

THE LUSOPHONE BRIDGE: MACAU'S ROLE IN CHINA-BRAZIL RELATIONS (1999-2024)

HENOCH GABRIEL MANDELBAUM

henoch@alumni.usp.br

Ph.D. student in Political Science at the University of São Paulo (Brazil). Researcher at the International Relations Research Center at the University of São Paulo (NUPRI-USP), and at the Center for International Studies and Analyses at São Paulo State University (NEAI-UNESP). Member of the International Political Science Association (IPSA), the Midwest Political Science Association (MPSA), the Second Cold War Observatory (SCWO), and the Society for Hong Kong Studies (SHKS). His current research interests are Foreign Policy Analysis, Security Studies, and Political Regimes, with an emphasis on Brazil, Latin America, China (including Hong Kong, Macau, and Taiwan), and the Indo-Pacific region.

Abstract

Since the handover in 1999, Beijing has strategically used Macau's Portuguese heritage and thriving local economy to develop closer relations with Lusophone countries. Among these nations, Brazil stands out as an emerging power and as China's most important trading partner in Latin America. However, it is crucial to recognize that Macau is not merely a passive entity in this dynamic. As a Special Administrative Region (SAR), Macau possesses a distinct "actorness", empowered by its Basic Law to engage autonomously in relevant external affairs. This study aims to dissect and understand Macau's role in the evolving China-Brazil relations over twenty-five years. To achieve this, I will employ qualitative research methods, primarily online archival excavation, and document analysis, focusing on official documents, local media articles, and academic literature. Applying soft power and paradiplomacy frameworks, I will explore how China has utilized Macau as an instrument of attraction in its dealings with Brazil. Furthermore, I will examine Macau's endeavors to establish itself as a critical paradiplomatic player in these interactions. Lastly, I will delve into Brazil's reactions to China and Macau's efforts to strengthen their ties with the country and how these responses have shaped their triangular relations.

Keywords

Macau, China, Brazil, Soft Power, Paradiplomacy.

Resumo

Desde a transferência em 1999, Pequim tem utilizado estrategicamente a herança portuguesa de Macau e a próspera economia local para desenvolver relações mais estreitas com os países lusófonos. Entre estas nações, o Brasil destaca-se como potência emergente e como o mais importante parceiro comercial da China na América Latina. No entanto, é crucial reconhecer que Macau não é apenas uma entidade passiva nesta dinâmica. Enquanto Região Administrativa Especial (RAE), Macau possui uma "atividade" distinta, habilitada pela sua Lei Básica a envolver-se autonomamente em assuntos externos relevantes. Este estudo visa dissecar e compreender o papel de Macau na evolução das relações China-Brasil ao longo de vinte e cinco anos. Para o conseguir, empregarei métodos de investigação qualitativos,



principalmente consulta de arquivos online e análise de documentos oficiais, artigos dos media locais e literatura académica. Aplicando estruturas de soft power e paradiplomacia, explorarei a forma como a China utiliza Macau como instrumento de atracção nas suas relações com o Brasil. Além disso, examinarei os esforços de Macau para se estabelecer como um actor paradiplomático crítico nestas interacções. Por último, aprofundarei as reacções do Brasil aos esforços da China e de Macau para reforçar os seus laços com o país e como estas respostas moldaram as suas relações triangulares.

Palavras-chave

Macau, China, Brasil, Soft Power, Paradiplomacia.

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1. Introduction

In recent years, the relationship between China and Brazil has grown significantly. This growth is driven by expanding economic and political ties. At the heart of this evolving partnership is the often-overlooked role of Macau, a Special Administrative Region (SAR) of China. Since Macau was returned to China from Portugal in 1999, Beijing has aptly utilized its unique Portuguese heritage and vibrant economy to strengthen ties with Portuguese-speaking countries (PSC), particularly Brazil. Nonetheless, Macau is not just a passive player in this strategy since its status as a SAR gives it a unique ability to act independently in many external affairs. This autonomy allows Macau to bridge China and the Lusophone world, promoting economic, cultural, and diplomatic exchanges (Matias dos Santos, 2020; Mendes, 2014).

Brazil is the largest PSC and Latin American country, making it a crucial partner for China. Their relationship is marked by significant trade, investment and intersectoral cooperation (Oliveira, 2023). Yet, the place of Macau in this bilateral relationship has not been thoroughly explored. This paper aims to fill that gap, examining Macau's role in Beijing-Brasília relations over the last twenty-five years. The study will use qualitative research methods to analyze official documents, local media articles, and academic literature. By applying soft power and paradiplomacy concepts, the research will look at how China has used Macau to attract and influence Brazil.

Additionally, it will investigate how Macau has actively worked to establish itself as a critical player in these diplomatic efforts. The study will consider Brazil's reactions to initiatives by China and the MSAR, exploring how these responses have shaped the relationship between the three. Interactions between China, Macau, and Brazil offer a complex and fascinating case study in contemporary international relations.

2. Soft Power and Paradiplomacy: Diplomatic Tools in an Interdependent World

In the 1970s, new international players emerged, including non-state and subnational actors, along with new forms of exerting power in world politics beyond military might.



This shift was driven by advancements in transnational communication, finance, trade, and travel, as well as the rise of global interdependence. This new scenario begged for the development of concepts that allowed the understanding of these fast-paced transformations, leading to the appearance of the terms *soft power* and *paradiplomacy* in academic circles (Al-Malki et al., 2023; Oddone, 2023).

Nye (1990) coined the term *soft power*, which refers to a country's ability to influence others and shape their preferences through attraction and persuasion rather than coercion or payment. Nye (2004) also points out that a country's *soft power* lies mainly in three primary resources: culture (in places where it is attractive to others), political values (when it lives up to them at home and abroad) and foreign policy (when it is perceived as legitimate and has moral authority).

Culture encompasses the values and practices that impart meaning to a society, manifesting in various forms. It is often categorized into high culture, which includes literature, art, and education appealing to elites; and popular culture, which centers on mass entertainment. When a nation's culture embodies universal values and its policies advocate for shared values and interests, it enhances the likelihood of achieving desired outcomes due to the bonds of attraction and duty it fosters. Commerce is just one method of cultural transmission. Culture is also shared through personal interactions, visits, and exchanges (Nye, 2004).

Government policies, both domestic and international, can be significant sources of *soft power*. Depending on the context, these policies can have varying impacts over the short and long term. Effective policies can enhance a nation's *soft power* by reinforcing its attractiveness and legitimacy. Meanwhile, the political values a government promotes in its domestic actions, its participation in international institutions, and its foreign policy significantly influence the preferences of others. Governments can either attract or repel others through the power of their example. However, governments vie for control of *soft power* against a wide array of opinion leaders, including news media, corporations, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), intergovernmental organizations (IGOs), and scientific networks (Nye, 2004).

At the same time, the most encompassing and widely accepted definition of *paradiplomacy* has been advanced by Noé Cornago (1999: 40), who understands it as "sub-state governments' involvement in international relations through the establishment of formal and informal contacts, either permanent or ad hoc, with foreign public or private entities, to promote socio-economic, cultural or political issues, as well as any other foreign dimension of their own constitutional competences."

Paradiplomacy is governed by strong institutional conditions, including the necessity for political legitimacy, defined competencies, professionalized infrastructures, and financial resources for international operations. Furthermore, it is increasingly shaped by agreed-upon rules and is a collection of practices. When subnational governments engage in structured international activities, they do so under the influence of international norms, rules, and practices. Subnational governments, in collaboration with international organizations, transnational networks of subnational governments, and academics, have been participating in an international socialization process. This process is facilitating the establishment of a new international institution (Oddone, 2023).



More importantly, paradiplomacy can render *actorness* to the subnational units that use it. Tianyang Liu and Yao Song (2020) elaborated a four-dimensional analytical framework of the essential dimensions of international actorness in paradiplomacy: 1) authority, which refers to the powers that allow a subnational government to engage in international relations, albeit with certain limitations; 2) opportunity, which refers to opportunities arising from the external environment that directly or indirectly support the role of a subnational government as an actor in international relations; 3) capability, which refers to opportunities generated by the external environment that directly or indirectly enhance the role of a subnational government as a participant in international relations; and 4) presence, which pertains to the external and internal recognition of subnational governments as international actors by third parties.

3. Macau in the Chinese Soft Power Toward Brazil: Attracting a Portuguese-Speaking Strategic Partner (1999-2024)

China's post-Cold War strategy heavily relies on using the soft power approach in its foreign policy. Since 2004, China has expanded its global influence through a network of Confucius Institutes (CI) and Classrooms (CC), modernizing state media, enhancing overseas aid, and investing in cultural promotion. Under Xi Jinping, China intensified these efforts, launching the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) in 2013, aiming to strengthen global trade networks and investing nearly US\$1 trillion by 2023. China also established international financial institutions, like the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) and the New Development Bank (NDB), to create alternatives to the US-led global order (Kurlantzick, 2023; Leahy et al., 2023).

Meanwhile, Brazil has become more important in Beijing's foreign policy agenda since 1993, when it successfully elevated its cooperative relationship with China to a Strategic Partnership (SP), being the first country to do so. In 2012, the Brazil-China partnership advanced to a new level when it was elevated to a global SP as part of both countries' response to the 2008 financial crisis. This elevation signified China's recognition of Brazil's position within the international system (Oliveira, 2023).

Therefore, Brazil remains a highly valued strategic partner for Beijing for three primary reasons: 1) it is a reliable supplier of essential commodities for industrial production and capital formation, as well as foodstuffs to feed China's population of 1.41 billion while boasting a US\$ 157.4 billion bilateral trade (2023). Additionally, it serves as a significant consumer market in Latin America for Chinese goods and services, especially in strategic sectors such as energy, manufacturing, and information technology (Ellis, 2017; Reis, 2024); 2) it plays a pivotal role in South-South Cooperation (SSC) due to its status as a rising power that shares China's aspiration of shifting the world order towards a multipolar system. This includes amplifying the voice of the developing world in international institutions and pushing for the de-dollarization of the global financial system, a shift that both countries believe can be expedited through the joint diplomatic efforts of BRICS nations (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa) (Liu & Papa, 2022); and 3) as a regional power, it can help mitigate U.S. influence in Latin America



and compel Washington to refocus its strategic attention from the Indo-Pacific to the Western Hemisphere (Liang, 2019; Pini, 2015).

Because of these reasons, China started to launch a soft power offensive towards Brazil by using Macau as a major asset in this strategy, mainly in the cultural exchanges and foreign policy initiatives. Designated as a platform between China and the Lusophone world, due to the 442 years of Portuguese rule in the enclave (1557-1999) and the acceptance of Portuguese as an official language alongside Chinese after the handover to Beijing, Macau has unique characteristics to serve in this intermediary role effectively. In addition, the increasing demand for Portuguese language courses has transformed Macau into a prime location for linguistic and cultural training for Chinese diplomats, interpreters, CI Mandarin teachers, and businesspeople before they begin working in PSC, including Brazil (Matias dos Santos, 2020; Mendes, 2014).

Among Beijing's cultural initiatives, the most important one is the Cultural Week of China and Portuguese-Speaking Countries, launched in 2008, annually held in Macau and organized by the Permanent Secretariat of the Forum for Economic and Trade Cooperation between China and Portuguese-speaking Countries (Macau). The event is also supported by the Cultural Affairs Bureau of the Macau Special Administrative Region (MSAR), the Civic and Municipal Affairs Bureau, the Macau Government Tourism Office, the Oriental Foundation, and the Macau Association for the Promotion of Exchange between Asia-Pacific and Portuguese-speaking Countries (Mendes, 2014; Yu, 2018). For five days, artists from Mainland China, Macau, and the PSC perform music, theatrical presentations, dance shows, and exhibit photography, painting, and handicrafts. The Permanent Secretariat describes the Cultural Week as "a brilliant symbol of Macau's establishment as the center of cultural exchange between China and Portuguese-speaking countries" (Secretariado Permanente do Fórum para a Cooperação Económica e Comercial entre a China e os Países de Língua Portuguesa (Macau), 2023).

In the foreign policy arena, the main initiative the Chinese government leads is the Macau Forum. The Forum, created in 2003 by China's Central Government and coordinated by the Ministry of Commerce (MoC), represented a groundbreaking development in international relations. It connects China with nine Portuguese-speaking countries across four continents: Brazil in South America, Portugal in Europe, East Timor in Asia, and six African nations—Angola, Mozambique, Cape Verde, Guinea-Bissau, São Tomé and Príncipe, and Equatorial Guinea¹. The Macau Forum's ministerial conferences are always held in Macau and feature a Permanent Secretariat based in the city. The Chinese MoC nominates the Secretary-General. He is assisted by three deputy secretaries-general: one appointed by China's MoC, one by the MSAR, and one on a rotational basis in alphabetical order among the PSC (Matias dos Santos, 2020; Mendes, 2014).

In 2003, the First Ministerial Conference, chaired by then-Chinese Vice Premier Wu Yi, reached an agreement to enhance Sino-Lusophone economic collaboration,

¹ Equatorial Guinea joined the Community of Portuguese Speaking Countries (CPLP) in 2014, and the Macau Forum in 2022. Although Portuguese is one of the country's official languages, alongside Spanish and French, it is not widely spoken. The only Portuguese-based creole language spoken in Equatorial Guinea is Fa d'Ambô, which is used on the islands of Annobón and Bioko, and in the capital, Malabo. Cf. Agostinho, 2021.



intergovernmental partnerships, trade, investment, entrepreneurship, fisheries, agriculture, engineering, infrastructure development, natural resources, and human resources. The 2010 conference aimed to elevate the Macau Forum to a higher level. The establishment of the Training Center for PSC officials in 2010 also contributed to the renewed momentum generated by the third Ministerial Conference (Matias dos Santos, 2020).

4. The Lusophone Bridge: Macau as a Paradiplomatic Actor in China-Brazil Relations (1999-2024)

According to Liu and Song's (2020) framework, the MSAR has all the elements of international actorhood. Regarding *authority*, the Macau Basic Law (MBL) (1993), which serves as the "mini-constitution" of the SAR and came into effect when Macau was handed over to Beijing, stipulates that Macau "will enjoy a high degree of autonomy for fifty years, except in foreign and defense affairs, which are the responsibilities of the Central People's Government" (Basic Law of the Macao Special Administrative Region of the People's Republic of China, 1993, Art. 12). Nevertheless, it should be noted that the MBL presents a hybrid approach to Macau's autonomy since it highlights the binominal approach: "foreign affairs" vis-à-vis "external relations", in which the former is the sole domain of the Central Government while the latter comprises an authorized external space for the SAR (Matias dos Santos, 2020; Mendes, 2014). The MBL stipulates that the "Macao Special Administrative Region [sic] may on its own, using the name 'Macao, China,' [sic] maintain and develop relations and conclude and implement agreements with states, regions and relevant international or regional organizations in the appropriate fields, such as the economy, trade, finance, shipping, communications, tourism, culture, science and technology and sports" (Basic Law of the Macao Special Administrative Region of the People's Republic of China, 1993, Art. 136).

About *opportunity*, the MSAR's push into an intense international engagement was mainly prompted by China's skyrocketing real Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth in the early 2000s, around 10.5% per year, due to the country's accession to the World Trade Organization (WTO) in 2001. WTO membership committed China to further opening its economy, reducing tariffs, and eliminating trade barriers. This created a more favorable environment for foreign investment, leading to a surge in FDI inflows. Furthermore, Chinese growth was favored by comprehensive economic reforms, successful State-Owned Enterprises (SOE) restructuring, an export-led growth strategy, substantial infrastructure investments, a favorable demographic profile, and stable governance (Yao, 2014).

This context transformed China into the second-largest consumer of energy resources after the US, prompting Beijing to place energy security as one of its foremost priorities. At the time, more than 60 percent of China's crude oil imports originated from the Middle East, a dependency Beijing viewed as a strategic vulnerability due to the region's political instability and the dominant US military presence. Consequently, China strived to diversify its energy imports away from traditional sources in the Persian Gulf, turning to PSC such as Angola, Brazil, Mozambique, and Timor-Leste. Additionally, Beijing aimed to



leverage the rich natural resources of PSC to sustain its rapid economic growth (Horta, 2006; Matias dos Santos, 2020).

Regarding *capability*, the MSAR has heavily invested in cultural and diplomatic initiatives to increase its international influence over foreign partners. The Macanese government has sponsored numerous academic exchanges and PSC cultural festivals, while also providing scholarships to students from African PSC. The MSAR has also hosted many meetings involving professionals, academics, government officials, and businesspeople from China and PSC (Matias dos Santos, 2020; Mendes, 2014; Yu, 2018).

Concerning *presence*, the MSAR now participates as a full or associate member in over eighteen economic and cultural international institutions, including the WTO, the International Maritime Organization (IMO), the UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). Macau has consular relations with fifty-seven countries and maintains economic and trade offices in Lisbon and Brussels. Its representative in Brussels, where the European Union headquarters is located, is also accredited in Geneva, the seat of the WTO and many other international organizations. Brazil's importance is evident for Macau: its GDP is 5.15 times larger than that of all the other PSC combined, making it the primary focus for any strategy aimed at promoting a "greater Lusophone" commercial network. This trade relationship could effectively stimulate the international Lusophone community and provide a means to diversify Macau's heavy reliance on Cantonese gamblers from South China. However, the bilateral trade between the MSAR and Brazil continues to be very small: it amounted to around US\$ 3.15 million in 2023. Macau primarily exports plastics, clocks, watches, and machinery to Brazil. Meanwhile, Brazil exports to Macau mainly agricultural and food products (Spooner, 2016a, 2016b; Trading Economics, 2024a).

Therefore, Macau has launched several cultural initiatives to foster closer relations with Brazil and the other PSC. The most notable one is the Lusophone Festival (*Festival da Lusofonia*), established in 1998 and held annually every October to celebrate and promote the culture of the PSC. It also honors the Lusophone communities living in Macau for their contributions to the region's development. Organized by the Institute for Civic and Municipal Affairs and the Tourist Office, this traditional event features a variety of cultural activities, including food, handicrafts, exhibitions, and concerts (Matias dos Santos, 2020; Mendes, 2014).

The MSAR also actively supports academic events that connect local universities and those from the PSC countries. The University of Macau has hosted several meetings of the Association of Universities of Portuguese Language (AULP). In 2011, its Department of Portuguese hosted the World Symposium on Portuguese Language Studies and annually organizes the Day of the Portuguese Language and the Summer Course on Portuguese Language and Culture. This course includes visits and meetings with Macanese officials, educating participants about Macau's role as a cultural crossroads and a platform for relations between China and the PSC (Mendes, 2014).

Despite not being directly aimed at Brazil, the international sports tournaments hosted in the SAR have fostered people-to-people and organization-to-organization links between Macau and Brazil. Brazilians tend to have a prominent presence in Macau's



world-class Grand Prix. For instance, "Pipo" Derani secured third place in the 60th-anniversary race in Fall 2013, and Lucas di Grassi won the 52nd Macau Grand Prix in 2005. The top-ranked Brazilian Women's Volleyball Team has also regularly competed in major tournaments in Macau, facing teams from China, Russia, and the USA, including the 2011 International Federation of Volleyball Championship (Spooner, 2016b).

One of the MSAR's main diplomatic initiatives towards Brazil is its support to the Macau Association for the Promotion of Exchange between Asia-Pacific and Latin America (MAPEAL), a non-profit organization that focuses on the promotion of exchanges and connections between Macau, China, and Latin America, specifically in the areas of culture, business, tourism, academic research, publication, information exchange, and training. Among all the events and activities, two annual events are regularly organized between October and November/December each year. The "Latin American Cultural Festival," held from early October until the end of November, features 9 to 14 activities to foster cultural exchange, along with some business matching activities. Another significant annual event is the "Latin American Pavilion" and the associated seminars/forums, which take place in mid-October at the "Macao International Trade and Investment Fair" to foster business cooperation and exchange (Macau Association for the Promotion of Exchange between Asia-Pacific and Latin America, 2024; Mendes, 2014).

Despite its potential, the MSAR has not yet fully realized its role as a bridge between China and the PSC. The local business community, except for Stanley Ho's group and a few other entrepreneurs, has not placed enough emphasis on Lusophone markets. Additionally, some local authorities, who often focus more on internal matters than global engagement, have shown limited commitment, and the MSAR still needs to establish a trade and economic delegation in Brazil, as the only existing one in a PSC is in Portugal (Matias dos Santos, 2020).

5. Brazil's Responses to China's and Macau's Soft Power Initiatives (1999-2024)

Brazil prizes its relationship with China primarily for economic and political reasons. China has been the largest destination for Brazilian exports since 2009 (Oliveira, 2023). Since 2012, China has been Brazil's leading supplier of imported goods. In 2023, Brazil exported US\$ 104.32 billion worth of goods to China, especially soy, iron ore, and oil, while the country imported US\$ 74.19 billion worth of manufactured goods, especially machines and equipment (Trading Economics, 2024b). Simultaneously, Brasília welcomes diplomatic cooperation with China to maintain its economic and political independence from US influence and interference, thereby enhancing its bargaining power with Washington (Liang, 2019; Pini, 2015).

Brazil's participation in the Macau Forum has become more intense over the years. Initially, Brazil was criticized for sending low-level officials to the Forum's ministerial conferences. However, in 2013, Brasília sent Vice President Michel Temer to the 4th Ministerial Conference. Brazil also values the Macau Forum since it allows the country to engage annually with China and the PSC at the same event (Mendes, 2014; Veloso, 2015; Meneses, 2020).



Some observers (Mendes, 2014; Meneses, 2020; Veloso, 2015) have raised concerns that the Forum might enhance China's influence in the African PSC, which may undermine Brazil's strategic interests in the region. However, Brazilian diplomats have publicly stated that they do not see the Macau Forum as damaging to Brasília's interests. Paulo Estivallet, the former Brazilian Ambassador to Beijing, emphasized that Brazil values and recognizes China's efforts to promote rapprochement with the PSC through this mechanism. He highlighted that Brazil accounts for over 80% of China-PSC trade and is interested in participating in initiatives facilitating business and investments between member countries (Meneses, 2020). Brazil has also steadily engaged in China's cultural initiatives aimed at the PSC, sending diplomats, artists, scholars, chefs, and business delegations to the events held in Macau (Matias dos Santos, 2020). According to Ambassador Estivallet: "Since his [sic] creation and within the limits of its capabilities, Brazil has been seeking to participate in the initiatives promoted by the Macau Forum, both in the economic-commercial field and in the areas of cultural, educational and linguistic promotion" (Meneses, 2020).

It is important to note that Brazil's participation in the Macau Forum fluctuates depending on the strength of its bilateral relations with China. Given the extensive trade volume between Brazil and China, Brazil prioritizes its direct bilateral channels with China over the Forum. Moreover, Chinese soft power may not sufficiently enhance Brasília-Beijing relations due to several challenges: 1) there is an imbalance in trade, with Brazil's exports primarily consisting of soybeans and minerals, leading to the reprimarization of Brazilian exports; 2) the Brazilian industry struggles to compete with Chinese imports, contributing to the country's growing deindustrialization; 3) Brazil has not formally joined the BRI, citing the initiative's ambiguous legal frameworks and a lack of strategic information for Brazil's productive and political sectors; and 4) China remains ambivalent toward some of Brazil's key foreign policy goals, such as securing a permanent seat on the United Nations Security Council (Lopes, 2023; Oliveira, 2023).

Regarding the MSAR's cultural and diplomatic efforts towards Brazil, the South American country has regularly participated in its initiatives, sending diplomats, business delegations and artists. In addition, Macau, as a place with Portuguese as its official language, remains an attractive place to Brazilian researchers and athletes who want to work in China since it facilitates their lives there. Nevertheless, Brazil does not view the MSAR with the same level of importance as its relations with Beijing. Since the handover, Brazil has made only a couple of notable visits to the MSAR. Brazil's Vice President Michel Temer visited in 2013 for the 10th anniversary of the Macau Forum, and almost a decade earlier, in the fall of 2004, Brazil's Minister of Culture and renowned musician, Gilberto Gil, made a brief appearance. However, Gil's visit was primarily for the Hong Kong music festival, not Macau. Until Temer's visit in 2013, Gilberto Gil was the highest-ranking Brazilian official to have visited Macau. Another issue that limits its relations with the MSAR is that, as Brazil has outlawed gambling casinos in its territory since 1946, the country lacks companies that can invest in the MSAR's thriving gaming industry (Mendes, 2014; Spooner, 2016a, 2016b).



Conclusion

Over the past twenty-five years, the evolving relationship between China and Brazil has highlighted Macau's unique role as a bridge between the two countries. This study demonstrates how Macau's Portuguese heritage and status as a Special Administrative Region (SAR) of China have been leveraged to strengthen ties with Brazil, a Portuguese-speaking rising power in Latin America.

Following Nye's (2004) framework, China and Macau have focused on cultural and foreign policy initiatives to foster deeper engagement with Brazil. Besides, the MSAR has all the elements of actorness that were advanced by Liu and Song (2020). Macau has sought to position itself as a cultural and economic intermediary, enhancing China's soft power in Brazil through various initiatives and collaborations. Established in 2003, the Macau Forum has been pivotal in promoting economic, cultural, and educational exchanges between China and the PSC, including Brazil. Macau's efforts to host the Cultural Week of China and Portuguese-Speaking Countries and provide a hub for Portuguese language training for Chinese diplomats and businesspeople underscore its strategic importance.

Still, several challenges remain. Apart from a few notable exceptions, the Macanese business community has not sufficiently prioritized the emphasis on Lusophone markets, including Brazil. Establishing a trade and economic delegation in Brazil remains an unfulfilled need, as currently, the only such delegation in a PSC is in Portugal. From Brazil's perspective, the country remains cautious about deepening its engagement with China, primarily due to the asymmetry in their bilateral trade relations, skepticism about the benefits of the BRI, and the lack of support for some of Brazil's strategic goals in its quest to become a great power. Concerning relations between Brasília and the MSAR, Brazil has yet to accord more political and economic importance to the region.

In conclusion, while Macau has made significant strides in enhancing China-Brazil relations, addressing these challenges is crucial to completely capitalize on its strategic position. Macau's distinct actorness, facilitated by its autonomy under the Basic Law, has enabled it to serve as a vital conduit for Chinese diplomatic efforts. As Beijing continues to expand its global influence, overcoming these obstacles will be essential to further solidifying Macau's role in international diplomacy involving the PSC.

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