

The Last Five Decades of Sino-Portuguese Relations: The Quest for the Belt and Road Initiative

As últimas cinco décadas das relações sino-portuguesas:
A busca pela “Belt and Road Initiative”

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RESUMO

Este trabalho de investigação analisa as últimas cinco décadas das relações sino-portuguesas e antecipa o futuro desta relação bilateral, dez anos após o lançamento da iniciativa da rota da seda do século XXI (B&RI). Estas cinco décadas podem ser divididas em três grandes períodos e sete fases. Por um lado, em 2013, capitalizando a transformação de sua economia, a China lançou a B&RI. Esta iniciativa pode ser entendida como uma política económica global infraestrutural, multissetorial e multiator, projetada não apenas para promover o acesso consentido a mercados e centros de produção, mas também para contribuir para a criação de uma rede de fluxos económicos (Leandro & Duarte, 2020b, p. XII), bem como promover novas formas de interação

para o desenvolvimento e, talvez até, um novo modelo de relações internacionais. Por outro lado, Portugal encara a B&RI como uma oportunidade para continuar o processo de desmaterialização das fronteiras (Leandro & Duarte, 2020a), capitalizando as vantagens únicas das relações diplomáticas sino-portuguesas, designadamente a herança portuguesa na RAE de Macau, a adesão de Portugal à Comunidade da Países de Língua Portuguesa, onde é a segunda economia mais importante, a adesão à União Europeia (UE) e a sua posição como uma das 50 economias mais dinâmicas do mundo. A B&RI tem potencial para reduzir a condição geográfica periférica de Portugal no contexto do espaço da UE, explorar as imensas oportunidades oferecidas pela expansão da plataforma continental no contexto do triângulo estratégico português (Açores-Madeira-Portugal Continental) e, redesenhar as suas relações de cooperação entre os países de língua portuguesa, entre os quais Portugal ocupa o primeiro lugar no “doing business index” (2022). Estas diferentes fases, perspetivas e interesses conduzem à formulação da nossa questão principal de investigação: tendo por base a B&RI e a relação única entre a China e Portugal, o que podemos esperar do futuro da cooperação sino-portuguesa? Esta questão é particularmente importante no contexto das atuais tensões geo-económicas entre as potências económicas globais e do facto de Portugal ser um estado membro da UE. Esta investigação adota um modelo de diplomacia económica como a sua referência principal.

Palavras-chave: República Portuguesa; República Popular da China; Relações Bilaterais; “Belt and Road Initiative”

ABSTRACT

This research paper analyzes the last five decades of Sino-Portuguese relations and anticipates the future of this bilateral relationship, ten years after the inception of the Belt and Road Initiative (B&RI). These five decades can be divided into three major periods and seven phases. On the one hand, in 2013, capitalizing on the transformation of its economy, China launched the B&RI. This initiative can be perceived as a major global infrastructural, multi-sectoral, and multi-actor economic policy, designed not only to foster access with consent to markets and production centers, but also to contribute to creating a network of economic flows (Leandro & Duarte, 2020b, p. xii) as well as to advance new forms of interaction for development, and perhaps even a new model for international relations. On another hand, Portugal regards the B&RI as an opportunity to continue de-bordering (Leandro & Duarte, 2020a), capitalizing on the unique advantages of Sino-Portuguese diplomatic relations, namely the Portuguese heritage in the Macau SAR, Portugal’s membership in the Community of the Portuguese-speaking countries, where it is the second most important economy, its European Union (EU) membership, and its position as one of the world’s top 50 most dynamic economies. The B&RI has the potential to reduce the peripheral geographic condition of Portugal in the context of the EU space, explore the immense opportunities offered by the expansion of the continental shelf in the context of the strategic Portuguese triangle (Azores-Madeira-Continental Portugal), and redesign its cooperative relations among Portuguese-speaking countries, among which Portugal ranks first in the “doing business index” (2022). These different phases, perspectives, and interests lead to the formulation of our research question: Based on the B&RI and the

unique relationship between China and Portugal, what can we expect from the future of Sino-Portuguese cooperation? This question is particularly important in the context of the current geo-economic tensions between global economic powers, and the fact that Portugal is an EU member state. This paper adopts an economic diplomacy model as a main reference.

Keywords: Portuguese Republic; People's Republic of China; Bilateral Relations and Belt and Road Initiative

1. Introduction

Sino-Portuguese relations have been contextualized with Portugal designated not only as a “special friend” of the People's Republic of China (hereafter China) in Europe (Wise, 2020), but also, at times, even as “China's best friend in the European Union” (hereafter EU) (Wejchert, 2021, p. 3). Since its inception, the Belt and Road Initiative (hereafter B&RI) has been on both sides' agenda, with Lisbon assuring that Portugal “firmly supports” the B&RI and Beijing asserting that “China treats Portugal as an important partner for joint construction under the Belt and Road Initiative” (Xinhua, 2018b). The steadfastness of Sino-Portuguese relations is perhaps even more unequivocally depicted as follows: In 2020, the U.S. Ambassador to Portugal suggested that “Portugal must choose between ‘friends and allies’ [i.e., the U.S.] and economic partners [i.e., China]” (Glass, 2020), to which the Portuguese Minister of Foreign Affairs Silva rebutted, “In Portugal, the Portuguese people are the titleholders of their own decisions” (2020). The current state of Sino-Portuguese relations can be further depicted, under a political framework of comprehensive strategic partnership, by a number of high-level state visits (Table 2), involvement in Forum Macau, the level of Chinese foreign direct investment (hereafter FDI) in Portugal, formal Portuguese participation in the B&RI, as well as by unconditional Chinese support for Antonio Guterres's candidacy to the UNSG in 2016 and 2021, and a continuum of investment in economic diplomacy.

Sino-Portuguese relations are 500 years old and have contributed remarkably to globalization. Portugal was first to establish a global sea trade network connecting the Americas, Europe, Africa, and Asia, and, using a strategy of investment in maritime knowledge, innovation, and occupation of global choke points, becoming the first global entity to understand how using modern trade and investment may craft international relations. China, on the other hand, has always been a continental power and an ancient civilization, having established the ancient Silk Road as a network of Eurasian trade corridors that played a central role in promoting global economic, cultural, political, and re-

ligious interactions. Both China and Portugal have promoted long-term global people-to-people exchanges for mutual benefits.

The 500 years of Sino-Portuguese relations can be divided into three distinct periods and seven intertwined phases (Table 1): (1) In the first period, we observe an effort to assert a sort of historical compromise with a view to attaining mutual gains within the fundamental interests of imperial China and colonial Portugal; (2) In the second period we note the prominence of the so-called “question of Macau”; (3) Finally, since 1999, both sides have coordinated their efforts to establish the Macau Special Administrative Region (hereafter MSAR) of the People’s Republic of China and build up (new) bilateral relations. This last period can therefore be characterized as being dominated by a growing attitude towards economic diplomacy — defined by van Bergeijk (2009, p. 4) as the “use of government relations and government influence to stimulate international trade and investment [which] covers a broad range of semi-permanent international representations (embassies, consulates and other public sector business support facilities), domestic institutions (investment and export promotion offices), and diplomatic bilateral activities (trade and state visits)”; and by Lee and Brian (2018) as “the pursuit of economic security within an anarchic international system... conceived in [a] realist way [...] concerned with the economic agenda in diplomacy, which can be distinguished from the political agenda”. We thus understand economic diplomacy as a wide concept encompassing different modes of state diplomatic activities, such as commercial, trade, investment, financial, and cultural, designed to promote not only state-to-state relations but also networking and multi-stakeholder support, as well as facilitate economic security and social development.

The importance of this research is twofold: (1) Portugal’s involvement in the B&RI (Portugal signed a B&RI MoU in 2018) is attributed as the third milestone in Sino-Portuguese relations, since relations was first established in 1979 and the retrocession of the MSAR in 1999; (2) The year 2023 marks the 10th anniversary of the establishment of the B&RI. Consequently, this research revolves around the following question: Based on the B&RI and the unique relationship between China and Portugal, what can we expect from the future of Sino-Portuguese cooperation?

2. Literature Review

The director of the Platform, a Macau Newspaper, Ma Li (Nelson, 2023) asserted that Portugal is the European country that better understands China, precisely because of Macau history. Existent academic literature related to China-Portugal relations spans four main topics: (1) Macau; (2) Economic

diplomacy; (3) China and the EU; and (4) the B&RI. Ptak (1998) contributed a bibliographical essay that mainly analyzed publications on Macau and Sino-Portuguese relations published between 1980 and 1997. These publications were written in at least three languages (Chinese, Portuguese, and a number of other European languages), covering topics spanning from before the 1550s to the late 19th century, and were of these following types: (1) handbooks, (2) bibliographical tools, (3) archival sources (collections and catalogues), (4) geography and archaeology; (5) demography, sociology, biography; and (6) historical surveys. From these publications Ptak observed differences in the way people viewed Macau's past, i.e., relationship between China and Portugal, and suggested that readers should approach with an open mind (1998, p. 396).

“Research on Macau is not strictly separated from research on other sites of Portuguese activities” (Ptak, 1998, p. 345). Likewise, beyond the historical perspective, Macau has always played other important roles in Sino-Portuguese relations. The current body of academic literature (written in Chinese, Portuguese, and English) on China-Portugal relations that addresses Macau is dominated by two aspects: (1) historical questions associated with the so-called “question of Macau”; (2) the legal status of MSAR in light of the 1987 Joint Declaration between the governments of China and Portugal. The former is illustrated by publications such as Fernandes (1997), Loureiro (1999), Alves (1999), Chan (2003), Yee (2001), Clayton (2009), Hao (2011), Mendes et al. (2011), Wu (2013), Mendes (2013); the latter involves a considerable number of publications such as Oliveira and Cardinal (2009), Zeng (2009), Song (2015), Leandro (2016).

Lately, we have also observed a number of publications discussing the bilateral relations between China and Portugal contextualized in specific fields, with particular emphasis on economic diplomacy. Leandro and Afonso-Henriques (2019) examine the interplay between diplomatic and economic bilateral relations through the lens of political factors, and conclude that acts of economic diplomacy and the development of bilateral economic relations are positively correlated. Although data shows that Chinese investments in the energy sector in Southern Europe (Portugal) have been highly opportunistic, they have attained apparent growth over the last decade, thereby paving the way for further strategic cooperation between China and Portugal (Pareja-Alcaraz, 2017). Fernandes (2021) further believes that China's foreign investment in Europe (not just in Portugal) cannot be completely severed from the current and future global political atmosphere (p. 31). Conducting research on the goals and possible consequences of Chinese investments in Portugal in the past ten years (2010–2020), he points out that “a solid analysis through

a long period of time (perhaps a new decade)” is needed to clearly discern whether such investments have been for purely economic benefits, geopolitical ambitions, or both (p. 32). On the 40th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between China and Portugal, Zhang (2019) reviewed the cooperation between the two countries in terms of economy, trade, investment, and scientific and technological innovation, believing that the scale of economic and trade cooperation between them, though small, was innovative. In the scientific and maritime aspects, both countries also have great potential for cooperation. Liu and Zhang (2020) collected data on trade in goods, trade in services, direct investment, engineering, and contracting between China and Portugal, and carried out a quantitative analysis. Their main findings are: (1) bilateral trade in goods, China’s investment in Portugal, and contracting for construction have grown rapidly in the past ten years; (2) trade between China and Portugal is very uneven — Portugal has a large deficit in trade in goods and services with China, and China’s investment in Portugal is far more than Portugal’s investment in China; (3) “machinery and transport equipment”, “transportation services”, and “travel services” are the focuses of economic and trade cooperation between China and Portugal.

Since the outbreak of COVID-19, not only have individuals’ lives changed, but misunderstandings have grown due to various barriers in international relations among countries. Fernandes et al. (2022) replicated a project conducted by Turcsanyi et al. (2020) on Europeans’ public opinion on China in the age of COVID-19, focusing specifically on the Portuguese, and revealed that “Portuguese public opinion is generally more suspicious and critical of China than Portuguese government policies suggest” (p. 47). The unfolding rivalry between China and the U.S. has also put Portugal, an EU member, in a dilemma between keeping up “unfailing commitment to the U.S. and loyalty to the EU”, and having an “economic relationship with Beijing” (Arena, 2022). In addition to the aforementioned publications that address Sino-Portuguese relations directly, much research has also been conducted to examine Sino-Portuguese relations in the context of China-Europe relations or using Portugal as a case study (Sandschneider, 2002; Breda, 2015; Corre, 2018a; Rodrigues, 2022).

The year 2023 will mark the tenth year since the B&RI was proposed; within this past decade, the B&RI has been a hot topic for academic work. There have been plenty of related academic publications focusing on different perspectives, priority fields, and various countries and/or regions, from both academia of the East and the West (Wang, 2015; Lim et al., 2016; Griffiths, 2017; Chaisse & Górski, 2018; Liu, 2019; Ye, 2020; Liow et al., 2021; Arase & Car-

valho, 2022; Duarte et al., 2023). However, publications presenting academic research specifically on Portugal and China and the B&RI, though scarce, exist: It was China that first showed an interest in the port of Sines — arguably the first B&RI-related project in Portugal (Rodrigues, 2016, p. 49) — though it did not receive any bids in 2021 (Reuters, 2021). From the perspectives of geopolitics and geoeconomics of Portugal, Leandro & Duarte (2020a) assess Portugal's relevance in the B&RI, offering discussions that revolve around the geopolitical value of the Beja Airport, Praia da Vitória, Leixões and Sines deep-water seaports, the Lajes Aero naval base in the Azores, blue economy partnership, the establishment of technological labs, and triangular/trilateral cooperation, concluding that Portugal is literally the ultimate European border. Da Silva and Pereira (2020) elaborate on the importance of the B&RI to the Atlantic Ocean, arguing that Portugal's maritime assets are important in the Atlantic area, where trade flows intersect those of northern Europe. In terms of energy investment, Corre (2018b) believes that although China has successfully become involved in expanding energy networks into other Portuguese-speaking countries (hereafter PSCs) such as Brazil, Angola, and Mozambique through cooperation with Portuguese energy companies, the privatization of major parts of Portugal's national power utility (Energias de Portugal) and national grid (Redes Energéticas Nacionais) has also caused government concerns regarding long-term national security (p. 170).

This research takes the aforementioned multiple perspectives relating to Sino-Portuguese relations and in particular the B&RI into consideration, while adopting a qualitative methodology, data triangulation, and an inductive approach.

3. Discussion and Analysis

3.1 The Sino-Portuguese relations

Historically, Sino-Portuguese bilateral relations were framed by three sequential periods (Table 1): Period A — until the creation of PRC and the establishment of Sino-Portuguese diplomatic relations; Period B — dominated by the so-called “the question of Macau” (until 1999); Period C — dominated by the establishment of MSAR and the building up of a new bilateral relationship (post 1999).

Period A (Table 1) is characterizable by the idea of China and Portugal sharing trade for mutual benefits while preserving their fundamental interests. This period contains three distinct phases (A1 + A2 + A3):

TABLE 1
The Timeline of 500 Years of Sino-Portuguese Relations

PERIOD A			PERIOD B			PERIOD C				
Until the creation of PRC and the Establishment of Diplomatic Relations			Dominated by the so-called “the question of Macau”			Dominated by the MSAR establishment and building up of a new bilateral relationship				
Asserting a historical compromise looking for mutual gains within their fundamental interests		Portuguese Administration under the Chinese Sovereignty					Transitional Phase (1999-2049)			
		Dual jurisdiction over Macau	Contractual presence of Portugal & Macau retrocession				The inception of a new era	Intensification of economic diplomacy and trilateral cooperation		
Imperial China and the Portuguese Monarchy			The Modern China and The Democratic Portuguese Republic (in the context of the European Union Membership)							
1513	1573	Colonial Portugal	1971	1986	1999	2000	2003	2005	2019	
		1582-1911-1949	1976	1987				2013		
			1979					2018		
PHASES			PHASES			PHASES				
A1	A2	A3	B1	B2		C1			C2	

Source: Author and Yichao Li.

A1 (Arrival and asserting a historical compromise)

The Portuguese and Chinese perspectives diverge regarding this historical period, but there is consensual recognition of Macau’s extraordinary importance as a territory positioned to facilitate/support regional commercial activities. Indeed, Macau (“ao men” in the local language) literally means “gateway of a (sea) port”. Thus, Macau has always been a strong link between Portugal, who sought to promote maritime international trade in East Asia, and Imperial China, who was concerned with putting the presence of foreigners under control and possibly securing a share of the commercial exchange. The year 1513 most likely marked the arrival of Portuguese sailors at the estuaries of Zhujiang (Pearl River) and the beginning of a system of fruitful exchanges with mainland China (Leandro, 2016, p. 59). In this initial phase, mutual benefits were a key reason for granting the Portuguese consent to be in Macau. Oliveira and Cardinal (2009, pp. 224–227) put emphasis on two aspects of this initial Portuguese presence in Macau: (1) Consent was given by the Chinese authorities to only the Portuguese, not an additional third party. Several historical facts even suggest that the Chinese in fact gave consent for a Portu-

guese administration in Macau. (2) In 1557, the Ming Court also approved the establishment of a permanent official Portuguese trade base as well as a permanent Portuguese settlement in Macau (Ferreira, 2010, p. 39). As such, the Portuguese represented not only a permanent source of income (tax) but also an enduring military force to protect the Chinese territory from pirates, the Dutch, and the British.

A2 (Consolidating a historical compromise)

Elaborating on the idea of a continued quest for cooperation, Alves (1999, pp. 147–161) posits that 16th-century Sino-Portuguese relations was dominated by a search for diplomatic understanding, but acknowledges the fact that the Portuguese were looking for conquests in Guangdong and Fujian. Alves (1999, p. 29) characterizes the overall relationship between the Portuguese and Chinese authorities using the word “tension”, particularly citing the 1620 dispute over “Green Island” as the first major crisis in the relationship. For the Portuguese, Macau had represented a gateway to not only Guangdong but also the most prosperous parts of China (Hao, 2011, p. 13), and, in 1564, the provincial Chinese authorities even asked the Portuguese to curb an unrest on a Chinese naval fleet returning from Fujian. This, together with support against piracy, reinforces the notion that the Portuguese were indeed granted a certain “informal territorial rights”. Notably, in 1557, the Portuguese’s presence in Macau was the subject of an authorization by the Chinese Emperor as a preventive reward, and ground rent payments began in 1573. Loureiro (1999, p. 30) refers to this period as an “age of compromise”, with Portugal being a sort of “tenant” in China, mainly due to the fact that the consent had an objective and material interest as well as a patriotic concern (Leandro, 2016, pp. 59–60).

A3 (Dual jurisdiction over Macau)

The Portuguese settlement in Macau from 1557 to 1601 was peaceful and prosperous. However, between 1601 and 1688, the Dutch launched several unsuccessful attacks on Macau (particularly in 1622) – It is important to note that, between 1580 and 1640, Portugal was under Spanish rule. The Chinese were neither interested in fighting the Dutch directly nor helping them fight the Portuguese in Macau. They were only interested in controlling the borders (they even built a barrier gate and a customhouse) and receiving annual rent (payments were given to the local Chinese authorities, not to the Portuguese King). As Mendes (2013, p. 10) mentions, the rent was worth 500 taels (Chinese silver monetary unit – weight » 50 grams), and custom duties were worth 20,000 taels, which in effect shows that the Chinese had a *de facto* tacit acceptance of

foreign presence in Macau. In sum, between the 16th and 18th centuries, Macau was under dual Chinese-Portuguese jurisdiction and shared sovereignty (Hao, 2011, p. 39). China retained sovereignty (“sovereignty” here not used in the modern, post-Westphalian sense) and Chinese residents were subjected to Chinese law, but the territory was under Portuguese administration.

In 1582, a land lease was signed and an annual rent was paid to the Xiangshan County (Leandro, 2016, 62). Interestingly, Wu (2013, pp. 110–113) refers to Macau as a “public space” in terms of social and commercial coexistence, while highlighting two exceptionally important facts: (1) The Ming (1368–1644) and Qing (1644–1919) dynasties treated Portuguese-administered Macau as “a foreign special district... that pays a rent...”, a commercial destination, and a reward for helping the Chinese fight against pirates and foreigners (as they had done against the Dutch in 1622); (2) a collection of Portuguese official documentation recognized Chinese sovereignty over Macau. In 1688 the Chinese built a customhouse in Macau (Mendes, 2013, p. 10). The idea of Macau as a commercial destination was again emphasized in 1733 by the emperor Yongzheng, when he wanted all foreign trade going inland to go through Macau, in order to prevent a growing British trade influence. In 1808, to avoid direct confrontation, the Portuguese allowed British forces to station in Macau, under the condition that the Portuguese flag would fly (Hao, 2011, p. 23). In addition, in this historic moment, the consent over the Portuguese presence was reinforced when the Chinese prepared to fight against British presence in Macau. The British finally withdrew from Macau, while the Portuguese remained.

The next period was characterized by the Opium Wars, which ended in epic humiliation of the Chinese and the signing of the Treaty of Nanking (1842) through which Hong Kong was ceded to the British. The so-called “unequal treaties” are a corresponding line of international shame that profoundly damaged the pride of the Chinese nation. The unequal treaties were a collection of international treaties following the Opium Wars that gave “foreigners substantial concessions in trade, tariffs, right of residence, extra-territoriality, most favored nations, and redress for damages. Britain was also given Hong Kong Island” (Dreyer, 2012, p. 48). As noticeably documented in the Commemorative Gallery of Macau’s Basic Law, all requests by the Portuguese authorities to have more freedom of movement and to be exempted from paying the land lease following the Treaty of Nanking, which marks the end of the First Opium War (1839–1842), were turned down by the Chinese authorities. This fact emphasizes once again the importance of consent in Sino-Portuguese relations. History would repeat itself after the Treaty of Beijing (1860) with a second set of the unequal treaties. In 1862, Portugal signed the

first Treaty of Friendship and Trade with China. The treaty did not mention the issue of sovereignty over Macau, again somehow respected the different concepts of the existing consent. In fact, the Treaty of Friendship and Trade of 1862 was never ratified by China and therefore became void. The Treaty contained trade clauses but also attempted to redefine the legal status of Macau: Article II annulled earlier agreements and referred to Macau as “formerly in the Province of Canton”, while Article III recognized the status of a “Governor General of Macau” (Ride & Ride, 1989, pp. 54-56). Nevertheless, the Portuguese Constitution of 1822 (and later the 1933 Portuguese Constitution) gave Macau the status of being a constituent of Portuguese territory.

In 1887, another treaty was signed – The Sino-Portuguese Treaty of Peking between the Kingdom of Portugal and the Qing Dynasty (中葡北京條約 – *Tratado de Amizade e Comércio Sino-Português*), which was ratified in April 1888. The document attempted to give Portugal perpetual colonial rights over the territory of Macau and in return, Portugal would cooperate in efforts to end the smuggling of opium. Regrettably, this treaty is considered part of the “unequal treaties” that took place in the aftermath of the opium wars. Ghai (2007) makes mention that China feels particularly humiliated at its treatment by European powers (particularly Britain) in the XIX and XX centuries. Among many other European nations, also the Kingdom of Portugal was party to one of these second sets of treaties, namely the Sino-Portuguese Treaty of Peking. The definition of borders remained unresolved. The controversy was based around two concepts. The first was the definition of unequal treaty and the second the consequences of such international treaties. Again as stated by Ghai (2007, pp. 9-12) “although some classic scholars of international law like Grotius has distinguished between equal and unequal treaties, and defined unequal treaties as lacking reciprocity and imposing permanent burdens on one of the States, they did not say that unequal treaties were invalid, merely urging that so far as possible treaties should be equal... A modern formulation published in 1991 by Jilin People’s defines unequal treaties as those concluded by the coercion of one party through unjust methods with the aim of imposing unequal obligations to other party”. The consequence seems to be the search for equilibrium in the case of free negotiation, or nullity in the case of negotiation under coercion.

Between 1911 and 1949, China was involved in three revolutions – against foreign occupation, against nationalism, and against feudalism – and that struggle eventually culminated in the declaration of the People’s Republic of China by Chairman Mao Zedong’s in 1949. After 1949, the regime appeared to have made two unsuccessful attempts to establish diplomatic relations with

Portugal in 1949 and 1954 (Leandro, 2016, p. 65). However, China did not apply strong enough pressure to establish relations with Portugal because the Chinese recognized that Portugal had de facto administrative control over Macau.

The second and third periods (B and C in Table 1) are characterized by an initial ideological antagonism with later traces of pragmatism for mutual benefits. From these two periods we identify four distinct phases:

B1 (Modern China and the Colonial Portuguese Republic)

After the establishment of People's Republic of China, relations between China and Portugal remained tense, rifted by the question of Macau and by a colonial policy that led to the liberation wars between 1961 and 1974 in Portuguese colonial territories. There was, however, perhaps an interesting point of diplomatic convergence: in 1971, a relevant diplomatic event took place despite the two states having held different positions not only in relation to Macau but also in relation to the global system of international relations — Portugal voted for the recognition of China as a unique representing sovereign power at the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA). The UNGA Resolution 2758/1971 was passed in response to the UNGA Resolution 1668/1961 that required any change in China's representation in the UN to be determined by a two-thirds vote according to Article 18 of the UNC. On 25 October 1971, Resolution 2758 passed, recognizing the People's Republic of China as “the only legitimate representative of China to the UN” and expelling “the representatives of Chiang Kai-shek from the place which they unlawfully occupy at the United Nations”. In the following year (1972), the territory of Macau was removed from the United Nations' list of non-self-governing territories (article 73 UNC) at the request of China — who had just replaced the Republic of China (Taiwan, ROC) in 1971 for a seat at the UN (Hua, 1972). Portugal was in consent of the removal, but no further substantial decisions were made on the “question of Macau”.

Despite these episodes of diplomatic convergence, between 1949 and 1974, lingering political differences prevented any rapprochement, as, for China, Macau was a Chinese territory administrated by Portugal at the consent of China, but, for Portugal, Macau was an overseas province and Portugal therefore exercised full sovereign rights over it. Its removal from the United Nations' list of non-self-governing territories deprived Macau of a third option: self-determination or having a third party voice in the subsequent process to become (likely) an international entity.

Notwithstanding, on 10 April that same year — 15 days before the Portuguese Carnation Revolution on 25 April 1974 — Deng Xiaoping delivered a

scathing criticism of Portuguese colonialists and imperialist policies in his “Three Worlds” speech at a UNGA special session (Leandro & Afonso-Henriques, 2019):

The case of the developed countries in between the superpowers and the developing countries is a complicated one. Some of them still retain colonialist relations of one form or another with Third World countries, and a country like Portugal even continues with its barbarous colonial rule. An end must be put to this state of affairs. At the same time, all these developed countries are in varying degrees controlled, threatened or bullied by the one superpower or the other. (Xiaoping, 1974)

The Carnation Revolution and the Portuguese’s decolonization policy paved the way for a new constitution (of 1976) and therefore a pragmatic solution to the so-called “question of Macau”. Amidst this context of political and diplomatic challenges, the first sign of willingness to thaw the relationship was made after the 1974 Portuguese revolution, through a 1975 official press release from the Portuguese Minister of Foreign Affairs, declaring Portugal’s intention to establish relations with all countries including China (Mendes, 2013, p. 25). The first public reaction to the events in Portugal was given by Chinese Prime Minister Zhou Enlai (周恩来, Chou En lai). During a banquet on 6 May 1974 in Beijing in honor of President Leopold Sedar Senghor of Senegal, the head of the Chinese government defended the change of political regime in Portugal as representing “a shameful defeat of the Portuguese colonialist policy of sad fame”, adding: “The fall of Caetano’s reactionary regime represents [a] great victory for the African peoples. The situation on the African continent is very encouraging” (Fernandes, 2010, p. 26). However, the future of Portuguese decolonization policy was yet undecided, and uncertainties lingered: during the 18th UNESCO general conference, which aimed to mark, among other topics, the return of the new Portuguese regime to this specialized UN body, the deputy head of the Portuguese delegation, Ambassador Coimbra Martins gave a speech thanking Portugal for its support for readmission, causing the delegations from China and Guinea Conakry to leave the plenary session in protest on 26 October 1974 (Fernandes, 2010, p. 39).

B2 (Modern China and the Democratic Portuguese Republic)

A new phase of Sino-Portuguese relations opened with the assurance that the Portuguese government was in a process of decolonization by virtue of recognizing the independence of GuineaBissau and Cabo Verde on 29 August 1974, and by passing a new Portuguese Constitution (of 1976) (§4 article 5 and

article 306), which categorized Macau as a “territory under Portuguese Administration and is governed by a special statute”. This new understanding of the legal status of Macau, led China and the Republic of Portugal to establish diplomatic relations in 1979. Portugal thereby recognized the Government of China as the only legal Government of China, while Taiwan was an integral part of China.

Ideological challenges between Beijing and Lisbon continued after the Carnation Revolution. Consequently, Portugal persisted in making efforts to clarify its decolonization to the international community. In the first week of June 1974, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mário Soares sent a Portuguese mission to New York to inform the United Nations and various member states of the progress on decolonization made by the Portuguese government. Consisting of Jorge Sampaio and João Cravinho, this mission met with an assistant to the UNSG and representatives from 17 permanent missions. According to the press, Jorge Sampaio stated: “[There] is still an attempt with the delegation of the People’s Republic of China, which did not come to fruition, without however having any ill will to influence this impossibility” (Fernandes, 2010, p. 29). However, the clarifications provided by the new Portuguese regime created unfounded fears in Beijing that Portugal intended to hold a plebiscite on the decolonization of the Macau enclave (Fernandes, 2010, p. 29). Indeed, Macau had been removed from the UN list of non-self-governing territories in 1972. Although China did not in any way intend to have Macau and Hong Kong decolonized, it nevertheless sought to obtain political assurances from the Portuguese government in relation to Macau in exchange for the normalization of diplomatic relations between Beijing and Lisbon. The main counterpart was the guarantee by the Portuguese central government that it would be available to enter into political negotiations with the People’s Republic of China regarding the future of Macau when it was politically convenient for Beijing to prevent Macau from being treated as a colonial territory. That fact had three very important implications: (1) Neither the Chinese nor the Portuguese population was supposed to be consulted; (2) The Legislative Assembly of Macau should not be consulted as foreseen by the organic statute; and (3) The national parliament in Portugal was not supposed to be directly and actively involved in the retrocession process as required by the Portuguese Constitution.

Mário Soares, in an interview given to the weekly newspaper *Expresso* on 12 October 1974, observed: “The Portuguese government has always said that Macau’s problem does not have a colonial root. It’s a slightly different problem. We are in China by an agreement between Portugal and the old China and we understand that our current presence in that region, under the terms

in which it is practiced today, will have to result from a bilateral agreement with the People's China. People's China has not wanted to establish normal diplomatic relations with Portugal, citing the fact that we have not yet completed the decolonization process" (Fernandes, 2010, p. 38). Moreover, it was only after the start of the decolonization process that China showed interest in inquiring about the normalization of relations between the two states. Veiga Simão, Portuguese Ambassador to the UN in New York, informed the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on 8 October 1974 (Simão, 1974) that he had been informed by the permanent representative of Romania that mainland China was willing to enter into talks at the level of the United Nations with the permanent Portuguese mission. He added that he was going to meet with the Chinese Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, Qiao Guanhua, to take steps in this regard (Fernandes, 2010, p. 35). The push towards a closer position between Portugal and China continued, and on 6 January 1975, the Minister of Foreign Affairs (Melo Antunes) announced, as previously mentioned, the intention to establish relations with all countries, including China (Mendes, 2013, p. 25).

Considering the aforementioned aspects, after the passing of the 1976 constitution, legal conditions were established in preparation of diplomatic relations, as it changed the statute of Macau as a territory under Portuguese administration. However, from the Chinese side, those legal conditions had to be supplemented by three political requirements: (1) not treating the "question of Macau" as a colonial problem and the acceptance of a negotiation process leading to the retrocession of the territory until the end of the century; (2) a clear implementation of the decolonization process in relation to all the new Portuguese-speaking countries; (3) recognition of the principle of "a single China" (i.e., Taiwan is part of the PRC).

In 1978, Xinhua established a delegation in Lisbon and negotiations began in France (Paris had been selected for the inception of the negotiations to establish diplomatic relations). Both embassies had good international reputation, and, for both, ambassadors were selected based on national and international prestige. The Chinese embassy in France was also responsible for taking up issues regarding the African Portuguese-speaking countries. From the Chinese point of view, it was important to be in France due to the fact that in 1958, the Fifth Republic and General de Gaulle pursued an independent foreign policy (from the U. S.) and attached greater importance to enhancing relations with China. In light of this, China and France issued a joint communiqué on 27 January 1964, announcing the establishment of their diplomatic relations with ambassadors to be appointed within three months (Ministry of Foreign Affairs – China, 2022).

The negotiation process which led to the establishment of diplomatic relations took place at the same time as the new Organic Statute of Macau (Estatuto Orgânico de Macau) was negotiated, implemented, and revised. As emphasized by Macau Governor Garcia Leandro, “The draft of the new organic statute required the acceptance of both the Portuguese and Chinese communities, the tacit acceptance of China, and the political agreement of Portugal” (Leandro, 2011, p. 85). The Organic Statute of Macau was approved on 17 February 1976, and was revised in September 1979, May 1990, and July 1996 in accordance with the idea that the Portuguese Constitution reclassified Macau as a “Chinese territory under Portuguese administration”. The Organic Statute stipulated that the new political system of Macau would give a high degree of legislative, administrative, economic, and financial autonomy to the territory, and delegate all power to the governor and the Legislative Assembly, but, according to a note published on 6 January 1975, the Organic Statute would avoid addressing the sovereignty of Macau (Mendes, 2013, p. 27). As Garcia Leandro described, the Macau Organic Statute paved the way for the Chinese future of the territory in the following aspects: (1) The Macau Organic Statute constituted a role-model for Hong-Kong a few years later; (2) the nomination of the members of the legislative assembly with 2/3 elected seats, and not chaired by the governor; (3) The creation of security forces and the expiration of the Portuguese army branch; (4) The creation of the central bank (Leandro, 2011, p. 95).

In addition to the Organic Statute, a number of small steps encouraged diplomatic bridging before and after the establishment of diplomatic relations: In 1978, the Portugal-China Chamber of Commerce and Industry (CCILC) was created as a non-profit private entity devoted to the development of economic and commercial relations between Portugal and the People’s Republic of China; on 4 July 1980, the first Sino-Portuguese agreement for commercial cooperation was signed in Beijing and on 8 April 1982, the first agreement on technical and cultural cooperation took place; on 22 July, 1991, China and Portugal signed an agreement on cooperation in the arena of sports; and, on 3 February, 1992, an agreement to protect bilateral FDI was signed during Chinese Premier Li Peng’s visit to Lisbon.

Indeed, on 8 February 1979, the Ambassadors António Coimbra Martins and Han Kehua (韩克华) signed a joint communiqué on the establishment of diplomatic relations and a memorandum on the “issue of Macau”, which became a priority for both sides after the establishment of Sino-Portuguese diplomatic relations in 1979. In March of 1979, Portugal and China issued a joint communiqué announcing the establishment of diplomatic relations. Ambassadors from the two states also signed a memorandum on the “question of Ma-

cau” (Lima, 2018, p. 164). In the same year, both Ministers of Foreign Affairs met in New York, on the sidelines of the UNGA to initiate initial talks on the “question of Macau”. In June 1982, Deng Xiaoping made a public declaration on China’s sovereignty over Hong Kong and Macau, stating that these territories would be re-integrated into China within years under the banner of “one country, two systems” (Mendes, 2013, p. 37).

During the visit of Portuguese President Ramalho Eanes to Beijing in May of 1985, Portugal declared its willingness to open negotiations regarding the “Macau Statute”. This was, following the resumption of diplomatic relations, the first significant step to address the status of Macau. The “second negotiation” process was initiated in 1986 and concluded in the Great Hall of the People in Beijing in 1987, with the signing of the Sino-Portuguese Joint Declaration on the Question of Macau, leading to the ultimate retrocession of Macau to China in just over a decade later in 1999 (Leandro & Afonso-Henriques, 2019).

As depicted by Table 2, between 1974 and 1999 (B1-B2), a number of high-level state visits took place, as purposeful contributions to advance diplomatic relations to another level, to smooth the establishment of political conditions capable of facilitating the initiation of a negotiation process, and to set the stage for retrocession as well as leaving a legacy to promote future relations. As asserted by Mendes (2013, p. 45), “China and Portugal shared an exemplary relationship and they were on the same page with regard to the future of Macau, driven by a mutual desire to guarantee the territorial stability and development of the enclave”. Between 2000 and 2004 (C1), despite three state visits of Chinese representatives, we observed a sort of political lull from the Portuguese side as it showed limited interest in continuing to develop Sino-Portuguese bilateral relations. The second “rapprochement” took place with the creation of Forum Macau in 2003, of which Portugal is a founding member-state, and with the state visits of Premier Wen Jiabao to Portugal and President Jorge Sampaio to China in 2005. After 2005 (C2), as shown by Table 2, there were more than 20 high-level contact opportunities, representing another phase of diplomatic intensity to promote bilateral relations.

C1 (Inception of a new era of economic diplomacy and paradiplomacy)

As mentioned earlier, after the retrocession of Macau in 1999, Sino-Portuguese bilateral relations entered a sort of diplomatic lull, signifying that the initial main purpose of their relationship had expired in light of the successful resolution of the question of Macau. It took both sides a few years to discover another line of diplomatic development. Perhaps, the 1986 Portuguese membership of the European Union and the lessons learned from Deng Xiaoping’s

TABLE 2

Bilateral High Level State Visits

PHASES	PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA		PORTUGUESE REPUBLIC	
	ENTITY	DATE	ENTITY	DESTINATION/DATE
B1 1949-1979			Min Almeida Santos	Macau, 9-11 October 1974
			HoS Ramalho Eanes	China and Macau, May 1985
B2 1979-1999	HoG Li Peng	2-3 February 1992		
			HoG Cavaco Silva	China and Macau, April 1994
			HoS Mário Soares	China and Macau, 10-16 April 1995
			HoS Jorge Sampaio	China and Macau, February 1997
			HoG António Guterres	China and Macau, April 1998
		HoS Jiang Zemin	27 October 1999	
C1 2000-2004	Vice-HoG Li Lanqing	July 2002		
	MFA Li Zhaoxing	June 2003		
	HoS Hu Jintao	A stopover in Porto November 2004		
C2 2005-2022			HoS Jorge Sampaio	China and Macau SAR., 11-17 January 2005
	HoG Wen Jiabao	9 December 2005		
	HoG Wen Jiabao met HoG José Sócrates in September 2006, Helsinki (The sixth summit of the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM)).			
			HoG José Sócrates	China and Macau SAR., February 2007
	MFA Yang Jiechi	January 2009		
	HoS Hu Jintao	July 2009		
			MFA Luís Amado	China, April 2010
	HoS Hu Jintao	7 November 2010		
			MFA Paulo Portas	China, July 2012
		HoS Cavaco Silva	China and Macau, 12-18 May 2014	

TABLE 2
(cont.)

PHASES	PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA		PORTUGUESE REPUBLIC	
	ENTITY	DATE	ENTITY	DESTINATION/DATE
C2 2005-2022	HoS Xi Jinping	A stopover in Terceira Island, Azores, 24 July 2014		
	MFA Wang Yi met MFA Augusto Santos Silva in July 2016, Ulaanbaatar (The 11 th summit of Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM))			
	HoG Li Keqiang	A stopover in Terceira Island, Azores, September 2016		
			HoG António Costa	China and Macau SAR, October 2016
	MFA Wang Yi	May 2018		
			MFA Augusto Santos Silva	China, October 2018
	HoS Xi Jinping	4-5 December 2018		
			HoS Marcelo Sousa	China and Macau SAR, April 2019
	HoS Xi Jinping Speaks with HoS Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa on the Phone in May 2020			
	MFA Wang Yi met MFA Augusto Santos Silva held the First Round of China-Portugal Strategic Dialogue at Foreign Ministers' Level in July 2021			
	HoS Xi Jinping Speaks with HoS Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa on the Phone in August 2021			
	MFA Wang Yi met MFA João Gomes Cravinho in September 2022, New York (UNGA)			

Source: Author.

1979 vision of building a *xiaokang* society (Permanent Mission of PRC to UN, 2023) played a role in understanding that Macau did not represent the end of Sino-Portuguese relations, but rather a bridge into and motivation for a new era of economic and development efforts as well as triangular cooperation.

The establishment of Forum Macau in 2003 as a Chinese initiative can be said to be the only splash aroused during this diplomatic lull C1 (2000–2003). This fact has had two major impacts on Sino-Portuguese relations:

1. It was time for China to assert itself in the international arena and set itself on a path to becoming a global economic power. Therefore, in the early 2000s, there was a new development in China's foreign policy — the establishment of “Chinese” forums. Such

forums have all been established through China's initiative and placed under the Ministry of Commerce (MOFCOM)'s tutelage. Forum Macau, as all other Chinese forums are, is a mechanism of permanent contact created by diplomatic efforts to facilitate trade and economic cooperation, to supplement bilateral relations, and to facilitate and promote paradiplomacy as defined by Mitchelmann and Soldatos (1991, p. 34) — an apparel diplomacy and “a direct continuation, and to varying degrees, from sub-state government, foreign activities”.

2. Forum Macau is the only mechanism of cooperation between China and the Portuguese-speaking countries that puts emphasis on the latter¹⁾, which, together, represent approximately 7% of global territories above sea level (which is more than China's 6.3%). In particular, Brazil has some of the most fertile terrain in the world, is home to the largest tropical rainforest, and has extensive agriculture and cattle industries. Angola and Mozambique are large countries even by African standards, though both have underdeveloped farming and food production industries. The other PSCs are considered small in size, but — along with Brazil, Angola, and Mozambique — they are all coastal countries with considerable exclusive economic zones (EEZs). Brazil currently has the 11th largest EEZ in the world, while Portugal, if requests to extend its current EEZ is accepted, will possess the 7th largest EEZ in the world (Migiro, 2021), bringing to the PSC block numerous possibilities in the natural resources and marine industries. Along this line of reasoning, since the establishment of Forum Macau, Portugal has understood the potential of Sino-Portuguese economic cooperation and China has realized the potential of the PSCs as a whole (especially in terms of location and blue economy). In particular, Portugal is perceived as an entry point to the European Union, as well as a multiplier of triangular cooperation with the PSCs.

The next milestone in Sino-Portuguese relations can be traced back to the year 2005, when Premier Wen Jiabao visited Portugal and President Jorge Sampaio visited China. The year 2005 thus represents an acceleration in economic relations, with the 2017 blue partnership being a concrete solution to common challenges, while the years 2018–2019 stand out as the moment that

1. São Tomé and Príncipe joined Forum Macau in 2017, and Equatorial Guinea joined in 2022.

the two states elevated their bilateral relationship to another level (Leandro & Afonso-Henriques, 2019). The next section will discuss this intensification of Sino-Portuguese relations.

C2 (Intensification of economic diplomacy and exploring trilateral cooperation)

Since 2005, the development of bilateral relations between China and Portugal has entered a period of steady growth with two peaks in 2005 and 2018. In January 2005, President Jorge Sampaio received an invitation from President Hu Jintao to visit China on the special occasion of the 25th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations. The two sides issued a joint communiqué to, on one hand, affirm the achievements of the MSAR over the past five years, agreeing that the MSAR should continue to play an important role in further developing exchanges and cooperation, and to, on the other hand, attach importance to the development of exchanges and cooperation between China and Portugal in the economy, culture, science, technology, tourism, and justice. A series of cooperation documents were signed (Ministry of Foreign Affairs (PRC), 2005).

In December 2005, Premier Wen Jiabao visited Portugal, and the two sides issued a formal joint statement to establish a comprehensive strategic partnership. Both countries believed that Sino-Portuguese relations had a solid foundation and great potential for further development. In the years that followed, with increasingly frequent exchanges of bilateral high-level state visits, with relevant cooperation documents, agreements, or memorandums involving different fields signed on different levels almost every year. Furthermore, in addition to strengthening Sino-Portuguese cooperation in terms of third-party markets, Portugal as an EU member state has been playing a constructive role in promoting the development of EU-China relations.

Table 3 shows the recent key milestones of Sino-Portuguese relations. After the establishment of diplomatic relations, the signing of the 1987 Joint Declaration and the 1999 retrocession of Macau, we can say that the “third negotiation” process was initiated in 2005 with the constitution of a comprehensive strategic partnership, the strengthening of partnership, as well as the signing of a B&RI MoU in 2018. Nevertheless, one will notice a change of focus in Sino-Portuguese relations after 1999, and, since 2005, a sort of intensification of economic cooperation and explorations in other fields.

Chinese partnerships are a characteristic of China’s diplomacy. President Xi Jinping also emphasized at the Central Conference on Work Relating to Foreign Affairs in 2014 that China should abide by the principle of non-alignment and build a global network of partnerships (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2014). Since China established its first strategic partnership with Brazil in 1993, various types

of Chinese partnerships have been established with more than 100 countries in the world (Li & Vicente, 2020, p. 210). At the same time, based on the political cooperation framework with flexibility provided by dynamic partnerships, bilateral relations have continued to develop both in the vertical (i.e., cooperation in bilateral, regional, and global levels) and horizontal (i.e., cooperation in politics, the economy, culture, science and technology, health, and other fields) dimensions.

TABLE 3
Key Milestones of Sino-Portuguese Relations (1949–2022)

PHASES	YEAR	KEY MILESTONES
B1 1949–1979	1949	Founding of the People's Republic of China
	1961	Portugal joined the IMF
	1971	Portugal voted for UNGA Resolution 2758/1971
	1974	Portuguese Revolution (25 th April 1974)
	1976	Passing of the Portuguese Constitution and the Macau Organic Statute
	1978	Portugal-China Chamber of Commerce and Industry (CCILC) founded in Portugal
B2 1979–1999	1979	Establishment of Sino-Portuguese diplomatic relations
	1980	China regained its legal seat in IMF ^(a)
		China-Portugal signed a commercial agreement (terminated)
	1982	Sino-Portuguese Agreement on Cultural, Scientific and Technological Cooperation
		Sino-Portuguese Agreement on Economic, Industrial and Technical Cooperation (terminated)
	1986	Portugal joined the Economic European Community (Today's European Union)
	1987	Sino-Portuguese Joint Declaration on the Question of Macau
	1991	Sino-Portuguese Agreement on Sports Cooperation
	1992	Sino-Portuguese Agreement Concerning the Encouragement and Reciprocal Protection of Investments (terminated)
		Macau Delegation at the CCILC officially established
	1993	Basic Law of MSAR adopted by NPC and Promulgated by HoS
		Sino-Portuguese Basic Agreement on Science and Technical Cooperation
	1995	Portugal joined WTO
1998	Sino-Portuguese Agreement for the Avoidance of Double Taxation and the Prevention of Fiscal Evasion with Respect to Taxes on Income	
1999	Retrocession of Macau	

(a) China is a founding member of the IMF (1945), but Taiwan authorities have occupied China's legal seat since the founding of new China. Retrieved on 3 January 2023, from https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/wjtb_663304/zjzjg_663340/gjs_665170/gjzz_yhy_665174/2594_665176/2600_665188/200011/t20001115_598031.html

**THE LAST FIVE DECADES OF SINO-PORTUGUESE RELATIONS:
THE QUEST FOR THE BELT AND ROAD INITIATIVE**

TABLE 3
(cont.)

PHASES	YEAR	KEY MILESTONES
C1 2000–2004	2000	Portugal-MSAR China BIT
		Sino-Portuguese Implementation Plan for Cultural Exchanges from 2000 to 2003
	2001	China joined WTO
	2003	1 st Ministerial Conference of Forum Macao (Portugal became a Founder Member of Forum Macao)
C2 2005–2022	2005 ^(b)	Consulate General of Portugal in Shanghai set up
		Sino-Portuguese Agreement on Economic Cooperation
		Sino-Portuguese Agreement on Mutual Acknowledgement of Higher Educational Level and Degree Certificates
		Joint Statement on Strengthening Sino-Portuguese Bilateral Relations (China and Portugal established Comprehensive Strategic Partnership)
		Sino-Portuguese Agreement on the Encouragement and Reciprocal Protection of Investments
		Sino-Portuguese Agreement on Mutual Judicial Assistance in Criminal Matters
	2006	2 nd Ministerial Conference of Forum Macao
		Agreement between the Ministry of National Defense of the People's Republic of China and Ministry of National Defense of the Portuguese Republic for Cooperation
		Establishment of the first Confucius Institute at the University of Minho
	2007	Treaty between the Portuguese Republic and the People's Republic of China on Extradition
		Treaty between the People's Republic of China and the Portuguese Republic on Transfer of Sentenced Persons
	2010	3 rd Ministerial Conference of Forum Macao
		Sino-Portuguese Agreement in the field of Tourism
2012	Memorandum of Understanding between the Ministry for Education and Science of the Portuguese Republic and Ministry of Science and Technology of the People's Republic of China on Cooperation in Science, Technology, and Innovation	
2013	4 th Ministerial Conference of Forum Macao	
	Sino-Portuguese Agreement on the Recognition of Academic Degrees and Study Periods of Higher Education ^(c) (Portugal MNE, Decree 10/2013, Diário da República, 1.ª série, n.º 113, 14 de junho de 2013)	

(b) Other bilateral cooperation documents signed in different fields in 2005 were: (1) Cooperation Agreement between the Supreme Court of the People's Republic of China and the Supreme Administrative Court of the Republic of Portugal; (2) Sino-Portuguese Implementation Plan for Cultural Exchanges from 2005 to 2007; (3) Cooperation Agreement between China Central Television (CCTV) and Portuguese Television; (4) Memorandum of Understanding on Code-Sharing Arrangement between the Aviation Authority of the People's Republic of China and the Aviation Authority of the Republic of Portugal; (5) Exchanges and Cooperation Agreement from 2005 to 2007 between China International Culture Association (CICA) and the Fundação Oriente of Portugal; (6) Memorandum of Understanding between the Ministry of Justice of the People's Republic of China and the Ministry of Justice of the Republic of Portugal in the judicial field; (7) Cooperation Agreement between the Ministry of Health of the People's Republic of China and the Ministry of Health of the Republic of Portugal on Health Cooperation.

(c) Retrieved on 3 January 2023, from <http://dre.pt/pdf1sdip/2013/06/11300/0330103304.pdf>

TABLE 3
(cont.)

PHASES	YEAR	KEY MILESTONES
C2 2005–2022	2014	Protocol on Cooperation in Research and Innovation in the Field of Marine Sciences between the Ministry of Education and Science of the Portuguese Republic and the Ministry of Science and Technology of People’s Republic of China
		Memorandum of Understanding between the Portuguese Republic and the People’s Republic of China on the Reciprocal Establishment of Cultural Centers
	2016	5 th Ministerial Conference of Forum Macao
		China supported Antonio Guterres’s candidacy to the UNSG
		Sino-Portuguese Agreement on the Reciprocal Establishment of Cultural Centers
		Memorandum of Understanding between the Portuguese Republic and the People’s Republic of China on Maritime Cooperation
	2017	Memorandum of Understanding between the Ministry of Commerce of the People’s Republic of China and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Portuguese Republic on Strengthening Third-Party Market Cooperation
		State Oceanic Administration of China signed a Concept Paper on Blue Partnership and Joint Action Plan Framework with the Ministry of the Sea of Portugal (China and Portugal established a Blue Partnership)
		Memorandum of Understanding between China’s National Peoples’ Congress and the Portuguese Parliament
	2018 ^(d)	Joint Statement between the People’s Republic of China and the Portuguese Republic on Further Strengthening the Comprehensive Strategic Partnership
		Memorandum of Understanding between the Portuguese Republic and the People’s Republic of China on Cooperation within the Framework of the Silk Road Economic Belt and the 21 st Century Maritime Silk Road Initiative
		Memorandum of Understanding between the Portuguese Republic and the People’s Republic of China on Trade in Services Cooperation
		Memorandum of Understanding between the Ministry for Science, Technology and Higher Education (MCTES) of the Portuguese Republic and the Ministry of Science and Technology (MOST) of the People’s Republic of China on the Promotion of Cooperation Activities towards the Implementation of the China-Portugal Science & Technology Partnership 2030
	2019	Memorandum of Understanding between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People’s Republic of China and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Portuguese Republic on establishing the Strategic Dialogue
	2021	China supported Antonio Guterres’s candidacy to the UNSG
		First Round of China-Portugal Strategic Dialogue at the Foreign Ministers’ Level
	2022	6 th Ministerial Conference of Forum Macao

(d) Portugal has signed 17 bilateral documents in different fields with China during a two-day state visit by Chinese President Xi Jinping in 2018. Retrieved on 3 January 2023, from <https://www.essential-business.pt/2018/12/07/china-and-portugal-herald-new-trade-relationship-with-17-trade-agreements/>

Source: Leandro & Yichao Li.

All aforementioned stages of Sino-Portuguese relations show why Portugal began to pay attention to the development of the B&RI soon after the initiative was put forward by China in 2013.

It was Deng Xiaoping who applied the idea of *xiaokang* to the larger society, laying down in the late 1970s and early 1980s a blueprint for building a moderately prosperous China through socio-economic development, modernization, opening up, and going global:

Xiaokang, meaning moderate prosperity, has been a consistent aspiration of the Chinese nation since ancient times. More than 2,000 years ago the term appeared in the Book of Songs to mean modest comfort: The people are hard-pressed; they need some modest comfort. Do well by the Central Plains, and your rule will spread beyond. Centuries later the Book of Rites described the ideal state of society that xiaokang would bring about. Both gave expression to the ancient Chinese people's desire for a better life. But for millennia moderate prosperity remained a dream (SCIO-PRC, 2011).

As such, the B&RI is grounded in the notion of being xiaokang – enjoying moderate prosperity while being free from both wants and toils (in the Confucian sense, xiaokang means being adequately provided for despite imperfections) (CGTN, 2021).

The maritime dimension of the B&RI – the China–India Ocean–Africa–Mediterranean Sea Blue Economic Passage (Extension – Lusophone B&RI) – has been particularly attractive to Portugal and all PSCs (Table 4). As such, Portugal signed the B&RI MoU (Table 3) in 2018. As maritime cooperation became a centerpiece of Sino-Portuguese relations, the Council of Ministers in Portugal's 2019 approval of the National Maritime Spatial Planning Situation Plan (PSOEM), which included subdivision of the mainland, the subdivision of Madeira, and the subdivision of the Extended Continental Shelf, reinforced this opportunity for cooperation (EU MSP Platform, 2023).

TABLE 4
B&RI Physical Dimensions

	DOMESTIC AXES	INTERNATIONAL ECONOMIC CORRIDORS		
Land	Axis 2 Guangdong-Harbin	GBA	China-Mongolia-Russia Economic Corridor	CMREC
		Beibu Gulf	New Economic Land Belt	NELB
		Bohai Rim Region		
	Axis 1 Urumqi-Shanghai-Kashgar	Yangtze River Delta	China-Central and Western Asia Economic Corridor	CCWAEC
			China-Pakistan Economic Corridor	CPEC
Maritime	Axis 3 Kunming-Shanghai		China-Indochina Peninsula Economic Corridor	CICPEC
			China-Bangladesh-India-Myanmar Economic Corridor	CBIMEC
	All Axes and Coastal Zones as well as SEZ		China-India Ocean-Africa-Mediterranean Blue Economic Passage (Extension – Lusophone B&RI)	CIOAMBEP
			China-South Pacific Blue Economic Passage	COSPBP
			China-Arctic-Europe Blue Economic Passage	CAEBEP

Source: Author.

Indeed, to demonstrate the importance of Sino-Portuguese cooperation on maritime affairs, in 2014, a Protocol on Cooperation in Research and Innovation in the field of marine sciences between the Ministry of Education and Science of Portugal and the Ministry of Science and Technology of China was established. Consequently, in 2016, when Portuguese Prime Minister António Costa visited China, he proposed for the first time that Portugal would be willing to push forward cooperation with China under the B&RI framework (Ministry of Foreign Affairs (PRC), 2016). In 2017, the signing of the Concept Paper on Blue Partnership and Joint Action Plan Framework between China and Portugal was definitely a cooperation highlight, making Portugal the first country to officially launch a blue partnership with China (China Daily, 2017a). Particularly important is the fact that blue partnership cooperation principles are supposed to contribute to SDG 14 (life bellow water). As of 2022, China had established bilateral blue partnerships with the following partners: Portugal, the EU, Seychelles, and Mozambique (SBPCN, 2023). In 2021, the words of the

Chinese Ambassador to Portugal, unequivocally clarified why the 2017 Blue Partnership is important.

The recent sixth plenary session of the 19th Central Committee of the Communist Party of China pointed out that high-quality development is the fundamental path for China to embark on a new journey toward a modern socialist country and realize its second centenary goal. History has fully proved that unswervingly adhering to giving “priority to ecological development and green development” is a prerequisite for pushing for high-quality development, as well as a solid foundation for creating high-quality life. China has attached great significance to the construction of a marine ecological civilization, by continuously strengthening marine environmental pollution prevention and control, conserving marine biodiversity, and realizing orderly exploration and utilization of marine resources, so as to leave future generations with blue sea and blue sky. In this regard, Portugal’s 2021-30 National Ocean Strategy holds the same view as that of China (Bentang, 2021).

Thus, in 2018, a joint statement on further strengthening the Sino-Portuguese comprehensive strategic partnership was issued, and the B&RI MoU between China and Portugal was officially signed (Table 3). In July 2021, China and Portugal held a first round of strategic dialogue at the Foreign Ministers Level, with the aim to further strengthen cooperation in the fields of scientific and technological innovation, materials, marine, language, and cultural heritage (CLBrief, 2012). Portugal is the second country in the EU to establish foreign minister-level strategic dialogue with China - Germany had been first, in 2011, to begin dialogue, held usually every two years (Ministry of Foreign Affairs (PRC), 2011).

3.2 Evolution of Sino-Portuguese economic and trade relations

Portugal and China are global neighbors, not contiguous states. In fact, it is important to bear in mind that the transportation of goods and people by air freight takes one to five days, train freight between 17 and 22 days, and maritime freight between six and eight weeks. Despite the vast distance separating them, since 1999, the development of economic and trade relations has been a decisive point of both sides’ economic diplomacy. In this section, we will focus on three main indicators; (1) bilateral trade in goods; (2) bilateral trade in services; (3) Chinese investment in Portugal.

1. Bilateral trade in goods — The Observatory of Economic Complexity (OEC) provides comprehensive data on the import and export between China and Portugal from 1995 to 2020 (Table 5). From 1995

to 2020, the following can be observed: (a) The total volume shows a steady surplus favorable to China; (b) Bilateral trade in goods has maintained an upward trend, especially in phase C2 (after 2005); (c) The bilateral profile relies on a multi-sector array of goods; (d) In terms of specific exports from China to Portugal, HS2 ID-85 (electrical machinery and equipment and parts thereof; sound recorders and reproducers; television image and sound recorders and reproducers, parts and accessories of such articles) accounted for the highest proportion, fluctuating between 14% and 28%. One exception was in 2016, HS2 ID-89 (ships, boats and floating structures) accounted for the highest proportion; (e) On the contrary, among goods exported from Portugal to China, the types of products with the highest proportion changed frequently, but HS2 ID-85 and HS2 ID-87 (vehicles other than railway or tramway rolling stock, and parts and accessories thereof) were the most common, the latter in particular.

2. Bilateral trade in services — The EU is the world's largest trader of services and currently has a trade surplus with China (European Commission, 2022a). However, from 2010 to 2021, despite some ups and downs, Portugal maintained a constant trade deficit in services with China. According to data from Eurostat, except for a decline in trade in services exported from Portugal to China in 2020 and 2021, trade in services generally showed an increasing trend year-on-year from 2010 to 2021 from both sides. Especially after China and Portugal signed the B&RI MoU and further deepened the comprehensive strategic partnership in 2018, the total scale of bilateral trade in services increased significantly (Table 6).

Furthermore, also depicted in Table 6, data from the OECD gives more detail on the composition of data regarding trade in services. The more important ones in trade in services between China and Portugal were transport services and travel services. From 2010 to 2020, China's exports of transport services to Portugal accounted for around 80% of the total trade in services, and together with travel services accounted for almost 90% of the trade in services exported from China to Portugal. In contrast, in trade in services exported from Portugal to China, the proportion of travel services was more than that of transport services. Although the combined proportion of these two services fluctuated every year, when the

proportion was high, it reached about 70% of total trade in services exported from Portugal to China.

3. Chinese investment in Portugal — Compared with Chinese investment in Portugal, Portuguese investment in China has always been low. As shown in Table 7, in 2020, 83% of inward FDI in China originated from ten Asian countries/regions. EU member states, namely Belgium, Denmark, Germany, France, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Greece, Portugal, Spain, Austria, Finland, and Sweden together invested a mere 3.8% of the total inward FDI (MOFCOM, 2021, p. 8). However, in 2021, according to a report issued by the Bank of Portugal (BoP), China has become the country with the fifth most investment in Portugal (€10.6 billion), followed by the Netherlands (€8.7 billion), Germany (€7.6 billion), the United States (€7.1 billion), Brazil (€5 billion), and Luxembourg (€4.3 billion) (ECO News, 2022). Furthermore, from 2000 to 2021, the cumulative value of Chinese direct investment transactions in Portugal ranked ninth among EU countries with a total Chinese investment stock of € 6.8 billion (Rhodium Group & MERICS, 2022, p. 7) (CL Brief, 2022b).

IMF data shows that before 2012, China invested very little in Portugal (Liu & Zhang, 2020, p. 127). Subsequently, in 2012, China's Three Gorges Corporation (CTG) used 2.7 billion euros to acquire 21.35% of the shares of Energias de Portugal S.A. (EDP) — Portugal's national electric power supplier. This was the first major FDI operation involving Chinese capital in Portugal (Rodrigues, 2017, p. 118). Since then, as shown in Table 8, Chinese investment in Portugal has not slowed down, areas involved mainly have included energy, finance, insurance, health, transportation, real estate and media (Corre, 2018c).

Another project that involved Chinese investments was the mega-central photovoltaic Solara4 in Alcoutim (Algarve) (220 MW). In 2016 the project preparation begun with the Welink (British) group specialized in the construction of modular buildings, energy efficiency solutions and renewable energy projects and the China Triumph International Engineering, which is part of the China National Building Material conglomerate, that has businesses in the areas of cement, glass, fiberglass, engineering and logistics. The group, founded in 1984, is listed on the Hong Kong stock exchange, but is controlled by the Chinese state. In 2018, Solara4 in Alcoutim was purchased by Allianz (Germany) and entered into operation in 2022.

TABLE 5

Bilateral Trade in Goods between China and Portugal (1995 to 2020)

PHASE	YEAR	EXPORTS FROM CHINA TO PORTUGAL		EXPORTS FROM PORTUGAL TO CHINA	
		TOTAL (\$)	TOP 1 PRODUCT (HS2 ID) - %	TOTAL (\$)	TOP 1 PRODUCT (HS 2 ID) - %
B2 (1979)- 1995-1999	1995	193 M	HS2 ID - 85 ^(a) (14.4%)	48.4 M	HS2 ID - 26 ^(b) (22%)
	1996	236 M	HS2 ID - 85 (16.9%)	39.2 M	HS2 ID - 39 ^(c) (16.9%)
	1997	251 M	HS2 ID - 85 (16.5%)	53.6 M	HS2 ID - 26 (18.5%)
	1998	304 M	HS2 ID - 85 (20.4%)	28.6 M	HS2 ID - 45 ^(d) (20.9%)
	1999	296 M	HS2 ID - 85 (22.3%)	40.9 M	HS2 ID - 47 ^(e) (26.2%)
C1 2000-2004	2000	364 M	HS2 ID - 85 (21.6%)	59.3 M	HS2 ID - 85 (36.6%)
	2001	342 M	HS2 ID - 85 (15.8%)	69.5 M	HS2 ID - 47 (25.2%)
	2002	360 M	HS2 ID - 85 (18.9%)	97.6 M	HS2 ID - 85 (37.9%)
	2003	474 M	HS2 ID - 85 (22.2%)	202 M	HS2 ID - 85 (53.9%)
	2004	641 M	HS2 ID - 85 (21.5%)	171 M	HS2 ID - 85 (20.2%)
C2 2005-2020	2005	844 M	HS2 ID - 85 (18.8%)	242 M	HS2 ID - 85 (37.3%)
	2006	1.92 B	HS2 ID - 85 (27.1%)	286 M	HS2 ID - 85 (49.5%)
	2007	1.74 B	HS2 ID - 85 (26.8%)	271 M	HS2 ID - 84 ^(f) (28.2%)
	2008	2.27 B	HS2 ID - 85 (23.4%)	309 M	HS2 ID - 85 (25.7%)
	2009	1.94 B	HS2 ID - 85 (23.6%)	400 M	HS2 ID - 87 ^(g) (14.2%)
	2010	2.43 B	HS2 ID - 85 (21.9%)	531 M	HS2 ID - 87 (32.6%)
	2011	2.66 B	HS2 ID - 85 (21.3%)	657 M	HS2 ID - 87 (27.3%)
	2012	2.41 B	HS2 ID - 85 (20.9%)	1.17 B	HS2 ID - 87 (55.2%)
	2013	2.34 B	HS2 ID - 85 (21.2%)	922 M	HS2 ID - 87 (39.8%)
	2014	2.86 B	HS2 ID - 85 (19.6%)	1.22 B	HS2 ID - 87 (47.8%)
	2015	2.61 B	HS2 ID - 85 (18.6%)	980 M	HS2 ID - 87 (39.9%)
	2016	3.7 B	HS2 ID - 89 ^(h) (32.2%)	818 M	HS2 ID - 87 (20.4%)
	2017	3.24 B	HS2 ID - 85 (18%)	1.05 B	HS2 ID - 87 (30.9%)
	2018	3.62 B	HS2 ID - 85 (19.7%)	967 M	HS2 ID - 87 (21.7%)
	2019	3.95 B	HS2 ID - 85 (25%)	723 M	HS2 ID - 47 (12.3%)
2020	3.89 B	HS2 ID - 85 (27.1%)	724 M	HS2 ID - 47 (12.6%)	

(a) HS2 ID - 85: Electrical machinery and equipment and parts thereof; sound recorders and reproducers; television image and sound recorders and reproducers, parts and accessories of such articles

(b) HS2 ID - 26: Ores, slag and ash

(c) HS2 ID - 39: Plastics and articles thereof

(d) HS2 ID - 45: Cork and articles of cork

(e) HS2 ID - 47: Pulp of wood or other fibrous cellulosic material; waste and scrap of paper or paperboard

(f) HS2 ID - 84: Nuclear reactors, boilers, machinery and mechanical appliances; parts thereof

(g) HS2 ID - 87: Vehicles; other than railway or tramway rolling stock, and parts and accessories thereof

(h) HS2 ID - 89: Ships, boats and floating structures

Source: Author. Retrieved in December 2022, from <https://oec.world>

TABLE 6
Bilateral Trade in Services between China and Portugal (2010 to 2021) (Million €)

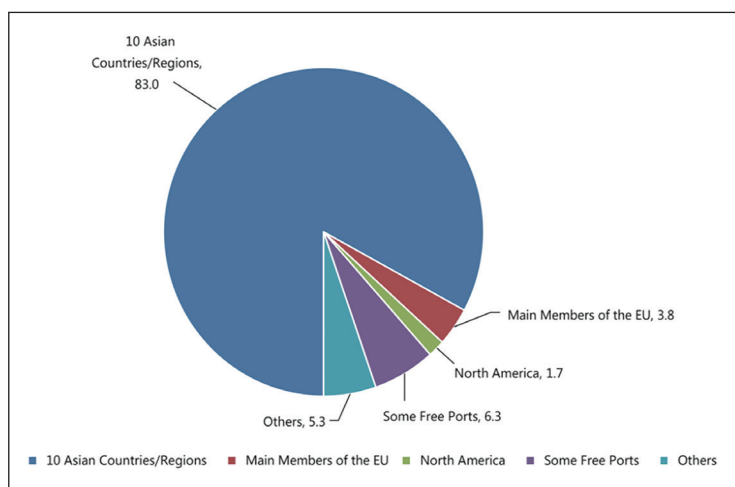
PHASE	YEAR	BALANCE*	EXPORTS FROM CHINA TO PORTUGAL			EXPORTS FROM PORTUGAL TO CHINA		
			TOTAL*	TRANSPORT** (%)	TRAVEL** (%)	TOTAL*	TRANSPORT** (%)	TRAVEL** (%)
C2 (2005)-2010-2021	2010	-273.0	289.0	243.0 (84%)	22.0 (8%)	15.0	4 (27%)	7 (47%)
	2011	-252.0	285.0	241.0 (85%)	17.0 (6%)	33.0	9 (27%)	12 (36)
	2012	-195.0	246.0	208.0 (85%)	15.0 (6%)	51.0	15 (29%)	11 (22%)
	2013	-53.0	242.0	196.0 (81%)	19.0 (8%)	189.0	10 (5%)	38 (20%)
	2014	-107.0	243.0	197.0 (81%)	19.0 (8%)	136.0	12 (9%)	68 (50%)
	2015	-144.0	268.0	221.0 (83%)	20.0 (7%)	125.0	11 (9%)	83 (66%)
	2016	-105.0	272.0	221.0 (81%)	19.0 (7%)	167.0	11 (7%)	94 (56%)
	2017	-71.0	298.0	240.0 (81%)	20.0 (7%)	227.0	19 (8%)	154 (68%)
	2018	-46.0	334.0	273.0 (82%)	22.0 (7%)	288.0	24 (8%)	187 (65%)
	2019	-58.0	428.0	341.0 (80%)	26.0 (6%)	370.0	39 (11%)	225 (61%)
	2020	-268.0	432.0	355.0 (82%)	5.0 (1%)	164.0	20 (12%)	58 (35%)
	2021	-643.0	777.0	n.d.	n.d.	134.0	n.d.	n.d.

(*) Retrieved on 5 January 2023, from https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/bop_its6_tot/default/table?lang=en

(**) Retrieved on 5 January 2023, from https://stats.oecd.org/Index.aspx?DataSetCode=TISP_EBOPS2010#

Source: Author.

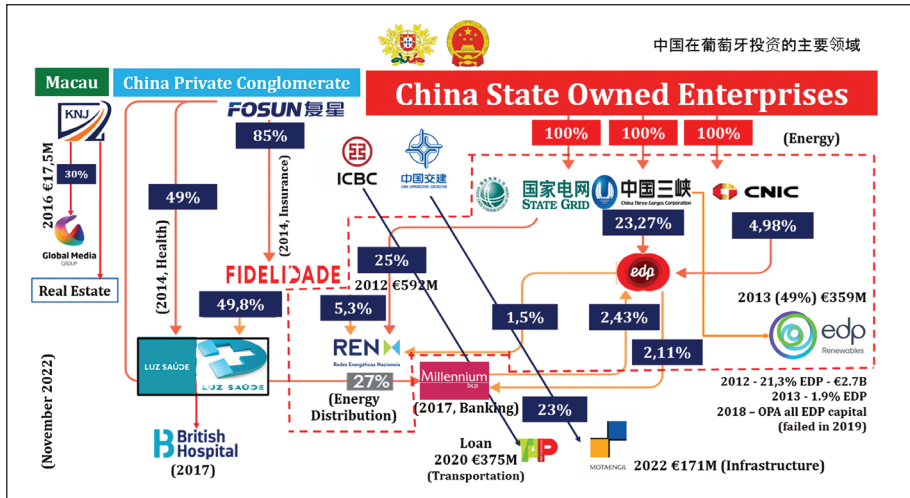
TABLE 7
Sources of Realized FDI Value in 2020 in China



Source: MOFCOM, 2021, p.9

TABLE 8

Chinese Investments in Key Sectors of the Portuguese Economy
(中国在葡萄牙投资的主要领域)



Sources: <https://www.publico.pt/2018/12/04/economia/noticia/fidelidade-bcp-fosun-assumiu-se-maior-investidor-privado-chines-portugal-1853293> and Carla Fernandes (2021). China's Energy Security and Portugal in the Belt and Road Initiative pp. 127-150, in Sofia Gaspar & Irene Rodrigues (Ed). *The Presence of China and the Chinese Diaspora in Portugal and the Portuguese-speaking Territories*. Brill.

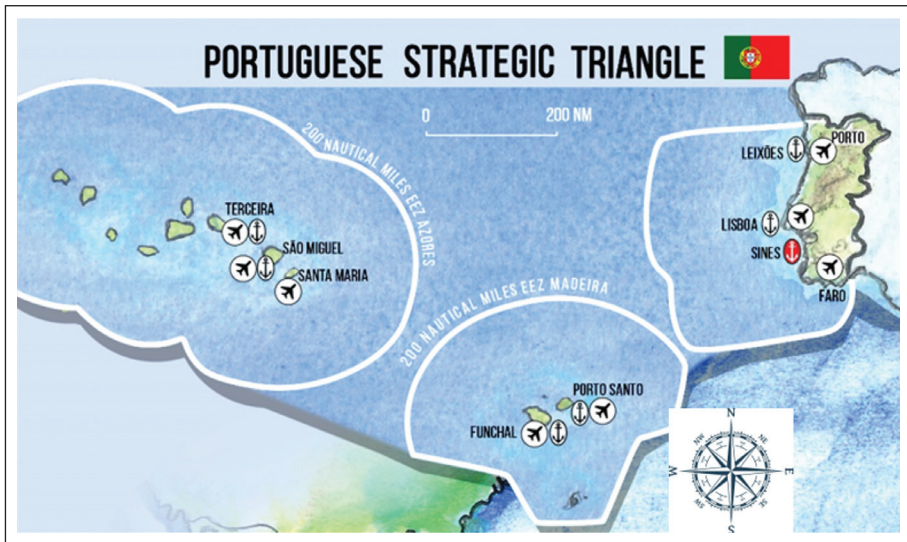
According to (Fernandes, 2021, p, 143) “(...) the MoU between EDP and China three Gorges and State Grid and REN, reinforces the cooperation between those companies (...) The MoU between State Grid and REN foresees the continuation of the partnership in the development of the energy research center, as well the integration of renewables energies into the energy system. It also provides for the operationalization of an electric interconnection project (Project MAPT) between Portugal and Morocco.” Therefore, the Chinese corporations will be involved in a project to export green energy, between two continents (Europe and Africa) using HVDC submarine cable.

The transformation of the energy sector is perceived by China as very important for their internationalization and sustainability. Thus, the fact that, as of December 2022, 80.8% of the energy in Portugal was produced from renewable sources (REN, 2022) not only contributes to SDG 7 (Affordable green energy), but makes the sector more competitive and sustainable. The involvement of China in the Portuguese energy sector has facilitated the Chinese companies to be part of large international solar photovoltaic projects in the

fourteen countries were EDP group operates, namely Brazil, U.S., Canada, Italy, Belgium, Poland, Spain, Mexico, and France.

3.3 The B&RI – Sino-Portuguese mutual interests from different perspectives

The B&RI is perceived by both sides of Sino-Portuguese diplomacy as an opportunity which China and Portugal want to use their historical relations to intensify their commercial relationship. The B&RI provides a framework for investment, trade, and multi-level cooperation, as it is driven by major infrastructure. Undoubtedly, since 2013, cumulative B&RI engagement has amounted to US\$932 billion, about US\$561 billion of which in construction contracts and US\$371 billion in non-financial investments (Nedopil, 2022, p. 3). As a multi-level, multi-state initiative, the B&RI operates under Chinese leadership, but remains under multi-state scrutiny of national interests and active participation. The B&RI offers not only domestic and international physical mechanisms of de-bordering but also a platform for immaterial global governance (Leandro & Duarte, 2020a, p. 384). From the Chinese point of view, B&RI as a strategy to promote access with consent has a clear purpose to contribute to reinforcing China's position as a global actor and attaining a *xiaokang* society. China has realized the First Centenary Goal of building a moderately prosperous society in all respects, which was declared by President Xi Jinping at the ceremony marking the centenary of the Communist Party of China (CPC) in 2021 (Qiushi, 2021). To realize this centenary goal, reform and opening up has been a critical element. "Building a moderately prosperous society in all respects has progressed in parallel with China's interaction with the rest of the world" (SCIO-PRC, 2021). During the process for achieving a moderately prosperous society in all respects, no matter from the increasing urbanization to regional coordinated development, or from the transformation of China's special economic zones to the high-quality cooperation under the B&RI, China's development has not only solved its own problems but has also brought further opportunities to develop for other countries. From Portugal's standpoint, the B&RI supplements the European policies, taking advantage of the positioning of Portugal and its strategic triangle (Diagram 1 – Azores-Madeira-Continent) in the context of the central Atlantic. Particularly important is the location of the SLOC to access the Gibraltar Strait and the Panama Canal.

**DIAGRAM 1**

Positioning of Insular Portuguese Territory

Source: Paulo Gonçalves 2022

The B&RI can be considered a border shaper in the sense that something new is on the verge of changing the old patterns of integration in both regional and extra-regional spheres. Some five centuries ago, Portuguese sailors made their way to the East; today, it is China who is looking for new opportunities in the West via both land and sea. Due to its geographical position, Portugal is literally the ultimate border for the Iron Silk Road (a metaphor for the railway corridors in China's Silk Road Economic Belt) which in the future will connect China directly to Sines. In turn, in the context of the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road, Portugal is the gateway to Chinese goods coming by sea and crossing the vast and complex borders of the EU. The borders of China's engagement in the EU cannot be fully shaped by Beijing alone; support of Portugal is needed (Leandro & Duarte, 2020a, p. 385).

The steps towards the Portuguese involvement in the B&RI seems to be unequivocal: Portugal was one of the 57 founding member of the Chinese lead Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (2015); one of the first European states to sign a memorandum of understanding on jointly advancing the construction of the Belt and Road (2018); and one of few to have a regular direct flight from China. In addition, China is Portugal's biggest trading partner in Asia, as well as the biggest destination for Portuguese pork exports.

Combining the analysis of intensification of economic diplomacy in phase C2 (2005–2022) with the evolution of Sino-Portuguese economic and trade relations mentioned above, we place extra importance on the following potential points and areas of cooperation under the B&RI: (1) the Sines deep water seaport; (2) Sines-Beja Airport; (3) the Archipelago of Azores; (4) Chinese diaspora; (5) Chinese student community; (6) trilateral cooperation (7) tourism and direct flights between China and Portugal; (8) the Golden Visa Program; (9) Health sector; and (10) innovation and technology transfer.

(1) Sines deep water seaport — From the Chinese standpoint, as shown in Table 4, the Atlantic seaport of Sines (Diagram 1) represents a potential juncture between the maritime silk road (the China–Indian Ocean–Africa–Mediterranean Blue Economic passage — Extension to Lusophone Maritime B&RI) and the land-based economic belt (axes 1 and 2) stretching from China’s eastern seaboard across the Yiwu-Madrid railway line. The seaport of Sines lies at the crossroads of major global shipping routes (including the trans-Atlantic, Mediterranean and Cape routes). In addition, the doubling of the Panama Canal’s cargo capacity following a multi-billion-dollar expansion project in 2016 has shone a greater spotlight on the Portuguese port, which benefits from being Europe’s closest deep-water port to the major waterway across the Atlantic. From the Portuguese viewpoint, Sines represents a new opportunity to promote domestic development and European integration, as a project capable of generating employment, innovation, and energy security. Sines’s geolocation represents another European Union global economic gateway, which holds the potential to mitigate the peripheral positioning of the Portuguese Republic. Indeed, Sines has the potential to influence the EU’s long-term trade orientations and energy dependencies, at least in southwestern Europe (Piedade, 2021). In fact, soon after signing the B&RI MoU, Portugal and China both expressed mutual interest in cooperation on the port of Sines. Portuguese Prime Minister António Costa claimed that “Portugal is willing to make the port of Sines as an important component of the B&RI” (MOFCOM, 2018). In May 2019, the Minister of Natural Resources of China, Lu Hau, visited the Port of Sines for details of the project and its future location (CLBrief, 2020b). In October of the same year, the Portuguese government decided to invite bids from contractors around the world to build and run a container terminal in the port of Sines (Forum Macau, 2019). However, by April 2021, though the COVID-19 outbreak had delayed the tendering process by a year, no bidders had come forward (CLBrief, 2021d). Perhaps instability in the whole international environment had also influenced the situation. As asserted by Wejchert (2021), the port of Sines “has become an economic battleground for Chinese and U.S. influence in Europe” (p. 1).

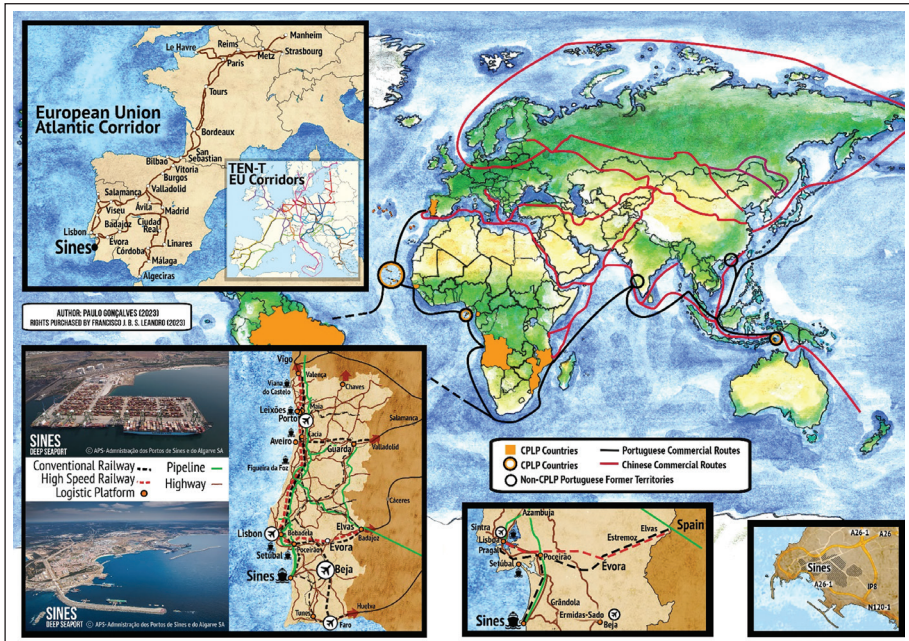


DIAGRAM 2

The Connectivity of the Deep Sea Port of Sines (Portugal)

Source: Paulo Gonçalves 2023

The deep seaport of Sines, must be taken into consideration not only because of its geographic location to operate as a transshipment seaport for goods and liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) to the EU, but also due to the existence of the Sines Industrial and Logistic Zone (ZILS), which will host MadoquaPower2X, a project designed to use renewable energy and 500 MW of electrolysis capacity to produce 50,000 tons of green hydrogen and 500,000 tons of green ammonia annually. It is the first industrial-scale project to be installed in the future energy and technological hub of Sines. MadoquaPower2X is a consortium comprised of Madoqua Renewables, Power2X, and Copenhagen Infrastructure Partners (CIP) (MadoquaPower2X, 2022). The production of renewable hydrogen in Sines is at the center of this developing project, and it will gather a consortium of 13 companies and research partners that include EDP, GALP, MARTIFER and EFACEC. This consortium will be named GreenH2Atlantic, and in addition to EDP, GALP and MARTIFER will include

companies such as ENGIE, BONDALTI, VESTAS, McPhy and EFACEC, as well as “academic and research partners such as ISQ, INESC-TEC, DLR and CEA, and public-private cluster AXELERA”. GreenH2Atlantic was one of the three projects selected under the EU Horizon 2020 - Green Deal, to demonstrate the viability of green hydrogen on an unprecedented scale of production and technological application. The operations are expected to begin in 2025 (LUSA, 2022b). These projects and the opportunities offered by ZILS will probably attract the Chinese “investment eye”, which we have already begun to notice.

The Portuguese Government considers Sines as part of a group of projects of strategic interest, and therefore it will have additional 4,800 hectares associated to its port infrastructure. In this vein, the Portuguese Government has decided to expand the Sines area dedicated to industrial, energy or telecommunications investments of strategic interest. In September 2018, Portugal and China signed a bilateral agreement that aimed to speed up customs procedures for shipments traveling between Sines and Chinese ports (Xinhua, 2018a). In 2022, China Aviation Lithium Battery Technology (CALB) signed an MoU with a subsidiary of the Portuguese Agency for Investment and Foreign Trade (AICEP) to install a plant in ZILS (LUSA, 2022a). Recently (4 January, 2023), the Port of Sines has issued a public tender for the construction of a solar plant for self-consumption. The client is Administração dos Portos de Sines do Algarve, S. A. (APS) and the contract is worth €1.99 million and should be completed in ten months. The tender shows that the supply and installation of a photovoltaic production unit can be expected (PortSEurope, 2023).

(2) Sines deep water seaport and Beja airport — The strategic value of Sines is maximized by being linked to Beja airport and airbase and by the new international railway as part of the International Corridor South (one of the freight railways axis in the Iberia Peninsula). Diagram 2, depicts the importance of the deep sea port of Sines and its proximity of Beja Airport, in the context of the European interconnectivity vision. In fact, the Trans-European Transport Network (TEN-T) policy addresses the implementation and development of a Europe-wide network of railway lines, roads, inland waterways, maritime shipping routes, ports, airports and railroad terminals. The ultimate objective is to close gaps, remove bottlenecks and technical barriers, as well as to strengthen social, economic and territorial cohesion in the EU (European Commission, 2022b). Furthermore, the Sines deep water seaport complemented by the Beja Airport, is the connecting pivot between the TEN-T and the B&RI (The B&RI maritime component — CIOAMBEP — Maritime extension to the Lusophone blue passage and the B&RI land component).

Sines→	Grandola→	Évora→	Vendas-Novas	Lisboa			
		Évora→	Elvas (Caia)		Badajoz	Carceres	Madrid
New Railway		High-speed (Existing Railway)					
Portugal				Spain			

DIAGRAM 3

Freight Railways Axis (Iberia Peninsula)

Source: Infraestructuras de Portugal COBA/EUROESTUDIOS, 2007

Diagram 3 details the freight railways axis connecting Portugal to Spain, namely detailing the new railways (planned) and the high speed lines. Thus, the Sines deep water seaport and its ZILS will be connected to Madrid and the central Europe.

Beja Airport (located 100 km east of Sines), which in 2011 opened a new civilian terminal and became a dual-use military-civilian airport, aims to attract low-cost carriers and offer air maintenance operations, affordable parking, and together with the Luso-Brasilian project ATL-100 (air carrier for short distances) may represent opportunities for the Chinese air-transportation industry. With excellent location and infrastructure, Beja has prompted the Government of Portugal to plan to create a free zone with special fiscal characteristics, as well as to improve the airport’s accessibility, modernize the railway and highways, as well as equipment and infrastructure. This will make Beja a more competitive alternative to Faro Airport for passengers and cargo, and, in conjunction with Sines, a logistics entry point to the EU market. Indeed, in 2020 during the COVID-19 pandemic, an Airbus A380 connected Beja (Portugal) to Wuhan (China) to repatriate EU citizens.

(3) The Archipelago of Azores (Diagram 1) — The Lusophone leg of the B&RI, the seaports of Sines and Leixões, as well as the archipelago of Azores are parts of the same game. It is important to remember that the Portuguese deep-water seaport of Leixões (the closest port to Madrid) and the port of Sines offer flexibility to the New Economic Land Belt (NELP) as well as an alternative access, not far from the Strait of Gibraltar, to the center of Europe, especially for commercial vessels crossing the Panama Canal. Furthermore, the so-called technical stopovers made by some Chinese politicians (including Xi Jinping himself) in the Azores lead some, such as Devin Nunes (Kates, CBS News, 2017), to warn U. S. congressmen that China is interested in filling the void left by the U.S.’s disengagement from the Lajes airfield. If nature cannot tolerate a vacuum, politics and states are not much different, and China is no exception — it

would fill the geopolitical and geostrategic void left behind by the U.S. in the Azores. Nonetheless, in the medium- and long-term future, one will certainly hear more about the Azores, of which on Terceira Island lies the deep sea port of Praia da Vitória just a few miles away from the Lajes airfield. The port can be adapted to accommodate the biggest cargo ships in the world. A maritime axis starting in the Pacific Ocean, crossing the Panama Canal, continuing until Praia da Vitória before reaching Sines is not only viable but also promising if Portugal shows receptivity towards the B&RI, as has been the case so far. The North Atlantic is currently somewhat forbidden to China, because of the roles played by the U.S., NATO, and the EU, who together will preserve their sphere of natural influence. The Azores facilities can be the Chinese's gateway to the most "western forbidden sea" (Leandro & Duarte, 2020, pp. 385–383).

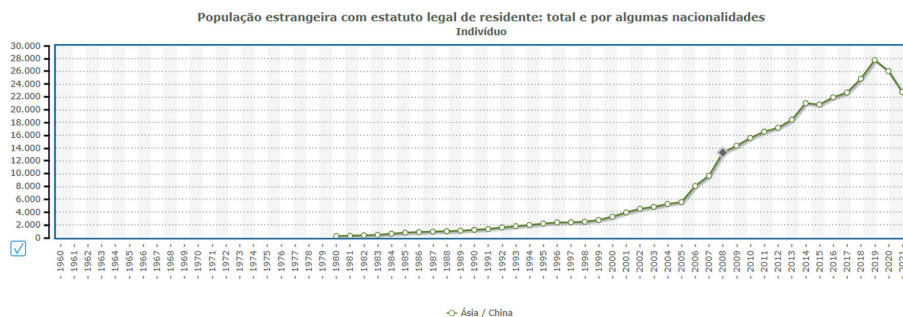
(4) Chinese diaspora — A Chinese diaspora in Portugal is not a new phenomenon and has been well researched especially since the publication of the edited volume *The Presence of China and the Chinese Diaspora in Portugal and Portuguese-Speaking Territories* by Brill (2021).

However, benefiting from low birth rates in Portugal and the willingness of the Portuguese government to accept foreign labor, the boom of modern Chinese immigration has been based on four facts: (1) good relations between China and Portugal boosting bilateral trade and significant flows of inward FDI; (2) prospects of entering the EU after having legally established oneself in Portugal — "The number of Chinese citizens legally residing in Portugal increased exponentially (...) after 2001 due to an extraordinary legalization of irregular migrants (Decree-Law 4/2001 of January). Another extraordinary regularization period occurred in 2008 (Ordinance No. 395/2008, of June 6, under the terms of Law No. 23/2007) (...) and another one is planned to take place in 2023 (...)" On the one hand, extraordinary legalization of migrants allowed many individuals who were already in Portugal to obtain residence permits; on the other hand, the prospect of obtaining a regular situation in Europe attracted Chinese migrants in irregular situations in other European countries" (Gaspar & Rodrigues, 2021, p. 6); (3) the fact that Portugal ranks second among the healthiest place to live, third in the world for offering the best quality of life for expats, and fourth in the global peace index (2021); (4) the golden visa program.

Table 9 shows a steady evolution of Chinese immigration to Portugal between 1980 and 2005, and, afterwards, particularly between 2005 and 2009, as well as the Chinese diaspora remittances. We observe an exponential and continuous increase of Chinese citizens becoming legally established in Portugal, until 2019 when the COVID-19 pandemic struck and a positive correlation with the level of remittances.

TABLE 9

Chinese Nationals Legally Established in Portugal and Their Remittances



REMITTANCES OF CHINESE RESIDENTS TO CHINA (THOUSAND €)									
2007	2010	2013	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
4,731	21,715	78,201	73,050	61,680	55,400	39,500	42,800	51,400	n.d.

Source: Portugal National Institute of Statistics (INE) <https://www.pordata.pt/Portugal/Popula%C3%A7%C3%A3o+estrangeira+com+estatuto+legal+de+residente+total+e+por+algumas+nacionalidades-24-184451>
<https://www.pordata.pt/portugal/remessas+de+imigrantes+total+e+por+principais+paises+de+destino-2368-182074>

(5) Chinese student community – In 2021, Portugal had 13% of foreign students among its higher education population, contributed with top 1% of the world’s most highly cited scientific publications, presented the third highest rate of engineering graduates in Europe, ranked seventh in the English proficiency index and ranked 28 in the global talent competitiveness. Those statistics are among the reasons why the number of Chinese students attending regular education in Portuguese educational institutions has been growing, with particular emphasis on master’s and Ph.D. programs. Between 2010 and 2019, there was a 54.5% increase, and the academic year of 2018/19 was the one with the higher number of Chinese students. Chinese students are the seventh largest group of international students in Portugal. The good Sino-Portuguese relations, as well as “(...) the changes implemented by the Portuguese Government in 2007 and 2017 (Law 23/ 2007 and Law 102/2017), by transposing the EU directive on the mobility of international students, also contributed towards attracting Chinese students, as they facilitated visa issuing processes and circulation within the Schengen Area” (França, 2021, p, 29), strongly contribute to the numbers presented in Table 10.

Additionally, there are two important facts to consider. On the one hand, in 2013, China signed a protocol (Decree-Law 10/2013) with Portugal specifi-

TABLE 10

Chinese Students affiliated with Portuguese Education Institutions

	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19
Technical Superior Education	003	002	003	003	006
Bachelor	234	390	468	530	601
Specialization after Bachelor	001	001	006	006	002
Master (Integrated)	037	047	045	055	056
Master	188	250	313	369	426
PhD	186	261	169	177	205
Total	649	951	1004	1140	1296

Source: Direção-Geral de Estatísticas da Educação e Ciência (DGEEC). <https://www.dgeec.mec.pt/np4/18/>

cally targeting Chinese students to simplify the mutual recognition of academic diplomas awarded by higher education institutions between both countries, as well as schemes for studying abroad (França, 2021, p, 29). On the other hand, in 2018, two out of seventeen points of the cooperation memorandum signed between Portugal and China concerned the education field. Indeed, “(...) one foresaw the creation of a Confucius Institute at the University of Porto — at the present moment, Portugal has fourteen institutes dedicated to the Chinese language and culture. The other one envisaged the creation (currently ongoing) of the first center of Chinese studies in Portugal at the University of Coimbra” (França, 2021, p, 30). As of 2023, China has established Confucius Institutes in these five institutions in Portugal: University of Minho (2006), University of Lisbon (2008), University of Aveiro (2015), University of Coimbra (2016) and University of Porto (2019) (DIG Mandarin, 2023). As an extension of the Confucius Institute program, the Confucius Classroom (unlike university-based Confucius Institutes) puts more focus on building connections with local schools and education centers for strengthening Chinese language and culture programs in schools and in the local area (UCD, 2022). There are two Confucius Classrooms operating in Portugal, one based in the Confucius Institute at the University of Minho, which establishes a protocol with CLIP (the Oporto International School) for cooperation to improve the quality of the teaching of Mandarin in schools in 2008 (OIS, 2022), the other based in the Confucius Institute at the University of Lisbon, operating a Confucius Classroom in a private school (College of St Thomas) in Lisbon (China Daily, 2019). In 2021, Portugal had fourteen institutes dedicated to Chinese language and culture (França, 2021, p. 30). Furthermore, there are a number of language and international studies majors in Portuguese high academic intuitions, as well as a Chinese language Pilot programs at public and private secondary schools.

“Since the establishment of a strategic Partnership between PRC and Portugal in 2005, trade, cultural exchange, and technological cooperation grew rapidly. When the Chinese President Xi Jinping proposed the B&RI in 2013, cooperation exchange between the two countries reached a significantly higher level, triggering a new round of interest in the Portuguese for learning Chinese”. Indeed, in China, there are 45 (or 47 according to NOVO, 2022) higher education institutions (including the MSAR) offering various Portuguese language courses (Macau Polytechnic University, 2023). According to Wang & Sun (2021, p. 55). Besides language, another interesting example is the fact that in 2022, the University of Lisbon announced that a new partnership, between the University of Lisbon (ULisboa), in Portugal, and the University of Shanghai (SHU), has come into operation to establish a new faculty located in Shanghai. This faculty, will provide with three degrees, in the areas of Electrical and Computer Engineering, Civil Engineering and Environmental Engineering. In the academic year 2023/2024, it is expected that several masters will advance. Doctorates will also be made available, to be developed based on existing programs in each of the two institutions.

(6) Trilateral cooperation — Since 2012, Portugal has been increasing its emphasis on triangular cooperation, especially following the adoption of its Strategic Concept for Development Cooperation 2014–2020, supported by three pillars: (1) participation of the private sector; (2) emphasis on the PSCs; (3) promotion of sustainable development (Secretaria de Estado dos Negócios Estrangeiros e Cooperação, 2020). Furthermore, Portugal sees triangular cooperation as a way to move beyond traditional donor-recipient relations and foster horizontal partnerships for sharing knowledge and experiences (OECD, 2022). It is important to bear in mind the possibilities offered by triangular or trilateral cooperation (among China, Portugal, and other Lusophone countries), where all countries can benefit from synergy among different economic operators, as mentioned by the Prime Minister of Portugal during the Ministerial Conference of 2016 of Forum Macau (Macau News, 2019), addressing areas such as agriculture, education, environmental sustainability, infrastructure, and renewable energy (Leandro & Afonso-Henriques, 2019, p. 19). This concept is especially important to Portugal, as the Portuguese economy is relatively small, with exports to non-EU countries accounting for 29% and imports from non-EU countries accounting for 25% (European Commission, 2021). China piloted trilateral aid projects with Australia and New Zealand, and between 2013 and 2018, China also tested the approach with the United Kingdom, Portugal, and UN organizations, especially the United Nations Development Programme. China has so far focused its trilateral cooperation

on less politically-sensitive areas, such as agriculture, public health, natural disaster relief, and renewable energy. However, China's budget earmarked for trilateral cooperation is also small and, therefore, it could be difficult for China to contribute to a pooled fund to be jointly managed by China and other donors (Zhang, 2021). An attention-grabbing case of Sino-Portuguese triangular cooperation is the Lobito corridor in Angola. In the same year (2022), a consortium of three European groups – Mota-Engil Engineering (49.5%) (Portugal), Trafigura Group PTE Lda (49.5%) (Switzerland) and Vecturis SA (1%) (Belgium) – won the tender of the 30-year concession to run the Lobito corridor to operate, manage, rehabilitate, and expand the railway connecting Lobito, Benguela, Luau, and the Democratic Republic of Congo (1290 km), as well as a new railway branch to Zambia. The interesting aspect of this, is the fact that in 2022, China Communications Construction Company bought 23% of the Mota-Engil Group, a leading Portuguese company with business in Latin America, Africa, and Eastern Europe, for EUR 171 million (CLBrief, 2022b).

(7) Tourism and direct flights between China and Portugal – Portugal has been a regular at the World Travel Awards (WTA), which is known as the Oscars of tourism awards. Portugal has won a list of awards in both the European and international categories at the 29th WTA in 2022 (World Travel Awards, 2022). Meanwhile, though Portugal is a relatively small state, its list of 15 UNESCO World Heritage sites is a testament to the Portuguese's long history of world presence (Direcção Geral do Património Cultural, 2022). Furthermore, based on a report published by the International Congress and Convention Association (ICCA) in 2021, the Destination Performance Index (DPI), which evaluates global destinations for international meetings, shows that both Portugal and China have performed quite well in the world, ranking seventh and ninth respectively (ICCA, 2022, p. 4). Specifically, from the Portuguese side, Lisbon and Porto rank second and 16th among the top 50 cities, while, from the Chinese side, Beijing, Hong Kong, and Shanghai rank 27th, 36th, and 39th only (ICCA, 2022, pp. 7–8). All of these point to Portugal's potential to attract more tourists. Indeed, before COVID-19, Portugal's tourism sector accounted for about 17% of its GDP, and it can be said that Portugal is one of the most tourism-dependent southern European economies (EIU, 2022).

In 2010, China and Portugal signed a cooperation agreement in tourism. The vision of Tourism Strategy 2027 promoted by Turismo de Portugal I.P. (TdP) was to make Portugal a competitive and sustainable tourist destination in the world (Turismo de Portugal, 2017, p. 6). The strategy has also led to the start of direct flights to new markets such as China, as an opportunity to develop the tourism sector (p. 42). The first direct flight between China and

Portugal — between Hangzhou and Lisbon via Beijing — was inaugurated in July 2017. The establishment of direct flights is also part of the B&RI and is of great significance to both sides, in terms of strengthening connections between China and not only Portugal but also other Portuguese-speaking countries (Brazil and those in Africa) (China Daily, 2017b). Though suspended in October 2018, the flight resumed in August 2019 with an expectation to provide assistance to the realization of comprehensive strategic partnership, as stated by Luís Araujo, president of the Portuguese Tourism Authority (Global Times, 2019). The fact is, in the year after the signing of the bilateral tourism agreement and the inauguration of direct flights, tourism revenues generated by China in Portugal and overnight stays of the Chinese market in tourism accommodation establishments in Portugal increased (Table 11) (Xing, Breda, & Da Silva, 2021, pp. 100–101).

Chinese tourism in Portugal had an upward trend between 2005 and 2019, particularly after 2014. In 2019, the number of Chinese tourists in Portugal peaked, as tourism in 2020 was deeply affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. The tourists' durations of stay fluctuated, but tourism revenues had a positive impact in line with the number of tourists. Encouragingly, there have been strong signs of recovery, based on 2022 numbers and estimations for 2023. In the first half of 2022, China was the 25th largest foreign market that chose Portugal, measured by guests (23.5 thousand guests who represented 0.4% of total external demand), and 30th in reference to overnight stays they originated (55,900 overnight stays and a share of 0.3%). These values represented, however, an increase of 20,205 guests and 47,012 overnight stays from the same period of 2021. The Lisbon Metropolitan Area continued to be the main national destination for Chinese tourists, with 59% of overnight stays concentrated in this region, followed by the northern region of Portugal (18%) and Algarve (10%) (CLBrief, 2022a). If we consider the numbers until 2019, and according to TravelBI (2019), in 2018, China placed 16th in terms of total Portuguese tourism share with 1.1%, and, by 2019, it ranked 12th with a 1.7% share (Source: INE). In essence, 2020 was the most important year for Chinese tourism in Portugal, with more tourists and higher spending. Indicators also point towards a strong recovery in 2023, returning to pre-pandemic levels.

(8) Golden Visa Program — On 8 October 2012, the Government of Portugal amended Immigration Law 29/2012 to allow non-EU Citizens to receive temporary residence permits for up to 5 years in exchange for investments. The Portugal Golden Visa is a residence visa issued to non-EU nationals who have made significant investment in Portugal, such as purchasing real estate, making a capital investment, creating employment opportunities, or making

TABLE 11
Impact of Chinese Tourism in Portugal

TOTAL/YEARS	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
Hotel Overnights	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.	47,123	59,812	74,861	101,363	142,976
Hotel Guests	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.	23,024	30,570	39,149	53,814	75,817
Ratio	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.	2.046	1.956	1.912	1.88	1.885
Tourism Revenues (Million €)	1,970	2,280	4,410	4,500	3,990	6,520	12,010	11,430	38,340
Remarks	Comprehensive Strategic Partnership	↑	↑	↑	↑	Tourism Agreement	↑	↑	B&RI

TOTAL/YEARS	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Hotel Overnights	221,387	290,321	329,380	455,840	518,919	605,999	102,818	45,608	119,732
Hotel Guests	119,658	163,218	193,717	277,628	324,258	385,307	56,623	17,249	51,415
Ratio	1.850	1.778	1.700	1.641	1.600	1.572	1.815	2.644	2.328
Tourism Revenues (Million €)	67,780	82,580	93,620	153,830	186,530	224,690	57,740	27,630	n.d.
Remarks	↑	↑	↑	Blue Partnership	Strengthening Comprehensive Strategic partnership & BRI MoU	↑	COVID-19		

Sources: INE, Turismo de Portugal and Bank of Portugal (<https://travelbi.turismodeportugal.pt/mercados/china/>)

a €250,000 donation to Portuguese arts, national heritage, or culture. This means that once a foreign citizen obtains a Portuguese passport, s/he can enjoy the full benefits of EU nationality – no borders, access to the EU single market, and life in a stable, democratic, prosperous, and secure community (Schengen Information, 2022). Overall, Portugal generated €646m EUR in 2020 from 3,225 people, out of which €588m EUR was yielded from real estate investment and €58m EUR from capital transfer (Portugal Golden Visa, 2023). The top countries of successful obtainees of visas (cumulative value from

2012 to 2022) were: China (4,923 – 52% of applicants), Brazil (1,021 – 11%), Turkey (464 – 5%), South Africa (403 – 4%), Russia (375 – 4%), others (2581 – 27%) (Portugal Golden Visa, 2023). In addition, the top investors were (May 2021): China (24%), South-Africa (4%), the U.S. (3%), Canada (3%), Vietnam (2%), Russia (2%), Brazil (2%), and Turkey (1%). The latest trend still puts China in the spotlight, as Chinese nationals invested a total of €37 million EUR during the second quarter of 2020, which was twice their spending in all of 2019. Portugal Golden Visa statistics report China as the main country that has invested in the residence permit programme. There are five reasons for this “appetite” for the Portuguese Golden Visa Program: (1) good Sino-Portuguese relations; (2) easy access to the EU; (3) Portugal being among the top ten countries for migrant integration according to the Migrant Integration Policy Index (MIPEX) 2020 (EU Commission, 2020); (4) the framework for cooperation that the B&RI and partnerships represent; and (5) the fact that the Portuguese passport is being one of the strongest in the world, as it opens the travelling to 186 out of 199 states and territories. Surprisingly, as we draft, on 17 February 2023, the Portuguese Government, announced the cancelation of the program as it has been causing too much pressure on the Portuguese real estate sector.

(9) Health sector – China is investing in the Portuguese health sector, pursuing two avenues. On the one hand, Chinese companies are purchasing hospitals and clinics and on the other hand, China is promoting Chinese Traditional medicine. Luz Saúde, a Portuguese subsidiary of the Fosun group of China, controls 80 percent of Capital Criativo Health Care Investments II, which owns the largest private hospital in central Portugal and four clinics. Furthermore, Capital Criativo Health Care Investments II owns the Idealmed group, which owns the Idealmed UHC hospital and outpatient clinics in Coimbra, Figueira da Foz, Pombal and Cantanhede (Forum Macau, 2018).

In 2022, Portugal continued to be, despite of the criticism from several domestic and European institutions, the only European Country to take steps for the implementation of an academic degree in Chinese Traditional Medicine (Diário de Notícias, 2018). The intensive cooperation between the Setubal Polytechnic Institute (Portugal) and the Tinjian University (China) produced in 2021, the first group of bachelor graduates in Chinese Traditional Medicine, after 4 years of intensive studies. This area holds an enormous potential to stand as a cooperation model for the Portuguese-speaking Countries and other European nations. Furthermore, the Portuguese pharmaceutical company Tecno-phage wants to launch a supplement in Europe this year with “very promising” results in Parkinson’s disease, based on research by the University of Macau on a fruit used in traditional Chinese medicine (Jornal de Negócios, 2023).

(10) Innovation and Technology Transfer — China and Portugal signed a Basic Agreement on Science and Technical Cooperation in 1993, which established a joint committee mechanism of science and technology cooperation for both sides. This joint committee is held every two or three years to discuss bilateral cooperation plans, explore priority matters for cooperation, and make arrangements for scientific and technological cooperation funds (Zhang, 2019, pp. 287–288). It is also one of the important and fundamental mechanisms under the framework of the comprehensive strategic partnership between China and Portugal. As of 2022, the Sino-Portuguese joint committee on science and technology cooperation has held meetings nine times, the most recent being in Lisbon in 2019. This committee, in the context of the MoU signed in 2018 towards the Implementation of the China-Portugal Science & Technology Partnership 2030, further discussed cooperation related to advanced bioengineering materials, collaborative innovation in marine science and technology, online translation of digital solutions and quality assessment, the role of Macau in the scientific and technological cooperation between China and PSCs, and ways to promote Sino-European scientific and technological cooperation through Portugal (MOST, 2019).

In the area of innovation there is an array of initiatives, such as: (1) Sci-tech collaboration, whose flagship project is the China-Portugal Joint Innovation Center for Advanced Materials, launched in 2013 at Zhejiang University (China) with support from the Chinese and Portuguese governments. Four research bases, which covered biomedical materials, nanotechnology, energy, and eco materials, were set up in this center (CGTN, 2018). In 2017, Fundo para o Desenvolvimento das Ciências e da Tecnologia (FDCT, MSAR, China) and the Fundação para a Ciência e a Tecnologia (FCT, Portugal) signed an MoU to encourage cooperation between research and development institutions in Macau and Portugal (Fundação para a Ciência e Tecnologia (FDCT), 2017). In 2019, a project related to marine sciences, marine pollution, and marine biotechnology received a budget allocation of 300,000€ from FCT (FCT, 2019); (2) The China Innovation Summit in Portugal (2022) was organized by the Portugal–Hong Kong Chamber of Commerce and Industry (PHKCCI) and the CCILC. This event aimed to provide a platform for like-minded professionals to connect and share their industry experience and insight, presenting the background of Hong Kong and its development as a smart city and the HK Fintech 2025 strategy; (3) The China-Portugal International R&D Seminar: Carbon Neutrality and Innovation was organized by EDP NEW and CTG (China Three Gorges Corporation) in 2022. The seminar, in a hybrid format, focused on the challenges of research

and the need for transdisciplinary collaboration, bringing together not only different themes but also different geographies.

Technology transfer is also an important part of Sino-Portuguese cooperation particularly in areas of research, electronic commerce, communications, and space oceans, and, as such, includes the following initiatives: (1) Municipality Agreement — In June 2022, FCT (Portugal) and the Science and Technology Commission of Shanghai Municipality (STCSM) signed an MoU to strengthen cooperation in science and technology between the Portuguese and Chinese scientific communities. This fact is particularly significant, as it was the first time that FCT had signed a formal cooperation agreement with an international municipality (FCT, 2022); (2) Space and Oceans — Portugal announced its entrance into the space sector through a major cooperative program with China and a proposal for a launch complex in the Azores in the mid-Atlantic Ocean, whose construction attracted bids from European, Russian, and U. S. companies (Spacewatch Asia Pacific, 2018). The cooperative program with China — the Joint Space and Maritime Technology Laboratory (STARLab), a Sino-Portuguese laboratory dedicated to the development of technology to monitor the oceans — has become part of the Chinese Belt and Road initiative.

In December of 2018, the China-Portugal STARLab was written in the Joint Declaration between the People's Republic of China and the Portuguese Republic, witnessed by both President XI Jinping and Prime Minister Costa. STARLab was upgraded to CAS-FCT in November of 2019, to enhance collaboration on space and sea research between Chinese and Portuguese [researchers] (...) The lab became the third batch of MOST's joint Laboratories under construction in August 2021, recommended by the Bureau of International Cooperation of the Chinese Academy of Sciences (Chinese Academy of Sciences, 2021).

STARLab is a joint project of the Portuguese Foundation for Science and Technology and the Academy for Innovation in Microsatellites of the Chinese Academy of Sciences (IAMCAS) and resulted from a scientific and technological cooperation agreement signed during the visit of President Xi Jinping to Lisbon (2018). With plans to establish facilities in Matosinhos and Peniche in Portugal and in Shanghai in China, STARlab is a public-private partnership that on the Portuguese side includes the aerospace company Tekever and the Center for Engineering and Product Development (CEiiA), and will build satellites to carry out comprehensive research on the interactions between oceanography, agriculture, and fisheries. The project plans to launch the Portuguese microsatellite Infante into space (CLBrief, 2021a; CLBrief, 2021c). Based on this STARLab platform, a number of cooperation initiatives are being developed, examples of which include: (a) joint research projects set up by the Chi-

nese Academy of Sciences with several Portuguese marine science and technology research institutions for marine scientific investigation, deep-ocean exploration, and studies on sustainable marine fisheries, as well as marine disaster prevention and mitigation; (b) the first national-level international joint lab on marine research, the International Joint Laboratory of Naval Architecture and Offshore Technology, set up between Harbin Engineering University (China) and University of Lisbon (Portugal); (c) the Sino-Portuguese Joint International Research Laboratory of Marine Biology, set up between Shanghai Ocean University (China) and University of Algarve (Portugal) (China Daily, 2021); The Second Institute of Oceanography at China's Ministry of Natural Resources has signed a memorandum of understanding with the Portuguese Earth Science Research Cooperative Alliance Association and the Portuguese Center of Marine and Environmental Research on marine research and environmental collaboration; China's Harbin Engineering University and Portugal's Lisbon University have set up the International Joint Laboratory of Naval Architecture and Offshore Technology, which is the first national-level international joint lab on marine research between China and Portugal (Bentang, 2021); (3) Communications — Huawei Portugal, the University of Aveiro, and Portugal's Telecommunications Institute opened 5GAIner (the 5G + IA Networks Reliability Centre), an infrastructure to "facilitate the development and experimentation of solutions in the context of fifth generation networks and new Artificial Intelligence tools" (CLBrief, 2021b); Altice Portugal and Huawei have joined together to develop 5G in Portugal and signed the protocol in 2018, that represented the commitment of both companies. This partnership with Huawei represented a major step forward in the commercialization of the 5G service in Portugal. Regrettably, the 5G operators decided not to include Huawei equipment in their operations and the Portuguese Government also received a clear statement from the U.S. Ambassador that would put the alliance in peril allowing the Huawei equipment to be part of the major components of the 5G system (Ferreira, 2019); (4) Electronic Commerce — (1) China is the largest e-commerce market worldwide, and therefore, there are a number of reasons for Portuguese corporations to export to China through e-commerce: China has been pushing for the development of e-commerce (in particular, cross-border), whose growth was driven by the COVID-19 restrictions; (2) The Chinese consumers decidedly value Western brands; (3) Alibaba is a large online platform in the e-commerce world (The ecommerce giant is offering English-language portal on Tmall to entice more merchants from around the world to sell to Chinese consumers. Alibaba is counting on the initiative to help double the number of foreign brands on Tmall Global to 40,000); (4) The

Chinese digital payments system is advanced; (5) The Chinese consumers and companies themselves make an intense social networks (WeChat; Sina Weibo); (6) There has been an investment in infrastructure and logistics services, in order to improve the respective response capacity; (7) The consumption habits of the Chinese population linked to festivals and holidays have enormous business potential (AICEP, 2022). Portugal is teaming with the China International Electronic Commerce Center (CIECC) to attract Chinese investment in life sciences, the automotive industry, and tourism (CLBrief, 2020a); (5) Subway Light Trains - In 2022, a brand set of China-produced subway trains were shipped to Porto (Portugal) through Tianjin seaport (China). This set of vehicles, is the first Chinese urban light railway trains exported to the EU. The project of 18 trains includes 72 train sections produced by the CRRC Tangshan Corporation. Each train has a capacity up to 346 passengers and weighs 28.4 tons, with a maximum speed of 80 kilometers per hour. The trains featured as low energy cost, low noise and intelligent functioning. The contract was signed in January 2020 between the CRRC Tangshan Corporation and the Portuguese state-owned enterprises Metro do Porto (Global Times, 2022).

4. Conclusion

The last five decades of Sino-Portuguese relations can be summarized as, as Ilhéu (2022) puts it, a “road of mutual learning and adaptation”. This mutual learning approach is our rationale behind answering the research question: Based on the B&RI and the unique relationship between China and Portugal, what can we expect from the future of Sino-Portuguese cooperation?

Current Sino-Portuguese relations are the result of a sort of historical continuum, which has narrowed the ideological differences and built a platform for mutual understanding. The latest stage of this relationship has been driven by economic diplomacy and by the idea of promoting “xiaokong”, by advancing more intensive state-to-state relations and to facilitate state-to-state, state-to-non-state and between non-state agents in both countries. As we have attempted to demonstrate, earlier political diplomacy has opened the doors for latter economic diplomacy, which has been intensified since 2005. The B&RI has been used by both sides as a framework to extend economic cooperation, giving Sino-Portuguese relations a European — perhaps also an African — context.

Consequently, the future of Sino-Portuguese cooperation in the context of the B&RI corresponds to a future third negotiation process initiated back in 2005, which China perceives as an instrument of the xiaokang concept — entrusting Portugal with a sort of access functional power providing economic markets ac-

cess; and through which Portugal sees China as a partner capable of mitigating its peripheral European condition, supplementing European policies, and being a multiplier of cooperations with other PSCs taking advantage of Portugal's positioning and strategic triangle (Azores-Madeira-Continent) in the central Atlantic.

As we have described in Table 1, periods A and B have paved the way to the current state of affairs between China and Portugal. Indeed, the processes which led to the establishment of diplomatic relations and to the retrocession of MSAR created the political conditions to advance a new type of bilateral relations grounded in a common idea of cooperation for development. After a diplomatic lull between 2000 and 2003, Sino-Portuguese relations were driven by a sort of economic pragmatism, through which Portugal positioned itself as an EU member and as a leading PSC economy.

During phase C2 of period C (Table 1), Sino-Portuguese relations expanded to new areas, while existing relations deepened for Portugal to attract more Chinese investment, migrants and students, growing Chinese interests for Portugal and Portuguese language and culture, as well as more opportunities for Portuguese to learn Chinese. The number of high-level contacts, positive evolution of bilateral trade in goods and services, availability of direct flights between China and Portugal, growing cooperation in areas of innovation and technology transfer, as well as opportunities offered by blue partnerships and the strengthening of comprehensive partnerships, cooperations in the context of Forum Macau, potential for trilateral cooperation, opportunities associated with the extension of the Portuguese continental platform in the context of the Portuguese strategic triangle (including the archipelagos of Azores and Madeira), and infrastructure such as the deep-sea port of Sines and Beja Airport currently being developed – all of which directly or indirectly correlating to the B&RI – permit us to anticipate that the intensification of Sino-Portuguese relations in the last five decades will function as a bilateral economic multiplier in the short and medium term.

In 2022, the Portuguese economy performed second within the 32 members of the OECD. This fact also represents a push for more economic bilateral diplomacy, paving the way for new cooperation developments, reinforcing the China's access to Europe and perhaps Africa as well. Indeed, the Ambassador of China to Portugal Zhao Bentang in an interview published in February 2023, asserted that: "The Future of the Sino-Portuguese Cooperation is shining. (Novo, 2022)". The reasons can possibly be summarized as follows:

1. After establishing diplomatic relations, Portugal and China found a diplomatic and peaceful solution for the so-called "question of Macau", which has been successfully implemented;

2. Portugal was the first Atlantic European state to sign the MoU on B&RI cooperation with China;
3. Portugal was the first European state to officially establish a blue partnership with China;
4. Portugal was the first European state to issue bonds in RMB;
5. China is the 5th larger investor in Portugal;
6. Portugal and china established a strategic MFA direct dialogue mechanism;
7. Portugal's location functions as the connecting link between the land and the sea B&RI corridors – Particular importance goes to the Portuguese strategic triangle formed by Azores, Madeira and continental Portugal, which includes the Sines deep seaport and its ZILS as well as the Beja airport. The deep sea port of Sines complemented by Beja airport, is the key link between the TEN-T and the B&RI;
8. Portugal is founding member of the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB);
9. The number of Chinese tourists, students and residents in Portugal is growing;
10. Portugal has enormous tourist potential - 14 UNESCO sites;
11. Portugal has enormous blue economy potential - 7th larger EEZ in the world;
12. China has significant investment and technologic interests in Portugal;
13. Portugal was the first European country to create a medical degree in Chinese Traditional Medicine;
14. Portugal has a regular direct flight from/to China;
15. Portuguese is an “Official Language” of Macau SAR;
16. Portugal is member of the Forum Macau, with a permanent representative to that organization;
17. In China 47 high educations institutions offer Portuguese language programs and there is a mutual agreement on the recognition of academic degrees;
18. Portugal is cooperating with China in Africa (trilateral cooperation);
19. China is Portugal's leading trading partner in Asia, as well as the largest destination for Portuguese pork exports;

20. China is the larger E-market in the world;
21. China has supported the Candidacy of Antonio Guterres to the UNSG;
22. Portugal, as member of the CPLP/PSC community holds a potential access market potential of 2,3B consumers (considering the current market economic integration of the 8 PSC and the Timor-Leste ASEAN future membership).

Any anticipation of the near future will assert that both sides are keen to preserve the special relation they have built over the last 50 years, bearing in mind the year of 2049, when the transition period over Macau will end. Therefore, Portugal and China know one another very well, and the future of Sino-Portuguese relations will continue to deepen trade and economic cooperation within the existing mechanisms and sectors (energy, health, education, tourism, insurance, and communications), extend to new areas related to technology and maritime (blue) economy, and continue to intensify people-to-people interactions (especially in tourism and education). We will undoubtedly witness a push from the Portuguese side for more intensive tri-lateral cooperation with the PSCs. We will likely also observe, from the Chinese side, a new multi-sectoral access push towards the Africa, Atlantic and Europe. On one hand, Portugal, despite of the Lusophone B&RI narrative, is not on the official map of the B&RI corridors and blue passages, but it is indeed an important connecting pivot of the B&RI physical components, and a functional partner that facilitates access with consent to Africa, Atlantic and Europe. On the another hand, “China is willing to further synergize development strategies with Portugal. With concerted efforts from both sides, China-Portugal relations will sail toward a more splendid future, not only better benefiting the two peoples, but also contributing more to the building of a community with a shared future for humanity” (Bentang, 2021).

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Abbreviations and Acronyms

B&RI	Belt and Road Initiative
CCILC	Portugal-China Chamber of Commerce and Industry
CPLP	Community of the Portuguese-speaking Countries
EU	European Union
Forum Macau	The Forum for Economic and Trade Cooperation between China and the PSC
EEZ	Economic Exclusive Zone
FDI	Foreign Direct Investment
HoG	Head of Government
HoS	Head of State
Joint Declaration	Joint Declaration between the Government of the People's Republic of China and the Government of Portugal on the Question of Macau
MFA	Minister of Foreign Affairs
Min	Minister
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
MSAR	Macau Special Administrative Region of People's Republic of China

NPC	National People Congress (China)
PSC	Portuguese-Speaking Countries
PRC	People's Republic of China
STARLab	Joint Space and Maritime Technology Laboratory
UNC	United Nations Charter
UNGA	United Nations General Assembly
UNSG	United Nations Secretary General
ZILS	Sines Industrial and Logistics Zone

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FRANCISCO JOSÉ LEANDRO Investigador integrado do OBSERVARE, Francisco Leandro é doutorado em Ciência Política e Relações Internacionais pela Universidade Católica Portuguesa, tendo obtido o Diploma Avançado em Direito Internacional (2011) – Istituto per gli Studi di Politica Internazionale e Instituto de Direito Internacional Humanitário (Milão, Itália), os Diplomas do Curso de Estado-Maior do Instituto de Altos Estudos Militares e do Curso de Estado-Maior Conjunto (2001-2003), uma Licenciatura em Direito pela Universidade Autónoma de Lisboa, uma Licenciatura em Ciências Militares pela Academia Militar do Exército Português, bem como o Diploma de Conselheiro Jurídico da OTAN e de Conselheiro de Relações Públicas, pela escola da OTAN em Oberammergau (Alemanha). Em 2015, recebeu o Diploma da Academia de Comércio Internacional e de Direito do Investimento do Delta do Rio das Pérolas (PRAIA) da Universidade de Pequim / IEEM. Entre janeiro de 2013 e julho de 2018, foi Professor Assistente da Universidade de São José, Presidente do Conselho Pedagógico da Faculdade das Indústrias Criativas (2014-2016), Secretário do Conselho Científico (2016-2017) e Professor Visitante do Instituto de Estudos Europeus em Macau (IEEM) (2013-2018). De 2016 a 2018 ocupou o cargo de coordenador do programa do Instituto de Estudos Sociais e Jurídicos da Faculdade de Letras da Universidade de São José – Macau, China. Em 2017 concluiu o seu pós-doutoramento na Universidade de Macau sobre a iniciativa Chinesa “uma rota uma faixa”. Entre 2018 e 2023 foi Diretor-associado do Instituto de Investigação dos Países de Língua Portuguesa, Universidade Cidade de Macau, China. Atualmente é Professor Associado com agregação na Faculdade de Ciências Sociais da Universidade de Macau (China). Os seus livros mais recentes são: *Steps of Greatness: The Geopolitics of OBOR* (2018), University of Macau; *The Challenges, Development and Promise of Timor-Leste* (2019), City University of Macau; *The Belt and Road Initiative: An Old Archetype of a New Development Model* (2020), Palgrave Macmillan; *Geopolitics of Iran* (2021), Palgrave Macmillan; *The Handbook of Special Economic Zones* (2021), IGI Global; *Disentangled Visions on Higher Education: Preparing the Generation Next* (2023), Peter Lang Publishers; and *The Palgrave Handbook of Globalization with Chinese Characteristics* (2023), Palgrave Macmillan. Como oficial do Exército Português (1989 a 2012), foi agraciado com a Medalha de Serviço da União Europeia, Medalha de Serviço das Na-

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