

1. Abstract

This research is focused on the role of Macao within the relations between China and the Portuguese-speaking countries (PSC) in contemporary society. The theoretical topic under discussion in this research is whether a form of paradiplomacy currently exists in China and, if it does, how it works in China, taking Macao as a case study. This research expands the study of paradiplomacy in a non-Western background, and also inquires to what extent Macao has expanded its autonomous interests or the external interests of the central government, whether Macao has challenged or even hindered the interests of the central government. Furthermore, this research will try to extend Macao study to areas beyond history, geography and culture, and to contribute to Macao research in the field of international relations.

In China, some cities' participation in international activities has also begun to be considered as paradiplomacy. The external powers granted by the Chinese central government to various provinces vary in scope and extent. Macao, as one of the special administrative regions, enjoys a greater range of autonomy than inland provinces and is relatively free in external affairs. China has attached great importance to developing stronger relations with the PSC in recent years and has included Macao Special Administrative Region (MSAR) in the framework of its foreign policy and used its particularity to develop relations with the PSC, particular emphasis on strengthening relations with the three strategic areas of Europe, Africa and Latin America (Neves, 2002; Mendes et al., 2011; Matias, 2014).

Chinese government decided to hold the first session of The Forum for Economic and Trade Co-operation Between China and Portuguese-speaking Countries in Macao (also known as the Macao Forum) from October 12th to 14th, 2003 in order to make use of Macao 's

language advantages and the network of Macao and the PSC in the cooperation process. The Macao Forum is not only a tool for rebuilding the identity of Macao by promoting cultural features and developing economic cooperation, but also a strategically important international cooperation and exchange platform led and promoted by China (Ye, 2015; Xu, 2018; Li, 2019). Even though research on Macao's economy and trade has increased in recent years, it still focuses on discussing the achievements and weaknesses of economic and trade cooperation between China and PSC through the Macao platform. The role of Macao itself in China's foreign policy has not received sufficient attention (Mendes et al., 2011).

The innovation of this study is a combination of IR theory and Guanxi theory, which originated in China and has been noticed and discussed among western IR scholars (Kavalski, 2011; Babones, 2017). Since the causes that enable the use of paradiplomacy can be very diverse, the most suitable method to achieve well-founded explanations is to combine different theoretical analyses (Kamiński, 2018). This study is connecting Guanxi theory and paradiplomacy to build a new theoretical framework and analysing the international behaviour of subnational actors from a relational perspective.

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