

## **BRAZILIAN FOREIGN POLICY AND THE QUEST TO PROMOTE PORTUGUESE: BUILDING BRIDGES THROUGH MACAU**

**JOÃO SIMÕES**

[joaosimoes@cityu.edu.mo](mailto:joaosimoes@cityu.edu.mo)

Assistant Professor at City University of Macau (China). He holds a Ph.D. in Portuguese-speaking Countries Studies from the same university, a Master's degree in Chinese Studies from the University of Aveiro, Portugal, where he studied language policy and planning of the People's Republic of China, and a Bachelor's degree in Electrical and Computer Engineering from the University of Lisbon, Portugal. Prior to his current role, he taught at Xi'an International Studies University, China. His current research focuses on Lusophony and the interactions between Portuguese-speaking countries and China, as well as energy geopolitics.

<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1437-5527>.

**DANIEL VERAS**

[daniar73@gmail.com](mailto:daniar73@gmail.com)

Professor of "China: Contacts, Culture, Identities, and Contrasts" in the Specialization/Graduate Studies in Contemporary China program at PUC Minas (Brazil). He is also the vice-coordinator of ALADAA Brasil (Asociación Latinoamericana de Estudios de Asia y África, Brazil chapter). Previously, he was a researcher at the Center for Sino-Brazilian Studies at Fundação Getulio Vargas, Brazil. He holds a Doctorate in Social Sciences, a Master's in Communication and Semiotics, and a B.A. in Social Sciences, all from the Pontifical Catholic University of São Paulo (PUC-SP). Daniel lived in China for ten years, where he studied Chinese at Nanjing University and worked in academic Sino-Brazilian cooperation involving the Confucius Institute of São Paulo, the Chinese Government (Han Ban), and São Paulo State University (Unesp). He taught Portuguese language, International Relations, and Brazilian culture at Hubei University in Wuhan. From 2015 to 2016, he worked as a researcher at the Santo Andre City Hall. From 2010 to 2018, he lectured in the annual video conference "Brazilian Society and Economics" for the Master's in Business Engineering program at Institut Supérieur d'Ingénierie d'Affaires (ISIALM) in Le Mans, France. Since 2016, he has been a guest professor of Sociology and Philosophy for students from the University of Alberta (Canada), Syracuse University, the University of Missouri, the University of Illinois, North Carolina State University, and Pine Manor College (USA) as part of the Summer Program, CUSSA, at Shanghai Normal University and Beijing University of Technology, China. His interests include globalization, migration, diasporas, intercultural communication, arts, identities, contrasts, and culture. <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4367-6807>.

### **Abstract**

This article explores Brazil's role in the global promotion of the Portuguese language. Through the lens of Cooper's framework on the international promotion of languages, the study investigates the intertwined political, economic and cultural motivations behind language promotion initiatives. It analyzes Brazil's unilateral actions as well as engagement with the institutional framework of the Institute for the Promotion of Portuguese Language (IILP) within the Community of Portuguese Speaking Countries (CPLP). Drawing upon a review of scholarly works, official reports and policy documents, the paper shows that Brazil's foreign policy has actively promoted the Portuguese language in certain geographies, but has yet to prioritize China, despite significant bilateral relations between China and Brazil. Furthermore, the article highlights the role of Macau as a valuable bridge between China and the Portuguese-speaking countries, which has been increasingly recognized by the People's Republic of China. The conclusion underscores the need for Brazil to effectively leverage Macau's strategic position to capitalize on these opportunities.



## Keywords

Brazil, China, Portuguese language, language policy and planning, cultural diplomacy, Macau.

## Resumo

Este artigo analisa o papel do Brasil na promoção global da língua portuguesa. Utilizando o quadro teórico de Cooper sobre a promoção internacional de línguas, o estudo investiga as motivações políticas, económicas e culturais que estão interligadas nas iniciativas de promoção linguística. O presente artigo analisa ainda as acções unilaterais do Brasil, bem como o seu envolvimento com o Instituto Internacional da Língua Portuguesa (IILP) dentro da Comunidade dos Países de Língua Portuguesa (CPLP). Com base numa revisão de literatura científica, relatórios e outros documentos oficiais, este artigo revela que a política externa do Brasil tem promovido activamente a língua portuguesa em determinadas geografias, mas não tem dado prioridade à China, apesar da importância da relação bilateral entre os dois países. Além disso, o presente artigo destaca o papel de Macau como ponte entre a China e os países de língua portuguesa, que tem sido cada vez mais reconhecido pela República Popular da China. A conclusão sublinha a necessidade de o Brasil aproveitar efectivamente a posição estratégica de Macau para capitalizar estas oportunidades.

## Palavras-chave

Brasil, China, Língua Portuguesa, política e planeamento linguístico, diplomacia cultural, Macau.

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### **1. Introduction**

The promotion of a language abroad is closely linked to language policy and planning frameworks. Several important theoretical models and empirical studies provide insights into this link. Einar Haugen's influential language planning model describes four main components: selection, codifying, implementation and elaboration (Haugen, 1983). Selecting the variety of the target language, codifying its standards, implementing curricula and developing its use in new areas are crucial to expanding a language's global reach. Based on this, Robert Cooper's work frames language planning as a socio-political process that aims to influence the function, structure and acquisition of linguistic varieties (Cooper, 1989). This perspective highlights how the promotion of languages abroad is often driven by political, economic and cultural interests, and requires coordinated policy initiatives. From this view, the promotion of a language abroad is not a neutral act, but can be a means of exercising soft power and furthering political, economic and cultural agendas. Governments, for instance, may support the global spread of their national language to enhance diplomatic influence, facilitate trade or propagate cultural values.

Empirical case studies such as those compiled by Kaplan and Baldauf (1997) demonstrate how national and regional language planning efforts have focused on expanding the use of a language internationally through education, the media and diplomatic channels. For example, the promotion of Mandarin, Arabic and Spanish as global languages implies extensive policy planning and implementation.

The promotion of a language abroad is closely linked to the concepts of cultural diplomacy and soft power. Since the 1990s, scholars have explored these links in their research. For example, Joseph Nye's seminal work on soft power highlights how the attraction and appeal of a country's policies, culture and values can be a powerful tool for global influence (Nye, 2004). The promotion of a language abroad can be seen as a key strategy of influence, as it allows a country to project its cultural and linguistic capital globally.

Similarly, the concept of cultural diplomacy emphasizes the use of cultural exchange and



linguistic promotion as a means of promoting mutual understanding and building relations between countries (Cummings, 2003). Language can be a powerful tool for cultural diplomacy, as it enables intercultural communication, facilitates the dissemination of artistic and intellectual works, and creates opportunities for immersion and cultural exchange (Gienow-Hecht & Donfried, 2010). Several studies have collectively explored the intersection of foreign policy and language promotion across various countries, highlighting how nations use language as a tool of soft power to extend their cultural and political influence abroad (Gil, 2009; Diniz, 2012; Yudina & Seliverstova, 2020; Noack, 2022). In particular, Gil (2009) and Paradise (2009) examined China's initiatives to promote Chinese language globally as a means to increase its soft power and achieve foreign policy goals, while Mkhoyan (2016) and Yudina and Seliverstova (2020) discussed how various countries employ language policy and planning as an element of their soft power strategies.

In the context of Brazil, the world's largest Lusophone country, the promotion of Portuguese is not only a matter of linguistic expansion but also a strategic endeavor that aligns with the country's cultural diplomacy and soft power initiatives. Against this backdrop, this article examines Brazil's pivotal role in the promotion of the Portuguese language worldwide. The Portuguese language holds significant global importance, with a very promising growth projection in the coming decades. As the most populous Portuguese-speaking country, with more than 200 million speakers, Brazil occupies a unique position in driving the worldwide spread and influence of the Portuguese language. Some of the key factors highlighting its worldwide relevance include (Camões, 2022; Statista, 2024; Eberhard et al., 2024):

1. Number of speakers: Currently, Portuguese is spoken by over 264 million people on five continents. It is estimated that this number will reach almost 400 million by 2050 and exceed 500 million by 2100, with the African continent responsible for the largest increase. Portuguese is the seventh most spoken language in the world as a native language, and the eighth most spoken by total number of speakers.
2. As the most spoken language in the Southern Hemisphere: Portuguese has a strong presence in regions in South America and Africa.
3. Seventh most used language among all internet users and in terms of percentage of the top ten million websites on the world wide web
4. Adoption as the official language in multiple international organizations: Portuguese is an official and/or working language in 32 important international organizations, including the European Union, Community of Portuguese speaking countries, African Union, *Organização dos Estados Americanos*, Southern Common Market (*Mercosul*), *Comunidade de Estados Latino-Americanos e Caribenhos*, *Comissão Económica para a América Latina e Caraíbas*, *Organização dos Estados Ibero-Americanos* para a Educação, a Ciência e a Cultura, Economic Community of West African States, World Health Organization, Economic Community of Central African States, Community of Sahel-Saharan States, *Associação Latino-Americana de Integração*, Zone of Peace and Cooperation of the South Atlantic, Southern African Development Community,



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Union of South American Nations, Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa, UNESCO.

5. The fact that, while English remains the dominant language, Portuguese has managed to create its own spaces for communication and scientific publication. Brazil has developed the Scientific Electronic Library Online, which sees significant participation from Portuguese- and Spanish-speaking countries. Additionally, there are a number of academic repositories and open-access online knowledge platforms, particularly in Portugal and Brazil.

Hence, the Portuguese language demonstrates a growing importance in the world scenario, in demographic, economic and political terms. Its role is likely to be further strengthened, especially considering the projected demographic development of Portuguese-speaking African countries. The perception of advantage of Portuguese as a common language stem from the high number of Portuguese speakers, the Brazilian demography, the language's dispersion over four continents and the consequent presence in various regional political and economic organizations such as those identified above. In addition, the influence of the Portuguese language can expand through demographic growth and digital technology in a knowledge-based economy and, according to authors such as Reto et al. (2012), Portuguese can evolve from an international language in a linguistic bloc to a language of functional communication across the globe.

This article examines Brazil's multifaceted role in the global promotion of the Portuguese language. First, we analyze Brazil's unilateral efforts in advancing the usage and reach of the Portuguese language. Secondly, the paper explores Brazil's engagement with multilateral frameworks such as the Institute for the Portuguese Language (*Instituto Internacional da Língua Portuguesa*, IILP) and the Community of Portuguese Speaking Countries (*Comunidade dos Países de Língua Portuguesa*, CPLP) in coordinating language promotion initiatives. Thirdly, the article discusses Brazil's efforts to promote the Portuguese language in China. Finally, the paper concludes with an assessment of Brazil's overall impact and strategic positioning as the world's largest Lusophone country in the global promotion of the Portuguese language, emphasizing the need to prioritize China and the specific role Macau could play in this effort. The methodological approach employed in this study consists of a literature review and an analysis of official government documents and institutional reports, synthesizing existing theoretical frameworks and empirical findings from previous research along with insights into the practical implementation of Brazil's policies.

## **2. Brazil's unilateral efforts in promoting the Portuguese language**

Brazilian foreign policy actively promotes the Portuguese language internationally, particularly in Latin America and Africa, through various initiatives. This includes the establishment of Brazilian Cultural Centers (CCB) and lectureships (Diniz, 2012; Carvalho, 2016), the implementation of language proficiency exams such as Celpe-Bras (Diniz, 2012) and participation in the CPLP (Miyamoto, 2009; Vieira de Jesus, 2012). The



lectureship program plays a crucial role in teaching the Portuguese language and Brazilian culture abroad (Oliveira, 2020).

Brazil's approach to language promotion overseas has been influenced by geopolitical interests and national security concerns (Rajagopalan, 2008). The country's language promotion efforts are closely tied to its foreign policy goals, such as to gain support for reforming the UN Security Council (Beckhauser, 2018). Brazil's rise as a regional power has also prompted increased interest in Portuguese language education, including in military contexts; in particular, the United States Department of Defense has acknowledged the strategic significance of Brazil and the vital need for its military leaders to be involved in South American operations to receive training in the Portuguese language and culture (Waldvogel & Souza, 2018).

The promotion of Portuguese is seen by some scholars as a tool for cultural diplomacy and for improving Brazil's global image (Beckhauser, 2018; Mendes, 2019), with a focus on transnational cooperation and development actions. Brazil's efforts have been aimed at strengthening its diplomatic relations, expanding its influence in developing countries, and increasing its voice in multilateral forums (Vieira de Jesus, 2012). The country's approach to language promotion is often framed within South-South cooperation and development aid, especially in Portuguese-speaking African countries. Ullrich and Carrion (2014, pp. 157–158) argue that Brazil's government support programs are being directed towards vocational training, adult literacy and public policies, in alignment with the country's economic objectives. They are leveraging South-South cooperation to build human capital and develop skilled workforces in potential areas of interest for the expansion of Brazilian companies. However, some scholars argue that more efficient language policies are needed to realize the full potential of Brazilian Portuguese as an international language (Bagno & Carvalho, 2015).

Silva (2011) and Mendes (2019) recall that the policy of promoting the Portuguese language in Brazil began in 1938 with the establishment of the Intellectual Cooperation Division within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. In 1940, the Uruguayan-Brazilian Cultural Institute was established in Montevideo, the first Brazilian studies center and the starting point for the establishment of the Brazilian Education Network Abroad (RBEx). The RBEx is composed of Brazilian Cultural Centers, bilateral cultural institutes (IC), and lectureships, and is under the authority of the Division for the Promotion of the Portuguese Language (DPLP) of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. In 2005, the Brazilian government decided to create the Machado de Assis Institute (IMA), in cooperation with the Camões Institute, a Portuguese public institution devoted to the worldwide promotion of the Portuguese language and culture. The objective of this Machado de Assis Institute would be to disseminate Brazilian culture and the Portuguese language outside the Lusophone space. However, as Mendes (2019) suggests, this project did not move forward due to internal disagreements.

Brazilian foreign policy has been marked by continuous efforts to increase its influence on the international stage. Since the beginning of the twentieth century, Brazilian diplomacy has worked to expand its room for maneuver, including seeking to become a permanent member of the United Nations Security Council. From the early 1990s to the



present, Brazil has been taking a more active role in the international order, “trying to consolidate its perceived role as a constructive multilateral player” (Garcia & Coelho, 2018).

At the regional level, Brazilian foreign policy towards Latin America has consistently been guided by the integration, aid and cooperation of its members. This is reflected in the multiple regional associations created in recent decades, united by common purposes of economic cooperation represented by the Southern Common Market (Mercosur), the Union of South American Nations, the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States, the Latin American Integration Association, the Amazon Cooperation Treaty Organization, among others. In this broader context of regional cooperation, Brazil has played a significant role in promoting the use of the Portuguese language across Latin America (Mendes da Silva, 2021).

Brazil’s foreign policy during the Lula government consolidated the political concept of the “Global South”, seeking to strengthen relations with peripheral countries and increase Brazil’s protagonism on the international stage, by assuming a posture of a donor country in the field of international development cooperation, in particular in education. To this end, the strategy was to get closer to the neighboring South American countries and the Portuguese-Speaking African Countries. This approach aimed not only to expand Brazil's geopolitical influence but also to position the country as a significant player in international aid and cooperation (Ullrich and Carrion, 2014, p. 157). In this context, cultural diplomacy became a crucial tool for reinforcing Brazil's identity and influence, linking its foreign policy objectives to its cultural initiatives.

The Guimarães Rosa Institute (*Instituto Guimarães Rosa*, IGR) is the unit within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (*Ministério das Relações Exteriores*, MRE) responsible for Brazil’s cultural diplomacy. The concept of cultural diplomacy employed by the Brazilian government refers to the promotion of national interests in the field of foreign policy through actions in the areas of culture, education and the Portuguese language abroad. The IGR is comprised of four main divisions (MRE, n.d.):

- Division of Actions for the Promotion of Brazilian Culture
- Division of Multilateral Cultural Affairs
- Division of Educational Cooperation
- Division of the Portuguese Language

These divisions work together to develop and implement Brazil’s cultural diplomacy initiatives, with the overarching goal of promoting the language, culture and education on the international stage. The role of the IGR in promoting the Portuguese language can be summarized as follows (MRE, n.d.):

- To propose guidelines for Brazil’s foreign policy in the areas of cultural relations, education and the promotion of Portuguese abroad, in coordination with other government agencies.



- To promote Brazilian culture abroad to internationalize Brazil's creative economy.
- To negotiate and oversee the implementation of international agreements in the areas of cultural and educational relations.
- To coordinate Brazil's participation in international organizations and meetings related to multilateral cultural, educational, and Portuguese language promotion issues.
- To promote and oversee international educational cooperation initiatives.
- To manage the network of Guimarães Rosa Institutes abroad, which includes 24 physical units, six Brazilian Studies Centers at Brazilian embassies, and around 40 Portuguese language lectureships.
- To offer Portuguese language courses for expatriate Brazilian communities and foreigners, as well as the CELPE-Bras proficiency exam.
- To organize courses and activities related to Brazilian dance, music, cuisine and visual art to promote Brazilian culture.
- To administer the Leitorado Guimarães Rosa program, which places Brazilian language and literature professors as lecturers at foreign universities to promote the Portuguese language and Brazilian culture.

Over the past 70+ years, around 400 Brazilian lecturers have participated in the Leitorado program, and there are currently almost 40 Guimarães Rosa lecturers distributed across 30 countries in the Americas, Africa, Asia and Europe.

In addition to the official measures presented earlier for the promotion and dissemination of Portuguese, Vianna da Cruz (2013, pp. 25–26) draws attention to other actions taken by the Brazilian government. For example, the inauguration in 2006 of the Museum of the Portuguese Language in São Paulo, with the objective of preserving and showcasing the diversity of the language, celebrating it as a foundational element of culture. Another Brazilian strategy for the promotion and dissemination of the Portuguese language, according to the same author, was the creation of a university for the CPLP countries, the University of International Integration of Afro-Brazilian Lusophony, created in 2008 as a proposal by the government of Lula da Silva to increase Brazil's union with other Lusophone countries; this essentially went beyond just the language aspect to encompass also the social, economic and geopolitical factors. Prior to this, the Federal University of Latin American Integration had been created in 2007 in Foz do Iguaçu, with a mission to contribute to Latin American integration, through educational, scientific and cultural exchanges.

Despite the extensiveness and significance of the network under the responsibility of the Brazilian government for the promotion of language and culture, as the centers and lectureships are present on five continents, Mendes (2019, p. 45) argues that this network has very little presence in Asia, a strategic continent for the current global geopolitical landscape. Consequently, according to this author, countries like China, India and Russia should be more strongly benefited by the interests of promoting the language and culture as part of Brazilian diplomacy. Along the same line of reasoning, Beckhauser





(2018) explains that Brazilian cultural diplomacy has prioritized the teaching of the Portuguese language in countries with low representation in the international political and economic arenas, instead of expanding it to the new emerging powers, such as China, India and Russia. According to the author, Brazil has been betting on the creation of Brazilian Cultural Centers (CCBs) in Latin America and Africa, as Brazilian diplomacy seeks to publicize its image and win votes from developing countries for a future reform of the UN Security Council. This strategy reflects the country's attempt to strengthen its presence and influence in regions considered priorities for its international aspirations.

### **3. Brazil's engagement with IILP and the CPLP framework**

The Community of Portuguese Speaking Countries (CPLP) was conceived as a forum to promote cooperation between Portuguese-speaking countries, a legacy of their colonial and cultural historical ties. This community represents an attempt to unite diverse countries on different continents—Africa, South America, Europe and Asia—under a common vision of development, democracy and international cooperation. The idea of creating the CPLP was first mentioned in 1983 by Jaime Gama, Portugal's Minister of Foreign Affairs, during a visit to Cabo Verde. The proposal included rotating summits, annual ministerial meetings and frequent political consultations, thus strengthening dialogue and cooperation between Portuguese-speaking countries. The project gained decisive momentum in the 1990s, thanks to the work of José Aparecido de Oliveira, then Ambassador of Brazil in Lisbon, culminating in the first official meeting of the leaders of these countries in São Luís do Maranhão, Brazil, in 1989. At this meeting, it was decided to create the International Institute of the Portuguese Language (IILP), which focused on the promotion and dissemination of the language. In 1996, the CPLP was formally established in Lisbon, with the signing of its constitutive documents, which established the operational bases and objectives of the community. Since then, Timor-Leste has joined the CPLP (in 2002) after its independence, and Equatorial Guinea was admitted as a member in 2014 (CPLP, n.d.).

The CPLP defined in its statutes the materialization of projects aiming at promoting the Portuguese language as one of its main objectives. In order to pursue its objectives, the CPLP has adopted, through the IILP, several measures that reveal the language policy of the organization, insofar as it seeks to establish the major guidelines that embody a set of strategic options regarding the relations between the Portuguese language and social life (CPLP, 2021, p. 2).

The global strategies for the dissemination of Portuguese are reflected in the Action Plans of Brasília (PAB, 2010), Lisbon (PALis, 2013), Dili (PADíli, 2016) and Praia (PAP, 2021), which together provide institutional support and inform policy on the promotion and dissemination of the language. These documents highlight the language's potential as a global, pluricontinental and pluricentric language, well-suited for education, culture, the creative economy, scientific collaboration, and international organizations where it serves as an official and working language. These references to the Portuguese language reveal the strategic thinking of the CPLP regarding the social uses associated with its language in a perspective of consolidation and conquest of new domains of linguistic uses. The



conclusions on the assessment of the implementation of the PAB (2010) and the PALis (2013), presented at PADÍli (2016), state that the main strategic lines inscribed in the thematic axes registered different paces in their implementation, pointing to bigger strides in, for example, the diffusion of the teaching of the Portuguese language in the CPLP space and among the diasporas, but slower progress in the adoption of Portuguese in international organizations and its promotion within civil societies (CPLP, 2021, pp. 3–4).

Miyamoto (2009) argues that Brazil's engagement in the CPLP can be seen from two perspectives: on the one hand, Brazil is visible as it uses the CPLP to project its own interests abroad, i.e., the instrumentalization of the CPLP as part of Brazilian foreign policy to maximize the use of all existing possible resources; on the other hand, it can also be inferred that, despite the pragmatism of its foreign policy, Brazil also thinks in terms of joint action within the CPLP to serve "global interests that would impossible to obtain individually".

In an interview conducted by Barão (2023) with diplomat Lilian Pinho, First Secretary and Head of the Portuguese Language Division (DLP) of the Guimarães Rosa Institute, the Brazilian government agency focused on cultural and educational diplomacy, discussing the working principles of Brazilian foreign policy in the promotion and dissemination of Portuguese, as well as the development expectations of the IILP. Pinho begins by highlighting the importance of Brazilian foreign policy's recent reprioritization of focus onto culture and relations with African countries, with the recreation of the Ministry of Culture being an important step towards strengthening inter-ministerial work, while also exposing the need to reinstall the National Commission of Brazil in the IILP, which had been affected under the Jair Bolsonaro administration.

Regarding the working principles that guide Brazil's performance in the promotion of the Portuguese language and its projection within the IILP/CPLP, Pinho stressed the importance of networking for Brazilian language policy and its international projection, seeking collaboration with other government agencies, civil society institutions, universities, specialists and academics. In this sense, she marked the 70th anniversary of the Brazilian Lectureship Program—now the Guimarães Rosa Lectureship—which funds Brazilian lecturers to work in foreign higher education institutions in teaching and promoting the Portuguese language, as well as Brazilian literature and culture. In 2023, at the proposal of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the symposium that connects Brazilian lecturers stationed in different parts of the world was brought under the scope of the CPLP, in order to give visibility to a project that had been ongoing by Brazil and that contributes to the IILP's mandate. According to Pinho, with this move from Brazil, the expectation is to contribute to the improvement of the shared and transnational management of the Portuguese language, which is one of the foundations for the performance of the IILP/CPLP (Barão, 2023).

Finally, Pinho concludes that in addition to the Portuguese language being a language of contact and collaboration between countries marked by colonial history, its adoption in international contexts can also be a form of resistance to the predominance of English and French in diplomacy and multilateral politics. However, Pinho draws attention to the



fact that it is necessary to reflect on the development of the IILP and CPLP, and this discussion needs to involve not only decision-makers, but also the active involvement of civil societies (Barão, 2023).

As we have seen above, authors such as Beckhauser (2018) and Mendes (2019) argue that the Brazilian government has not prioritized the teaching of the Portuguese language in new emerging powers, including China. Other authors, such as Pestana (2019) and Tang (2020), highlight the growing demand for Portuguese in China, driven by the country's economic relations and the Belt and Road Initiative. In the next section, we will look at Brazil's initiatives to expand the Portuguese language learning in China.

#### **4. Brazil's efforts to promote the Portuguese language in China**

This section provides an overview of the historical developments surrounding the promotion of the Portuguese language in China. According to Jatobá (2020), since 1949, the teaching of foreign languages in China has oscillated between periods of openness and restriction. Following the Chinese Revolution, the nation required time to reorganize its society, and it was not until 1956 that *Putonghua*, the modern standard form of Mandarin Chinese, was established as the official language of the People's Republic of China (Jatobá, 2020). A significant milestone occurred in 1960, when higher education institutions in China began offering Portuguese language courses, driven by the growing demand for qualified professionals.

Zhang et al. (2020) categorize the history of Portuguese language instruction in China into four distinct periods: 1) 1960-1966; 2) 1966-1977; 3) 1978-1999; and 4) 2000 onward. This classification considers the social transformations that characterized each period.

The 1960s were marked by global turmoil, as highlighted by Li (2012). Events such as the Caribbean missile crisis, ideological rifts between China and the USSR, the Vietnam War, and imperialism in Africa contributed to widespread disorder. In response to these challenges, the People's Republic of China was compelled to recalibrate its foreign policy. It was during this tumultuous period that Portuguese language courses were first introduced in Beijing's higher education institutions, which later evolved into universities.

The second period identified by Zhang et al. (2020) spans from 1966 to 1977. The first formal Portuguese language course in mainland China was established in 1960, at the university presently known as the Communication University of China. The goal was to meet the need of training translators. As Chinese relations with the USSR soured in the 1960s, Soviet translators departed from China, which urged China to train its own translators. In order to meet this need, Beijing International Studies University (BISU) also inaugurated its Portuguese course in the early 1960s. The Cultural Revolution (1966-1976) brought about the suspension of admissions in universities and of the *gaokao* (college entrance examination test), therefore creating an educational gap, as exposed by Professor Victoria Almeida from the Shanghai International Studies University - SISU (Radar China, 2022). As university activities resumed, SISU, for example, opened its



Portuguese course in 1977, with ten students (the same university had opened a mini-Portuguese course back in 1973 but with only three students) (Wang, 2001).

As Wang (2001) points out, that first Portuguese course offered back in the early 1960s had only 18 students. In the same year, the Institute of Foreign Languages in Beijing (present day Beijing Foreign Studies University, BFSU) opened a two-and-a-half-year course, with ten students all selected among Russian language interpreters. As years went by, the city of Guangzhou also started Portuguese courses, and Nanjing University eventually followed suit. Between 1960 and 2001, more than 400 students majored in Portuguese language and culture in Chinese universities. Yet according to Wang (2001), the first teachers of Portuguese language in China were Brazilian, both in Beijing and Shanghai. Then the first teachers from Portugal came via non-state channels, and, with time, they would outnumber the Brazilians. Due to the China-Portugal-Macau protocols, by the 2000s, as Wang (2001) would affirm, all lecturers in Chinese universities would be from Portugal, sent by the Camões Institute and Instituto Português do Oriente. Initially, Chinese and Portuguese lecturers would have complementary functions, with the former focusing on grammar and the latter on conversation and culture.

As Li (2012) points out, despite the challenges posed by the Cultural Revolution, institutions that evolved into the present-day Communication University of China and Beijing Language and Culture University (BLCU) graduated approximately one hundred students proficient in Portuguese under difficult conditions and with outdated methodologies. During the same period, Macau trained nearly forty professionals. Li (2012) notes that while the number of Portuguese speakers in the PRC was limited, their contributions were significant in advancing Chinese foreign policy.

Li (2017) further asserts that the first formal major in Portuguese language was established in 1960 by the institute that later became the Communication University of China. Subsequently, BLCU and SISU introduced their own Portuguese programs between 1966 and 1977. By the year 2000, these three institutions alone had collectively trained around four hundred translators and interpreters throughout China.

China has also resorted to sending students abroad for Portuguese studies. After all, sending students abroad is a resource when domestic conditions are not mature yet. This is why in 1959 there were mainland Chinese students—seven in total—studying Portuguese in Macau (Wang, 2001). Political turmoil inside China would also be responsible for adopting this strategy a few years later. For example, during the Cultural Revolution (1966–1976), a five-student group was sent to Macau to study Portuguese. In the 1980s, more than ten Chinese were sent to Brazil as an experience abroad.

In contrast, Portuguese language education in Macau began much earlier. According to Li (2017), Portuguese teaching commenced in the 16th century, coinciding with the arrival of Portuguese explorers. Notably, the Colégio de São Paulo was founded in 1594. However, it was not until the 19th century that official schools began to emerge. Li (2017) highlights the significance of the Opium Wars in this educational evolution, listing several schools established during that period, including Escola Comercial Pedro Nolasco da Silva (1887), Liceu Macau (1894), and Escola Sínica (1914), which was the first translation school. Although none of these institutions were classified as higher education



establishments, they laid the groundwork for future developments in Portuguese language education in the region (Li, 2017).

From the 1980s on, Chinese students have gone to Portugal on scholarships from the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, the Camões Institute and Fundação Oriente. The Chinese government has also put an effort toward the diffusion of Portuguese in order to train diplomats. In the 1990s, however, Macau would play a more important role. In the late 1990s, the Chinese government sent 16 to 18 people to study at the University of Macau, and by the 2000s, more than a hundred Chinese had been sent abroad by government authorities to study Portuguese (Wang, 2001).

Diplomatic ties were also very important to motivate Portuguese teaching in China. China established diplomatic relations with Brazil in 1974 and with Portugal in 1979. China was also interested in establishing ties with countries like Mozambique and Angola who had just become independent, respectively (Mozambique in 1975 and Angola in 1983). It is also noteworthy that all these relations have been important to China all along, from then to the present, as noted by SISU's professor Victoria Almeida (Radar China, 2022). Conditions were being created to make way to the 3<sup>rd</sup> phase proposed by Zhang et al. (2020), which was 1978-1999. This context set the stage for the third phase proposed by Zhang et al. (2020), which spanned from 1978 to 1999. This period was characterized by the reforms and opening-up policies initiated by Deng Xiaoping.

In China, foreign languages that are taught are divided into major languages (mainstream languages like English, Spanish and French) and minor languages (those considered "minority" languages). Historically, Portuguese has fit into the second category. Nevertheless, Portuguese learning has not only connected China to Brazil and Portugal but also to countries in Africa. This way, the Portuguese language has meant access to an important part of what is now called the Global South. In addition, Portuguese has become an important working language. As Wang (2001) points out, to learn Portuguese one would have to go to BFSU or SISU, for example, both of which being top elite universities in China. This may support the argument that a career in the Portuguese language in China is somewhat prestigious.

How would a young person choose a career related to the Portuguese language? Especially from 1949 to 1966, a student would be assigned a major considering what the state needed. That means this was not an individual choice. In other cases, students applied to universities and, once selected, the universities would assign them a major that was in demand in society. As Wang (2001) explains, that meant that Portuguese actually chose the students, not the other way round.

The current situation of Portuguese language education in China corresponds to the fourth phase identified by Zhang et al. (2020), which spans from 2000 to the present. Pires (2022) conducted a comparative analysis of existing data on Portuguese language institutions, educators, and students in the country. The analysis reveals that there are currently 6,370 students and 221 teachers of Portuguese across 56 higher education institutions in China; this number rises to 304 when including Macau (as of 2021).

Jatobá (2020) reviews the history of Portuguese language instruction in China and emphasizes the multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary nature of language policy and



planning in the region. He argues that this approach presents both advantages and disadvantages. On one hand, it facilitates the analysis of language education from multiple perspectives across different fields. On the other hand, the fragmentation of linguistic policy into various areas of study may lead to its marginalization, rendering it secondary both academically and socially. This subjugation to a specific discipline diminishes the autonomy of the language as a subject of inquiry. Consequently, the broader implications of language in shaping and influencing behaviors are often overlooked.

Yan (2019) highlights the period after 2000 as a significant time of progress for Portuguese language education in China. As the country has become more open and its economy has experienced substantial growth, the number of courses and learners has increased, accompanied by improvements in the quality of Portuguese teaching at universities. Moreover, the evolving diplomatic and socioeconomic contexts, along with new foreign language teaching policies in China, have contributed to this advancement. However, these developments also present both challenges and opportunities for Portuguese educators, particularly in the context of globalization and superdiversity. With a growing number of Portuguese speakers, teachers face increased competition in the job market, necessitating a deeper understanding of the realities faced by Chinese students and a commitment to maintaining and enhancing the quality of instruction (Yan, 2019).

Radar China (2022) reports that there are 55 higher education institutions offering Portuguese courses at some level (either an elective or free course, degree, discipline, minor or major, undergraduate or graduate, etc.), all of which focusing on Portuguese as a foreign language. Out of these 55, 22 are partners with Brazilian universities, with student exchange. The main Brazilian partners are the Federal University of Rio Grande do Sul, the Campinas State University and University of São Paulo. Among the private ones, the Armando Álvares Penteado Foundation (FAAP) stands out. The data also shows that there are 316 teachers of Portuguese in China, 36 of whom being Brazilian. Nonetheless, as expected, all figures of foreign teachers came down after the COVID-19 pandemic. Currently, most teachers of Portuguese in China are Chinese, and have been trained at BISU, BFSU or SISU.

SISU, for instance, is among the three universities that pioneered Portuguese-teaching in China. SISU is one of few that offer a master's degree in Portuguese. China has only recently begun offering a doctorate in Portuguese language via the Beijing Language and Culture University (BLCU), and, with time, Portuguese teaching has extended into other regions and provinces—for example, from the far north to Hubei province, where the Confucius Institute fosters much of the process. What the students acquire from these programs is instrumental competency, allowing them to eventually become translators and interpreters. They also obtain some knowledge on history and culture especially pertaining to Portugal and Brazil. At SISU, Portuguese is essentially offered to third- and fourth-year (20 to 21 years old) university students (Radar China, 2022).

The students' background generally comprises a solid foundation in Chinese politics and advanced English language skills. Upon graduation, many students find jobs in the private



sector, such as in the communication and marketing departments of companies like Huawei or Xiaomi, and some of these students would go on to gain experience in other markets, such as Brazil and Africa. Other graduates enter the public sector, securing positions in diplomacy or state-owned enterprises with projects abroad, as reported by Professor Victoria Almeida (Radar China, 2022).

Wang (2001) explains why, even since decades ago, the number of graduates of Portuguese hired in Beijing has been higher than in Shanghai: a number of those employed in Shanghai have had to subsequently leave the city because most jobs there are in the private sector. On the other hand, Portuguese speakers are more needed for governmental relations, and Beijing offers more of those opportunities. In diplomacy, for example, the Chinese government tends to give preference to those majoring in Portuguese for diplomatic positions in Portuguese-speaking countries. Also, a number of Chinese ministries have positions and opportunities for those who speak Portuguese. Moreover, the media offer jobs for Portuguese speakers. For example, Beijing Radio, China Radio International (CRI), China publications in foreign languages, and Xinhua News Agency. Academically, the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences also benefits from Portuguese speakers.

Currently, across all regions of China—including Mainland China, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Macau—there are more than 60 higher education institutions offering programs in Portuguese (Zhang et al., 2020). These institutions provide a range of academic qualifications, including bachelor's degrees, master's degrees, doctorates, and minors. Zhang et al. (2020) also identifies emerging trends in Portuguese language education in China, such as an increasing number of qualified teachers and a growing array of exchange opportunities. Notably, initiatives like the Greater Bay Area and the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) are highlighted as significant factors driving this trend. This indicates that China is making considerable efforts to facilitate cultural and educational exchange. However, this raises the question: what is Brazil's role in this dynamic? The following section will provide insights into Brazil's contributions and responses to these developments.

In fact, Portuguese is expanding in China, but Brazil's participation in it does not quite match its magnitude as the biggest Portuguese-speaking country in the world. This discrepancy is even more surprising considering that China has been Brazil's biggest trade partner since 2009. As Professor Victoria Almeida (Radar China, 2022) points out, historically, Portuguese teaching in China used teachers from Portugal as a point of reference. It is only recently that teachers from Brazil have become more prevalent. One of the reasons for this may be because of initiatives such as the lectureship program (Programa de Leitorado). At SISU, for example, Portuguese belongs to the Department of Latin American and European Studies, where Spanish, Greek, Italian and others languages are included. Chinese students often lack the background to distinguish them, and often do not consider Brazil as part of Latin America. The teachers from Latin America therefore have to make an effort to better introduce their part of the world to the students. For example, the Brazilian professors may present specific facets, such as post-colonial readings and history of their home country to offer a broader panorama of the Portuguese language to supplement an otherwise overly Eurocentric study. Nevertheless,



teaching materials from Brazil are still scarce, and while there are Chinese students who want to go to Brazil, such opportunities are limited, and the costs are high.

From the graduates' point of view, many of them want to find jobs in private companies, especially those in Shanghai. They will become executives/interlocutors for Brazilians in virtually all states of the South American country. In fact, the Chinese know less about African Portuguese-speaking countries and East Timor than they know about Portugal or Brazil. This is because Chinese students who choose the former countries as research topics are rare, causing them to only acquire cursory knowledge at best. For Professor Victoria Almeida, a significant amount of work still needs to be done in this regard (Radar China, 2022).

In spite of the above-mentioned exchanges with Brazilian universities (partnerships with USP, Unicamp, UFRS and UEL (Londrina State University, in Paraná State)), this is still only just a handful of the universities in Brazil. According to Almeida (Radar China, 2022), there are far more Chinese students returning from exchanges in Portugal, whose best universities offer exchanges with Chinese students. It is a long-term process, so it will take long before Brazil builds a teaching culture in China. As a case in point, the Portuguese Department at SISU is more than ten years old, but it was not until recently that it had its first Brazilian teacher. Therefore, their course about Brazil is also only a recent addition.

Brazil, however, has made some efforts to promote the dissemination of Brazilian Portuguese. Brazil has established a lectureship program (Programa de Leitorado) that sends its teachers abroad to teach Portuguese in universities in countries around the world. Back in 2010, 13 lecturers were selected, two of whom took up positions in China: one at BISU and the other at the Guangdong University of Foreign Studies. In fact, among all countries considered (the other being Argentina, Bolivia, Cameroon, Chile, Guinea Bissau, Lebanon, Paraguay, Peru, Ukraine and Vietnam), China was the only country with two spots. There were three canceled slots: Cote d'Ivoire, Cuba and another Peruvian university (Brazilian Government, 2010). In 2023, 19 Brazilian lecturers were selected in the program for a number of countries: the U.S., Peru, Greece, Bahamas, Mexico, Bolivia, Spain, South Africa, Russia, Czech Republic, France, Chile, Finland, Israel and Italy. The U.S., China and France each had two slots. For China, one opening was at BFSU and the other at the Guangdong University of Foreign Studies (Brazilian Government, 2023).

According to Professor Victoria Almeida (Radar China, 2022), Chinese students learning Portuguese at SISU generally know little about Brazil beyond football and music, with only a few students having some knowledge of social issues like corruption and racism. This limited understanding highlights the need to deepen cultural exchange and knowledge-sharing between the two countries. Some aficionados, in turn, appreciate bossa nova and telenovelas/soap operas. Almeida opines that Brazil should explore cultural diplomacy, translation of Brazilian literature as well as other initiatives. In fact, the most translated Brazilian authors into Chinese are Jorge Amado and Paulo Coelho, but beyond that this area is largely unexplored and has a great deal of growth potential. Machado de Assis also has some works translated into Chinese, but only a smattering of Brazilian course books or textbooks (on language, history or society) have been





translated. In contrast, Portugal has far more titles translated into Chinese, not to mention the fact that most Portuguese language textbooks in China are by authors from Portugal or by Chinese trained in Portugal.

In the 1980s, Brazilian audiovisual productions generated some appeal to Chinese audiences. For example, the soap opera *Slave Isaura* and the country music duo *Milionário* and *José Rico* obtained unexpected success and increased Brazil's soft power, which, for decades up to that juncture, had been mostly fueled by Brazilian football. In the 21st century, intensified relations between Brazil and China increased cultural exchange. For example, in 2004, the year of the presidential meeting between Presidents Lula and Hu Jintao, the Forbidden City in Beijing housed a special exhibit called *The Amazon*. In the 2010s, the Festival of Brazilian Cinema took place in Beijing and Shanghai to showcase Brazilian productions to the Chinese audiences. In 2012, a Chinese translation of the 1968 book *Meu pé de laranja lima* ("My sweet orange tree") by José Mauro de Vasconcelos was released, along with a movie adaptation of it shown on the big screen in Beijing, which piqued the curiosity of Chinese youth. A few years later, with the support of the Brazilian government and the University of Macau, a Chinese translation of *O homem que sabia javanês* ("The man who could speak Javanese"), a tale by Lima Barreto, was launched. Other Brazilian authors translated in Chinese include Cristóvão Tezza and Amílcar Bettega. Nevertheless, these are still incipient cases and really cannot be considered enough for promoting Brazil in China. Moreover, if we juxtapose this with the above-mentioned initiatives in Macau, where countless authors from Portugal are translated and divulged, it becomes even clearer: the process of cultural exchange needs the participation of non-state actors—including the media, literature and audiovisual productions—as much as it needs commitment from governments.

Compared to Brazil, Portugal has a greater framework in Portuguese teaching overseas. It offers lectureship programs and scholarships to Chinese students (master's and doctoral degrees) as well as a partnership with the Camões institute (Instituto Camões). Portugal also facilitates acquisition of titles, besides promoting the translation of Portuguese novels in China. In contrast, Brazil does not make such a structured effort.

As a result, at present most Chinese students of the Portuguese language tend to use European Portuguese as a basis or at least have it as reference. In Macau, the majority of Portuguese teachers are from Portugal (Pires, 2022). Founded in 1992, The Instituto Camões is a public Portuguese institute that promotes Portuguese language and culture worldwide, through cooperation and educational and cultural exchanges. This institute has several areas of activity, including language teaching, cultural promotion and academic cooperation. It operates Portuguese language and cultural centers in various countries, providing Portuguese language courses and supporting the teaching of Portuguese as a foreign language. The Institute ensures the dissemination, promotion and teaching of Portuguese language and culture in nearly 80 countries, in cooperation with 357 higher education institutions and organizations. The institute also organizes cultural events, such as exhibitions, concerts and literary festivals, to showcase Portuguese arts and heritage. Additionally, it facilitates academic exchanges and research collaborations between Portugal and other countries Camões (n.d.-a, b).



Pires (2023) conducted a comparative analysis of state policies and strategies promoting Portuguese and Spanish as foreign languages in China, viewing Portugal and Spain as 'exporters' and China as an 'importer' of these languages. The research highlights the global activities of institutions tasked with this mission, followed by an examination of their implementation within China. Notably, gaps in the strategy for exporting Portuguese to China were identified, despite a favorable context for its adoption. The author offers recommendations for more effective use of existing resources and points out areas with significant potential for growth. The study suggests that language teachers should act not only as instructors but also as ambassadors for Portuguese language and culture. Additionally, it argues that Camões, I.P. should transition from a system that primarily benefits partner universities to one that actively promotes Portuguese language and culture in China. In addition, it emphasizes the need to expand cultural outreach and course offerings to the general public in mainland China.

In terms of Chinese institutions, there have been a great deal of efforts to keep cultural exchange alive, and the Confucius Institutes play a decisive role in facilitating Portuguese learning in China. If cultural partnerships succeed, much of it will be owed to the Chinese's effort. In fact, all cooperation involving the Confucius Institutes since 2004, fostered by the Chinese government, have prompted Chinese universities to teach Portuguese, along with the languages of the other countries involved in the cooperation. In addition, university exchanges and the Forum for Economic and Trade Cooperation between China and Portuguese-speaking Countries (Forum Macau), both motivated by investments in Portuguese-speaking countries, contribute to the diffusion of Portuguese. In some cases, like at Hubei University, the Portuguese course is a preparation for educators and volunteers before their teaching assignment at the Confucius Institutes in Brazil.

The year of 2024 is important because it marks not only the 50th anniversary of Sino-Brazilian diplomatic relations but also the 20th anniversary of the High-Level Sino-Brazilian Commission on Consultation and Cooperation. Moreover, China and Brazil have been strategic partners since 1993. In fact, Brazil is the first country with whom China established a strategic partnership. In 2012, the partnership became a global strategic partnership. Such an increase in level of cooperation can boost the role of Brazil in Portuguese teaching in China.

This is all in line with the "people-to-people connections" pillar of China's landmark Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) established in 2013. Although the BRI's flagship projects are related to infrastructure integration, beyond the economic and infrastructure aspects, the people-to-people connections pillar, one of five that the BRI is based on, reflects China's aim and commitment to deepening cultural exchange and mutual understanding through facilitating more human interactions. In July 2024, President Lula announced that the Brazilian government would be joining the BRI. What this signifies—if considered in conjunction the fact that of the more than 140 countries that have signed on to the BRI, only 20 of them are from the Latin American region—is that though there are existing Chinese investments in Brazil, it is possible that Brazil's joining the BRI would bring more opportunities of infrastructure integration and therefore more cultural exchanges.



Li (2015) notes that many Lusophone countries are located along the “Maritime Silk Road of the 21st Century.” The author emphasizes the historical significance of the Portuguese language in the ancient Maritime Silk Road, which primarily encompassed the Indian Ocean. Since the 15th century, following Vasco da Gama's voyages, Portuguese has wielded considerable influence throughout the region—and it continues to do so today. Consequently, Li (2015) argues that the Portuguese language is essential for the success of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI).

In May 2024, Brazilian vice president Geraldo Alckmin visited China for the COSBAN meeting, during which he met with Chinese president Xi Jinping and together announced a number of agreements amounting to R\$ 24 billion (US\$ 4.49 billion) in investments, including a broadening of the market for Brazilian coffee and a possibility to establish a Brazil House in Shanghai. As 2024 is the year Brazil presides over the G20, the COSBAN meeting represents a momentous occasion for Sino-Brazilian bilateral relations. Among other agreements from the COSBAN meeting, such as enhancing satellite cooperation and fighting poverty and starvation, was an MoU involving Portuguese language teaching (TV GGN, 2024). In addition, result no. 4 of the meeting highlights bilateral cooperation in many—including cultural—areas (Brazilian Government, 2024, 2024a). In 2023, along with President Lula, the Minister of Culture of Brazil, Margareth Menezes, visited universities and other cultural spaces, paving the way for agreements such as one signed on audiovisual cooperation.

In November 2024, Brazil will host the highly anticipated G20 summit, an event that will prove especially significant for China-Brazil relations as both sides look forward to the next level of partnership: Will it involve deeper collaboration under initiatives like the Nova Indústria Brasil Program and the new PAC (Program for Growth Acceleration)? How will Brazil joining the BRI impact Sino-Brazilian partnership? We will be especially interested in the answers to these questions in the context of cultural exchanges between the two countries.

## 5. Discussion and Conclusion

As we have seen, the Portuguese language has shown growing importance in the global scenario demographically, economically and politically. This relevance is expected to continue to rise, especially given the immense development anticipated in Portuguese-speaking African countries. Brazil plays a unique role in promulgating Lusophone influence on the world, due to its large number of native Portuguese speakers and presence in several regional organizations.

The Portuguese language's potential for expansion is promising, especially with demographic growth and the advancement of digital technologies. For Brazil, although the promotion of Portuguese is seen as a tool for cultural diplomacy and for elevating its global image, the country has not seized every opportunity to stamp its presence, especially with regard to promoting itself in China despite strong bilateral economic partnership between the two countries. How can Brazil best leverage its role as a global Lusophone leader to promote the Portuguese language in China?



Mendes (2019) advocates for a more cooperative and transnational approach to the global promotion of the Portuguese language, highlighting the importance of Brazil's active and cooperative participation in multilateral policies aimed at the promotion and diffusion of Portuguese. This includes leveraging the involvement of international higher education institutions in Brazil. In line with this perspective, we believe Brazil can capitalize on the current context, which encompasses several favorable factors, to adopt a more collaborative approach to promoting the Portuguese language in China. This favorable context can be understood across global, national, and regional/local levels.

On the global level, the new Lula administration in Brazil has tried a rapprochement with China, and Brazil has already committed to joining the Belt and Road Initiative (CLBrief, 2024) and appointing a permanent representative at Forum Macau (TDM, 2024). This goes beyond the misgiving and reservation that Brazil has shown over the years in relation to Forum Macau (Mendes, 2013, pp. 288–289). The year 2024 marks two important anniversaries in the context of Sino-Brazilian relations: the 50th anniversary of diplomatic ties and the 20th anniversary of the High-Level Sino-Brazilian Commission on Consultation and Cooperation. Since China established a strategic partnership in 1993—the first of its kind—with Brazil, relations between the two have evolved into a global strategic partnership (instated in 2012).

At the national level in China, Brazil could take advantage of what is happening with the teaching of Portuguese in mainland China. After years of rapid growth in the number of learners of Portuguese, we are now in a phase of investing in so-called area or regional studies. These studies refer to the interdisciplinary academic fields that focus on the study of a particular geographic region or cultural area of the world, and go beyond just the study of languages. Brazil's higher education and research institutions can contribute to strengthening China's area studies on Portuguese-speaking countries and Latin America by undertaking research and analysis of the social, economic, political and cultural dynamics of the target regions. Area studies can provide a deeper understanding of the needs, opportunities and challenges faced by partner countries. These studies play a vital role in facilitating China's engagement with the world, particularly within the framework of the Belt and Road Initiative.

At the regional and local level, Brazil can take advantage of Macau's advantages and special status, namely the "one country, two systems" policy, the international free port, the autonomous customs zone, the simple and reduced tax regime, and Macau's role as a service platform for cooperation between China and Portuguese-speaking countries. The "Development Plan for Appropriate Economic Diversification of the Macao Special Administrative Region (2024-2028)" also offers opportunities with a focus on promoting the development of key industries such as traditional Chinese medicine, the modern financial industry, cutting-edge technology, and the MICE (meetings, incentives, conferences and exhibitions) and culture and sports sectors (DSEPDR, 2024).

Indeed, it is time for Brazil to have a more significant presence in Macau, not only through diplomatic channels but also by stimulating the involvement of various non-state actors such as chambers of commerce and investment, professional associations, Brazilian cultural centers, media outlets, art and cultural foundations, among others. This



constellation of partners can help Brazil to leverage Macau's role as a generator of opportunities, something that Brazil has not fully taken advantage of yet. A strengthened presence in Macau would allow a consolidation of existing partnerships between Brazilian and mainland Chinese universities, by bringing Chinese students learning Portuguese closer to Brazilian companies, strengthening the connection between education and the entrepreneurial ecosystem of the Greater Bay Area, producing locally-adapted teaching materials for the Chinese context, ultimately bringing Brazil and China closer together through the unique environment that Macau offers.

This article has examined Brazil's pivotal role as the world's largest Lusophone country in the global promotion of Portuguese, a language that holds significant global importance with a very promising growth projection in the coming decades. As highlighted by the perspective of Cooper (1989), the promotion of languages abroad is often driven by political, economic and cultural interests, and requires coordinated policy initiatives. We have seen how Brazilian foreign policy has been actively promoting the Portuguese language in some geographies, but without drawing its attention towards China. By fostering Portuguese language education in China, Portuguese—despite its linguistic challenges for non-Romance language speakers—not only deepens cultural exchanges but also enhances mutual understanding. In the long run, the importance of cultural rapprochement between the two countries supports Chinese businesses and institutions, and enhances China's engagement with the broader Lusophone world, of which Brazil is the largest member. This engagement can help grant China access to vital resources and markets in Brazil and Africa, potentially contributing to China's domestic food safety and energy security, and supporting the broader movement in financial markets to internationalize the use of the Chinese *yuan*. Macau has been instrumental as a cultural conduit between China and the Portuguese-speaking world, serving historically as a meeting point. This role has been increasingly recognized and valued by the People's Republic of China. Nevertheless, while there is political will and a favorable environment in Macau, more concerted efforts from Brazil will be required to materialize these opportunities.

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