launched two MQ-4C Triton reconnaissance drones to the Andersen Air Force base, in Guam. The purpose of the American military with these drones is to publicly spy on the military activities of China and North Korea, capturing surveillance information

that is immediately passed on to the Pentagon. “The introduction of the MQ-4C Triton in the area of Seventh Fleet operations increases the scope of maritime patrol and the reconnaissance capabilities of the US Navy in the western Pacific,” said U.S. Navy Commander Peter Garvin. These drones have a range of 13,000 kilometers and can fly for up to 24 hours, according to data from the Military Watch. Its relentless work in the peaceful zone will collect more intelligence information about China and North Korea than any other technology used so far for the same function.

Also this year, the United States sent a warship to the Spratly Islands, a disputed territory in southern China, in response to the installation of Chinese military bases in the region. The Americans call these maneuvers “freedom of navigation operations” and claim they are peaceful maritime movements. However, what would be the “peaceful interest” in sending highly equipped battleships to areas occupied by a regional power in its continental surroundings?

The distinction between a sea-based potency and a land-based potency can be clearly seen here. China claims sovereignty over a series of islands close to its territory, which make up its subcontinent. The USA, however, with its maritime geopolitics, tries to intervene in areas completely outside its continental territory and acts as a global police, monitoring the military operations of any country in the world.

At the end of last year, Beijing officially demanded that the United States cease its “freedom of navigation operations” on islands in the sea of South China, classifying such operations as provocative. Washington has arbitrarily ignored the Chinese requirement and is now dealing with a simple response from the Asian country, which, for the first time, carried out maritime operations of the same content.

What we are witnessing is the change in China’s attitude towards its geopolitics, from a terrestrial program to a program of greater attention to the seas. It is likely that in a short time Beijing will be disputing the sovereignty of the oceans with the USA and this will allow other countries to undertake projects of the same nature, creating a truly multipolar sea.

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