

# The Maritime Silk Road: The Role Played by Portugal and Macao

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**ABSTRACT:** For many years, the Silk Road acted as a powerful vehicle for cultural and religious diffusion, in parallel with the trade that underpinned its very existence. The purpose of this article is to analyse Portugal's role in the construction of the sea routes and the way Macao fits into this context. The starting point is the history of the Silk Road, which shows that the various networks built up over time by monks, priests, soldiers, nomads and pilgrims, with their emphasis on religion and trade, also served as channels for the inter-civilizational dissemination of culture and knowledge. From the 15<sup>th</sup> century onwards, sea routes became an integral part of the existing networks. This was particularly the case for the routes developed by Portugal and Spain, who led the very first wave of globalisation. The later emergence of the great global empires of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries had a significant impact on the Portuguese empire and Macao. China's new Silk Road project seeks to revive cooperation between various cities, in different countries, that were part of the original Silk Road and that, in the future, can share the benefits of this heritage, through new interconnections and new sustainable routes.

**KEYWORDS:** Hong merchant; Canton trade; Macao trade; Hoppo; Porcelain; Tea; Silk; Tin.

## 1. Introduction

The role of the "Silk Road"<sup>1</sup> as an important vehicle of communication harks back to the distant past. Over several millennia, it not only underpinned trade but also facilitated the dissemination of ideas,

knowledge, culture and religion. The Silk Road, which started on land and then took to the sea, was an historically important driver of cultural diffusion, a powerful network that linked different communities and geographies.

It became a model for the co-existence of distinct cultures and ideas, a model of tolerance.

In order to assess the importance of the routes in the past, research needs to help us understand the emerging circumstances that led to the initial land routes being complemented, or even replaced, by sea routes. Such circumstances included the outbreak of bubonic plague in the 14<sup>th</sup> century, conflicts between nomadic Eurasian tribes and the high prices commanded by some goods. Although this route displacement largely began in the 15<sup>th</sup> century, it was most noticeable from the 16<sup>th</sup> century onwards, when the role played by Portugal and Spain was crucial in

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Ancient Silk Road Map.

shaping a new world view (Frankopan, 2015). A new paradigm was eventually established, and would later spawn the vast empires of the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries.

## 2. Portugal and the Sea Routes

The Portuguese Empire began with the conquest of Ceuta in 1415 and continued to expand over subsequent years. Following a successful exploration of the African coast, the Portuguese arrived in both Brazil and South-East Asia in the early part of the 16<sup>th</sup> century (Bettencourt and Curto, 2010).

Given Portugal's small geographical size and the ensuing lack of human resources, our ancestors developed a policy to encourage mixed marriage. This policy favoured miscegenation on the various continents where the Portuguese established colonies.

We should not forget that pragmatism also imbued the evangelising nature of these explorations, particularly as regards contact with other civilisations. With religion playing a key role in this era, Portuguese mariners strove to expand and strengthen Catholicism (Freitas, 2015).

As part of this maritime expansion, which started in the mid-15<sup>th</sup> century, Portugal built forts along the African and South American coasts, to help control its trade routes. The plan for covering the known globe and managing these routes called for explorers to cross the Indian Ocean and travel on to the East.

The spice trade was promising. However, the slave trade proved to be a more lucrative source of income, due to the *quinto*, a tax of one-fifth of all the profits on trade with the African continent (Frankopan, 2015).



Silk Road: Land and Sea Routes. "Odyssey Books and Maps". Copyright Airphoto International Ltd. Courtesy of the publisher.

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The explorations came in waves and were all highly successful. In 1480, Diogo Cão discovered the Congo River and later the king of this realm agreed to be baptised. In 1488, Bartolomeu Dias reached the Cape of Storms, later called The Cape of Good Hope.

Sponsored by the kings of Aragon and Castile, Columbus discovered the Americas in 1492 and, in Central America, the local people were pegged as potential slaves. From then on, the sea routes to Europe were plied by ships that crossed the Atlantic and carried silver, gold, precious stones, treasures and slaves. Wealth flowed rapidly and everything seemed possible.

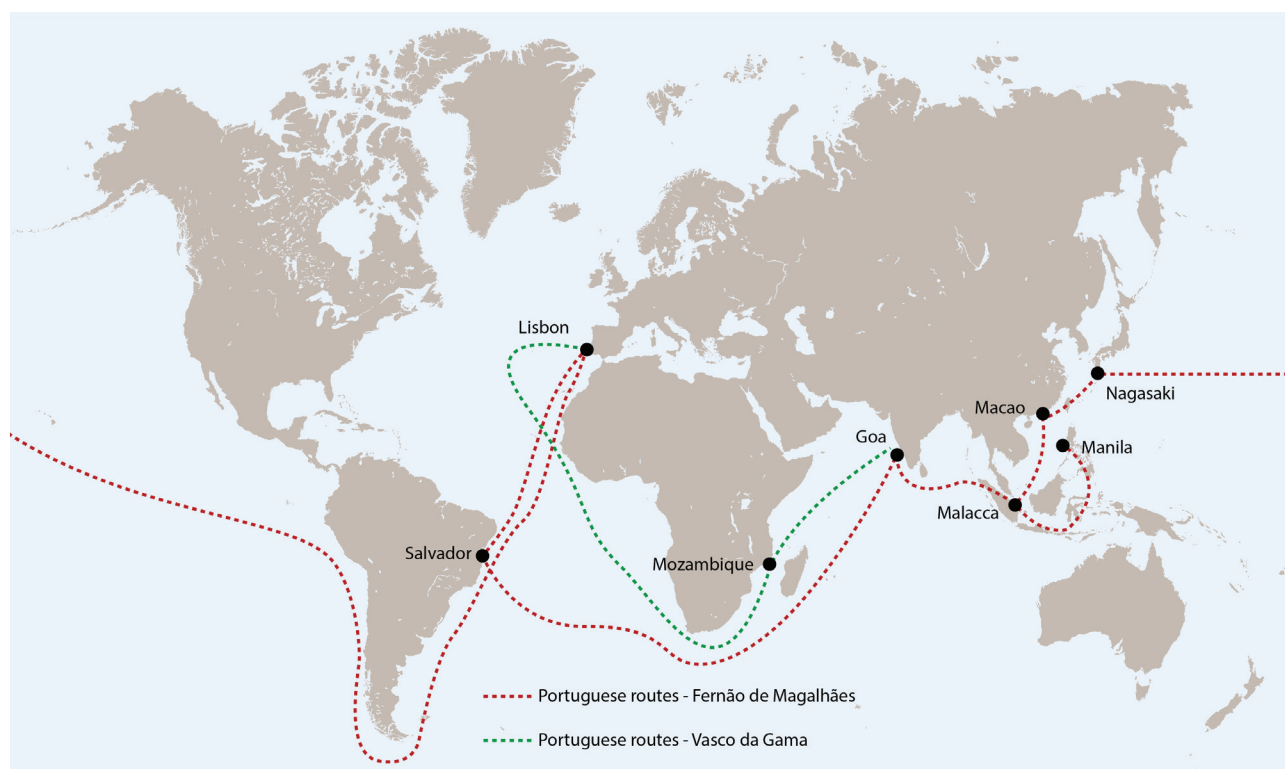
A new world had been discovered, and in Europe, new ideas flourished, thanks to intercultural encounters between civilisations. Intellectuals fought to win support for the dissemination of their particular viewpoints. This cultural transfusion completely transformed Europe, bolstering confidence in

European power, and in the power of religion, and giving new impetus to the idea of retaking the city of Jerusalem. This dream had always been close to Catholic hearts.

An ambitious maritime expedition to open a new route to the East was organised, under Portugal's leadership. It was captained by Vasco da Gama, who, relying on his faith in Jesus Christ, set off to find a sea route to India.

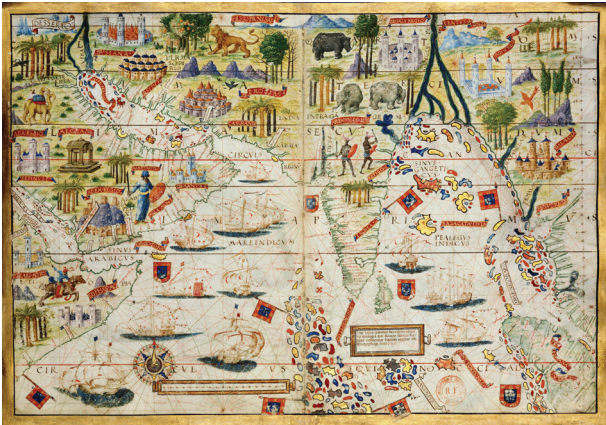
The voyage got off to a troubled start, but 10 months later the ship anchored in Calcutta and the sea route to Asia was firmly established. After two years of epic travels, Vasco da Gama returned to Portugal in triumph. Not only was he compared to Alexander the Great, but his feat was also interpreted as a great victory for the Portuguese monarch, King D. Manuel I.

These discoveries paved the way for the Treaty of Tordesillas in 1494, with which Portugal and Spain



Portuguese maritime trade routes. Image by the author.





Portuguese Map of the Indic Ocean, 1519. Authors: Pedro and Jorge Reinel.

divided the world between them along the following lines: “a line shall be drawn from north to south, from pole to pole, in the Arctic Ocean and across the Antarctic. Everything to the west of this line was to belong to Spain and everything to the east to Portugal” (Newitt, 2012, p.86).

Because of delays and tribal conflicts along the way, products brought to Venice by land could not compete with the prices charged in Lisbon for the same products, brought by sea.

These factors all underpinned the establishment of maritime trading routes and the further binding of ties. Portugal and Spain held an unassailable position as leaders of international trade in the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries (Frankopan, 2015).

However, sea routes were not without their dangers, and many ships failed to return, while others were wrecked or captured.

The competition between mariners, cities and countries to get the best trading positions soon heated up. Macao, in China, and Malacca, on the coast of Malaysia, supplied goods and spices at the best possible prices, in their bid to attract traders and ensure that the profits poured into their coffers and not those of their rivals. With increased trading opportunities and wealth flowing freely, Islamic, Hindu and Buddhist sensitivities were somewhat assuaged and religious tolerance became the norm.

Generally speaking, the opening up of the route to the East generated more cooperation than it did conquest, and the result was a huge increase in trade from East to West and vice-versa (Frankopan, 2015).

Just a few decades after Vasco da Gama’s expedition to India, a substantial part of Portugal’s state income came from the spice trade, a fact that aroused envy in many other countries. The situation abroad began to change with the emergence of the Ottomans, who were busily consolidating their trading position in Asia. By 1517, the Ottomans had emerged as a dominant force in the Eastern Mediterranean (Frankopan, 2015). They organised a network of purchasing agents and restored a series of castles along the shores of the Mediterranean, Red Sea and Persian Gulf. They clashed regularly with the Portuguese, attacking vessels, forts and other establishments, and even besieged Diu Fort in 1538. During this phase, the Ottomans became rich on the spoils of war whilst Portuguese fortunes waned.

### 3. Imperialism and Globalisation

Despite all the rivalries and struggles for supremacy, it is important to note that the world order was fundamentally altered by the explorations that took place from the 15<sup>th</sup> century onwards. Europe became the strategic driver for the whole world. Decisions taken in Lisbon or Madrid often had consequences on the other side of the globe. The strategic control of the trade routes between the West and the East was a lucrative business and aroused much jealousy. Some states cooperated in their attempts to wrest control of the situation. Towards the end of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, England began to forge links with anyone hostile to Europe’s Catholic powers.

At the same time that they were challenging the Portuguese and Spanish over the routes to America and Asia, the English were also forging close links with the Ottoman Turks. English Protestantism opened its doors to new believers, rather than closing them. This marked the beginning of a new era.



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A new world order, in which the large empires would take control of world trade, began to take shape in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Imperialism was, in essence, an “expanding process of contact, influence and control” (Jerónimo, 2011, p.7).

The importance of the processes of globalisation, driven by the British and by other European countries, must be recognised. Technological advances, infrastructure networks and railways were, undoubtedly, the main tools used by Europeans to manage their colonial empires. They also employed the tools of language, religion and trade in this enterprise. Together, these factors affected the relations between different peoples. Between 1860 and 1914, similar situations occurred in a number of countries and fed into the spread of imperialism across Europe. This was particularly the case for Britain, which held vast swathes of West Africa and South Africa, in addition to Australia and New Zealand, and whose influence reached the Arab peninsula and China. France also moved into Africa and, in Asia, reached Indochina. All of these situations had an important impact on the control of the trade routes that were in the hands of powerful shipping companies. These included England’s East India Company (EIC), and Holland’s Vereenigde Oostindische Compagnie (VOC), whose power was reflected in the number of ships they commanded. At the time, international trade had to comply with very strict rules, and these two companies were known for their reach, discipline and organisation.

Meanwhile, Portugal was trying to revive an older empire that was scattered across several continents, Germany held possessions in West Africa, King Leopold II of Belgium controlled the Congo and Italy brought together Tripoli, Somaliland and Eritrea. Spain lost Cuba and the Philippines, which were ceded to the United States.

These geopolitical changes had a knock-on effect on social behaviour. At the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, cultural superiority went hand in hand with racial superiority. Thus, Lord Salisbury even

referred to the conquests of war as the “foamy wave of colonisation” (Porter, 2011, p. 123). These notions of prestige were reflected in the expanded military capabilities of many countries, which included powerful arsenals of weapons, and fed competition between states. Imperial ambition was associated with notions of goodwill, duty, racial superiority, education and military prowess (Porter, 2011).

With the political instability in Europe that followed the wars of 1866 (Austro-Prussian War) and 1870 (Franco-Prussian War), states began to think of imperialism as a possible way of escaping the tensions, given that, as yet, no single power held sway over existing international trade routes (Freitas, 2015). Between 1880 and 1914, Europeans headed to Tunisia, Egypt, South Africa, Morocco, Persia and China, to escape the tensions in the metropolis. This development revealed an interesting potential. China, for example, was resistant to incomers, particularly after the two Opium Wars in 1842 and 1860, when the so-called “Unequal Treaties” forced it to open its doors to foreign powers. The country later moved to close these doors, whilst exhorting its people to adopt the same attitude of “turning their backs” to the wider world.

#### 4. The "Opening Up" of the East: India and China

The Eurasian Revolution took place between the 1750s and 1830s. In this period, Europeans were able to advance and extend their power in the hearts of the great Asian empires, beyond the last boundaries. “Up to the mid-18<sup>th</sup> century, there was an unstable equilibrium between the states and empires of the European, Islamic and Oriental worlds” (Darwin, 2015, p. 195). After this, there was a great upheaval and reorganisation of these states, a process that gave rise to the British empire on which “the sun never set” and a clear European hegemony. The great imperial conquest of the 19<sup>th</sup> century was India, which, by 1820, represented the most paradigmatic example of its kind in modern history (Darwin, 2015). In 1857,

the “*Sepoy Mutiny*”<sup>2</sup> caused some trouble, although, by then, the British had already conquered Sind, Punjab and Awadhi. The uprising was put down and the British government reigned supreme over India (Darwin, 2015).

The opening up of India proved to be a strong motivator for the British, who had managed to find a path to self-sustaining colonialism. This served to foster their even more imperialist ambitions.

The all-powerful East India Company (EIC) represented the British Government in India. India was transformed into a project, an empire in the making. From 1860 onwards, the expansion of the railways turned India into an important supplier of such raw materials as cotton. Britain’s enhanced military forces were capable of taking action anywhere on the planet, from Malta to Shanghai. New expansionary ideas emerged: what had happened in India could happen elsewhere. Thus, China faced growing pressure from European states to open its ports to international trade (Freitas, 2015).

In addressing China, we have to look a little further back if we wish to determine the dynamic that existed at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. In the 17<sup>th</sup> century, China faced changes after the decline of the Ming Dynasty and the rise of power of the Manchu, who took the imperial capital in 1644 and established the Qing Dynasty (1644–1911) (Bettencourt and Curto, 2011).

The most charismatic of these emperors was Kangxi, who worked throughout his long reign to consolidate his power base. His success paved the way for stability, economic progress, and culture; the population of the country tripled between 1723 and 1796. Agriculture was encouraged (Darwin, 2015). In the 18<sup>th</sup> century, slavery was abolished, the number of trading cities increased, and a market economy developed. At the time, China invested mainly in domestic trade.

During the Qing Dynasty, there was a great cultural renewal that focused on Chinese culture

(Frankopan, 2015) and the writing of noble literature flourished, and promoted Confucian ideas.

Political and economic integration was accompanied by a measure of cultural unity. However, there were limits to this in a country as vast as China and much feudal backwardness persisted in the more remote areas. As a whole, China, continued to gaze inwards and did not readily accept foreign influence in the 18<sup>th</sup> century (Freitas, 2015). However, cracks began to show in the effort that China was putting into unifying and strengthening the country against foreign invasion, and the collapse of the Canton trading system provided the pretext for an internal revolt.

The “Hong” Chinese traders in Guangzhou tightly controlled all trade between China and Europe. Trade was obliged to pass through the city and was only permitted at certain times of the year. Once the trading period was over, the traders, who were forced to leave Guangzhou, took refuge in Macao. Thanks to the pressure exerted by the imperial powers, this influx significantly increased the city’s trading prospects, at a time when its fortunes were in sharp decline. Given that it was illegal, opium was the only product that the Chinese would buy in exchange for other, less important, products, such as tea and silver. The rise in this trade generated widespread discontent and began to cause social asymmetries that became much more evident from 1833 onwards. The Chinese government was not satisfied with the production of silver and believed that opium was seriously harming its people. Therefore, China decided to re-establish control, expel the British officials who traded in the product and seize the illegal opium.

The British reacted immediately and, in February 1841, the Royal Navy arrived off Guangzhou, destroyed the Chinese fleet, and stormed the city. This would become the First Opium War. Later the British arrived in Nanjing, where, in 1842, the Treaty of Nanking was signed. This was the first of the “unequal treaties” that established the West’s right to trade in China. Five “treaty ports”



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were opened to international trade and the island of Hong Kong was ceded to the British (Darwin, 2015). Despite being “unequal” from China’s point of view, the treaty kept foreigners away from Beijing, as they were not allowed to travel and were therefore far from Chinese population centres.

As early as 1854, the British were agitating to renegotiate the treaty and improve their position. The westerners also won the Second Opium War in 1856 and this led to a second “unequal treaty”: the Treaty of Tientsin, which opened up more Chinese ports to foreign trade and gave more land, known as the “New Territories”, to the Hong Kong government (Darwin, 2015).

In the wake of the two opium wars, which left Britain and other western countries in more favourable positions, the ports of Guangzhou, Amoy, Fuchou, Shanghai and Niampó were immediately opened and land was made available for trading posts (Frankopan, 2015). These events served to undermine China’s supremacy and its closure to foreigners, and its policy was deemed to have failed. This caused widespread public discontent. The Chinese understood that they needed to reform the country’s military, infrastructure and communications.

Towards the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and particularly after 1880, borders were extended in many parts of the globe and some areas were shared, es-

*The Signing of the Treaty of Nanking, 1842. Anne S.K. Brown Military Collection. Courtesy of Brown University Library.*





pecially in Africa, with the beneficiaries being Great Britain, France, Spain, Austria, Portugal and Belgium. Trade was plentiful, capital circulated, people emigrated in search of opportunities in the newly colonised territories and there was a strengthening of the idea that Europe had a mission to bring both culture and civilisation to far flung places. The hierarchy established at this time worked well, until the Second World War. The imperial powers were also trading powers.

Global colonialism was an impressive edifice, but its foundations were weak. Or rather, its fine balance depended on a set of conditions that were unlikely to remain stable (Darwin, 2015, p.348).

### 5. The Situation of Macao

From the 19<sup>th</sup> century onwards, the opening of China's ports to trade with the West significantly affected Macao, a Portuguese-governed enclave in South-East Asia. The colony was forced to reorganise itself to deal with this new reality. Trade was in decline and the local inhabitants did what was necessary to survive. This included such black-market activities as the opium trade and the trafficking of coolies, slave labour from mainland China that was sent to the colonies to work, a practice that was severely frowned upon in the neighbouring regions. Meanwhile, nearby Hong Kong, a vibrant city with good infrastructure, flourished. If the Portuguese government's objectives were to be met,



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Macao needed to recover its lost prestige. The port facilities were essential to this ambition and the opening up of new ports along the peninsula coast and on the islands would give better access to the sea and lend renewed impetus to trade. The improvements to the port infrastructure, urban planning and the expansion of the city to the North, with new developments, aimed to fulfil the need to assert a new identity for Macao. This has to be understood in the context of the imperialist movements that flourished in Europe in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries (Freitas, 2015).

On a lesser scale, that of a small country with colonies and international trade networks that were centuries older than those of other countries, Portugal could not remain indifferent to the imperialist movements and, in its own way, did everything possible to participate. It played the game with all the assets at its disposal through its established network and long track record in East Asia.

Macao remained neutral during the two world wars that devastated the world in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. This meant the city was able to get through the various crises relatively unharmed. It took in countless refugees from neighbouring countries, including China itself, after the Japanese invasion.

Macao survived the 20<sup>th</sup> century and adapted to its new circumstances.

Whilst still under Portuguese administration, Governor Carlos Melancia (1987–1990) drew up development plans for Macao. These “Great Projects” comprised the building of a deepwater port for large ships and an international airport. The deepwater port project was eventually abandoned, because of the silting of the Pearl River. The international airport project, which went ahead, meant that Macao was no longer so dependent on Hong Kong for its links to the outside world, yet another boost to international trade.



World Map, 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, including the location of Portugal, Great Britain, Macao and Hong Kong. Image by the author.



On 20 December 1999, Macao was handed back to the Chinese government and designated a Special Administrative Region. This attribution has had an impact on its identity and has allowed it to continue to stand apart from its competitors. On 15 July 2005, the Historic Centre of Macao was placed on UNESCO's World Heritage List, on the basis of criteria ii), iii), iv) and vi), which attest to its unique and exceptional value.<sup>3</sup>

Hong Kong continues to be an economic and trading powerhouse. Ever since gambling was liberalised, Macao has grown exponentially, whilst also fashioning its historic past into a cultural brand.

## 6. Today's Silk Road

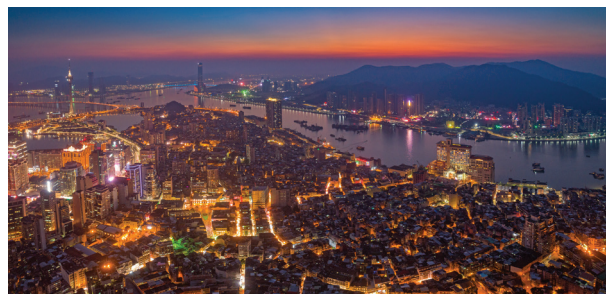
The Silk Road is once again a topic of conversation, after several centuries away from the limelight.

This is partly due to advances in knowledge and the willingness of various Eurasian states to begin working together. The overland trade routes will be supplemented by sea routes that will revitalise cooperation between countries.

The ancient Maritime Silk Road was opened up for both political and economic reasons and resulted from the cooperative efforts made by our ancestors in both the East and the West.

China's current proposal to build a 21<sup>st</sup>-century Maritime Silk Road aims to make the most of the unique values and concepts of the old route, enriching it with new meaning and actively developing economic partnerships with countries along the way. In more specific terms, the proposal seeks to further integrate the cooperation that already exists.

The ocean is the basis and the vehicle that is needed to build a 21<sup>st</sup>-century Maritime Silk Road. China's mission in this regard is to understand the importance of building a Maritime Silk Road, take effective action now and continue this over a specific period. The world is now at a point at which we value maritime cooperation and development. China's proposal to build a Maritime Silk Road aligns neatly



Macao panoramic view, 2018. Photo by Chan Hin Io.

with all the other major developments in economic globalisation and will make the most of the common interests shared by China and the countries that lie along the route. The aim is to forge a community of interest with mutual political trust, integrated economies, an inclusive culture and interconnectivity (Cigui, 2014).

The Belt and Road Initiative, launched by President Xi Jinping in 2013, focuses on improving and establishing new trade routes, links, and business opportunities with China. It covers over 60 countries that lie along a carefully planned path through Asia, Europe, the Middle East, and Africa.

On 29 March 2015, Chinese president Xi Jinping opened the BOAO Asia Development Forum, in Hainan province. The main focus of this meeting was the Belt and Road Initiative. In his opening address, the Chinese president appealed for political and economic cooperation. He invited all the countries and territories along the Road, including Macao, to join the Silk Road Economic Belt and the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Maritime Silk Road Initiatives.

Tim Winter has commented that reviving the idea of the Silk Roads, on both land and sea, gives vitality to histories of transnational, even transcontinental, trade and people-to-people encounters as a shared heritage. Crucially, it is a narrative that can be activated for diplomatic purposes (Winter, 2016). One interesting aspect of this initiative is that the Chinese government is clearly aware of the role played by Portugal in establishing the original maritime routes and, as a



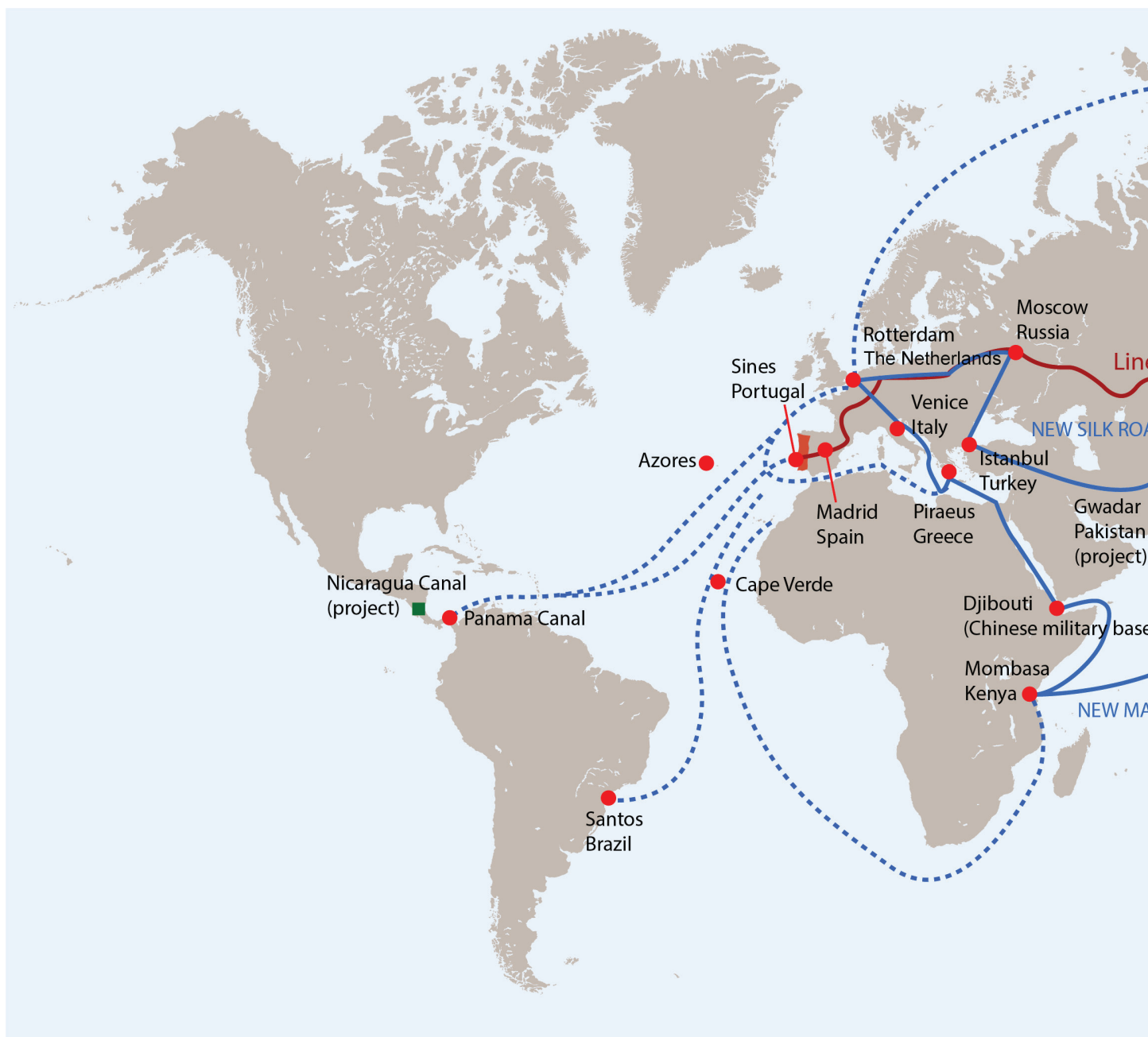
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result, has actively sought to include Macao in the various opportunities it presents.

Despite the small scale of its economy, Macao has played a unique role in Asia's development. The Macao Statistics and Census Service (DSEC) information for the 4<sup>th</sup> quarter of 2018 shows that Macao's per capita

GDP was \$82,609.00. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) forecasts that Macao will be the richest territory on the planet by 2020 (Fraser, 2018).

Today, the Macao SAR Government is committed to building Macao into a "World Tourism and Leisure Centre". It is investing heavily in new MICE



Silk Road Map, 21<sup>st</sup> century. Image by the author.

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industries, which are those involved in setting up and developing new tourism, leisure, recreation and entertainment industries and cultural and creative conferences and exhibitions. On the scientific front, it is working to advance and disseminate knowledge in the area of Chinese medicine. It is also promot-

ing higher education, as a way of diversifying the economy.

Macao is an integral part of the concept developed by the Chinese president. From an economic point of view, it represents a bridge between China and the Portuguese-speaking countries, from which a wide range of shared trade opportunities flow. Furthermore, and in view of a historic past that has left behind a rich heritage, it is one of a group of cities along the Silk Road that the Chinese Government intends to submit to UNESCO for world heritage listing.

Given that dozens of Silk Road corridors will potentially link more than 500 cities across the region, the Silk Road is likely to emerge as the most ambitious and expansive international cooperation programme for economy and cultural connections ever undertaken.

The story of the Silk Road is a story of the interconnectivity between countries. Its narrative serves the purposes of shared prosperity and cultural enrichment. The BRI initiative will certainly result in the establishment of new forms of cooperation.

## 7. Conclusion

The story of the Silk Road tells us that this memorable route of interconnections was the work of humanity as a whole, part of which was the communication generated between people of different cultures and geographies. The mechanisms of the old Silk Road involved a chain of networks that stretched from the most remote to the most advanced areas. The transfer of knowledge was comprehensive, included the people involved and emphasised the contribution that everyone could make. The contributions of small tribes were adjudged equal to those of the great powers, although with different objectives. Sometimes they would meet these objectives, sometimes not, but they all made valid contributions to building the world we live in today.



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The current spirit of the Silk Road initiative aims to revive this approach, by kindling cooperation between the different cities that used to be part of the original silk routes. In the future, they will all benefit from this heritage, sharing their skills and different perspectives, coming together in the construction of a new paradigm.

The Belt and Road Initiative, fostered by the Chinese government, is based on a history of cross-border narratives that can help perfect the domestic

programmes of the participating governments. It also foments a closer and more informal person-to-person relationship that will be highly beneficial in both economic and cultural terms. The new Silk Road is set to become a sustainable cultural route.

(Text based on the work presented at the II International Congress Intercultural Dialogues Portugal-China, Aveiro, 2019). **RC**

## NOTES

- 1 The term Silk Road is a literal translation of “Die Seidenstrassen”, coined by German geographer Ferdinand von Richthofen, in 1817. This term is generally used to describe the ages-old exchange between Asia, Europe and Africa in a variety of areas, including politics, economics, and culture.
- 2 The Sepoy riot was a violent revolt against British rule that took place in India in 1857. It is also known by other names, including: the Indian Mutiny, the Indian Rebellion of 1857 and the Indian Uprising of 1857, in <https://www.thoughtco.com/sepoy-mutiny-of-1857-1774014>.
- 3 Criterion (ii): The strategic location of Macao on the Chinese territory, and the special relationship established between the Chinese and Portuguese authorities favoured an important interchange of human values in the various fields of culture, sciences, technology, art and architecture over several centuries.  
Criterion (iii): Macao bears a unique testimony to the first and longest-lasting encounter between the West and

China. From the 16<sup>th</sup> to the 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, it was the focal point for traders and missionaries, and the different fields of learning. The impact of this encounter can be traced in the fusion of different cultures that characterise the historic core zone of Macao.

Criterion (iv): Macao represents an outstanding example of an architectural ensemble that illustrates the development of the encounter between the Western and Chinese civilisations over some four and half centuries, represented in the historical route, with a series of urban spaces and architectural ensembles, that links the ancient Chinese port with the Portuguese city.

Criterion (vi): Macao has been associated with the exchange of a variety of cultural, spiritual, scientific and technical influences between the Western and Chinese civilisations. These ideas directly motivated the introduction of crucial changes in China, ultimately ending the era of imperial feudal system and establishing the modern republic. In <https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/1110/>.



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