

The two oldest matrixes of world discoveries

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ABSTRACT: *Portuguese and Chinese Histories have a profound historical linkage – the globalization path in its birth period. In the 14th and 15th centuries the Portuguese and Chinese Navigators and Explorers shared a common portfolio of world vision: strategic intent, out-of-the box thinking, scientific commitment and power projection. Both revealed strategic intelligence – the most important ingredient of great power politics. The Chinese stopped the oceanic projection just at the moment the Portuguese become the new maritime challenger. It was the opportunity window for the Portuguese – they finished what the Chinese left unfinished. They fill the vacuum left by the Chinese. And accomplishing that mission, the Portuguese gave birth to the globalization, as a new long historical step of the evolution of the world system. Ironically, the Chinese came from the South China Sea to the Indian Ocean. The Portuguese did the reverse route – from the Atlantic to the “locked” Indian Ocean and afterwards to some regions of the Pacific. In this paper we intend to formulate the hypothesis of two Discoveries’ Matrixes, its similarities and differences. Both research projects on these Matrixes are very recent. They need more study and investigation. The Portuguese Discoveries Matrix was presented in the book Pioneers of Globalization, and the Chinese Matrix is un-structured described in different papers and books from Chinese and foreign origin. We only put the pieces together, in a comprehensive frame.*

Key words: Discoveries, Globalization, Power Projection, Soft Power, Hard Power, China, Portugal, Zheng He

TÍTULO: As duas mais antigas matrizes das Descobertas

RESUMO: *Neste artigo abordamos a «ligação» esquecida entre as Histórias Portuguesa e Chinesa na época remota de Quatrocentos e Quinhentos. O abandono abrupto das Navegações no Índico pela dinastia Ming abriu a oportunidade histórica que viria a ser aproveitada pela dinastia de Aviz. Separadas por quase cem anos, as duas estratégias no Índico estão ainda mais apartadas pela diferença abissal nos seus princípios directores. Revisitar a estratégia Ming no Índico entre 1405 e 1433 pode ser um elemento inspirador para se entender a projecção chinesa actual. A hipótese formulada é a da existência implícita de duas matrizes das «Descobertas» no Séc. XV, apontando as suas semelhanças*

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e as suas diferenças. No caso chinês, essa matriz está dispersa e não estruturada em diversas publicações sobre o tema das Navegações chinesas, que surgiram, desde 2005, com o aniversário dos seus 600 anos. Apenas, nos limitamos a sugerir uma forma de juntar as peças. No caso português, a referida matriz foi apresentada no livro Portugal, Pioneiro da Globalização.

Palavras-chave: Descobertas, Globalização, Projecção de Poder, Soft Power, Hard Power, China, Portugal, Zheng He

There is a profound historical link between Portuguese and Chinese histories – the globalization path in its birth period.

In the late 14th and early 15th centuries, the Portuguese and Chinese navigators and explorers shared a common portfolio of world vision: strategic intent, out-of-the box thinking, scientific commitment and power projection. Both revealed strategic intelligence – the most important ingredient of great power politics.

The Chinese stopped the oceanic projection just as the Portuguese became the new maritime challenger. It was the window of opportunity for the Portuguese – they finished what the Chinese left unfinished. They filled the vacuum left by the Chinese. And in accomplishing that mission, the Portuguese gave birth to globalization, as a new and large historical step in the evolution of the world system.

Ironically, the Chinese came from the South China Sea to the Indian Ocean. The Portuguese took the reverse route – from the Atlantic to the “locked” Indian Ocean and afterwards to some regions of the Pacific. At that time, the Indian Ocean was the center of the world economy.

In this paper we intend to formulate the hypothesis of two Discoveries Matrixes, their similarities and differences. Both research projects on these Matrixes are very recent and require further study and investigation. The Portuguese Discoveries Matrix was presented in **Pioneers of Globalization**¹; the Chinese Matrix, however, is un-structured and described in various papers and books by Chinese and foreign authors. We have simply put the pieces together to form a comprehensive framework.

First of all, let us begin with the Chinese saga.

THE LEGACY OF THE CHINESE NAVIGATIONS

At the dawn of the 15th century, before the Portuguese Prince Henrique had earned his nickname, “the Navigator,” the Chinese in the Ming Dynasty launched seven

expeditions toward the Indian Ocean in 1405 which extended well beyond their traditional oceanic sphere of influence. Their intended assertion of hegemonic role in that part of the world ceased in 1433 due to the reactionary movement of Chinese Confucian bureaucracy and amidst a crisis of hyperinflation.

As the economic historian Angus Maddison states, the Chinese had never set out to create a network of positions with strategic commercial or military objectives, even though their notion of naval projection was hitherto unparalleled in history. But the objectives clearly evolved after a number of expeditions, in other words the Chinese navigations were an evolutionary process just as the Portuguese saga would later become.

Their retreat would in turn leave the door open for the navigators who followed directly upon their heels, reaching the Indian Ocean from the West.

However, some say that this Chinese endeavor left a technological legacy around the world, of which the Italian – and indirectly the Portuguese – took bountiful advantage.

A controversy is now ongoing about the significance of the Chinese navigations before the arrival of the Portuguese onto the scene.

At the beginning of 2006, the intellectual and historical world was shaken by a sensational news report. The magazine *The Economist* published an 18th century Chinese map that demonstrated “an integrated world” (based on six Chinese characters printed on the map). This is thought to be a copy of a cartographic representation dating back to 1418, and thus totally independent of contemporary Italian Renaissance cartographers and of Prince Henrique. The map was in the possession of a Chinese collector who appreciated its importance thanks to the book 1421, authored by Gavin Menzies, an English submarine commander and which is much disputed in the scientific community. It apparently came into the Chinese collector’s possession by mere chance; he purchased it in 2001 for five hundred dollars at an antique shop in Shanghai.

A rather efficient media campaign started to emanate soon after this revelation in January 2006. The overwhelming impact of the world-map was due to its completeness as it represented the five continents and, presumably in 1418, showed that the oceans were clearly united. Indeed, it demonstrates the feasibility of the Cape route and world circumnavigation well before Bartolomeu Dias defied the phantom of the Cape, the mythical “Adamastor” (in 1488), and before Fernão de Magalhães

(Magellan) perished in the Philippines (in 1521) nearly concluding the first journey around the world. Therefore, assuming the original map is dated 1418, it must be concluded that the accuracy of this drawing could only be the result of *empirical* knowledge that *Chinese navigators* had transmitted to Chinese cartographers at the beginning of the 15th century.

Certain historians made an immediate connection. The map challenged the version passed down in history: the information contained in the map could only have resulted from the 15th century “Dragon Explorers” under Admiral Zheng He’s leadership. Zheng He, also transcribed Cheng Ho, earned the nickname *San Bao* (translation: *Three Treasures*). A Muslim eunuch by birth, Ma He was one of the boys castrated at Kunming in the worship of Buddhism and he served Yong Le, Emperor of the Ming Dynasty, who had taken the “Dragon Throne” by force in 1402. Yong Le planned a vast, global 20-year program for the Ming Empire which led to a series of journeys to “Xiyang” (the “Western Ocean”) between 1405 and 1433. Yong Le died in 1424 at the age of 64 after orchestrating some of the most important expeditions of the “Eunuch Admirals” under the command of Zheng He. However, his successors – son and grandson – reversed this process by deactivating the global strategy and dismantling all Chinese overseas infrastructures created by him.

Despite the apparent efforts to erase these navigations from the records, the global knowledge acquired from these Chinese discoveries may well have reached Europe after Yong Le’s death. The Portuguese would most likely have been the first to take advantage of this asymmetric information about what the European tales and myths had baptized the *Mar Ignoto* (the Unknown Sea), though they would have done so in great secrecy. With such precious clues, the political leaders (starting with the brothers Prince Henrique and Prince Pedro) and the Portuguese navigators would certainly have made their missions on the high seas much easier than what was depicted by the chroniclers and the great Portuguese poet Camões.

The thesis of Chinese pioneering was mainly divulged with the publication of Menzies’ book in 2002, but its scientific argumentation has been strongly criticized as frankly poor. The aim of the Royal Navy commander’s book was to disclose a secret: the Europeans may have had access to that almost perfect Chinese knowledge of the “integrated world” through the Venetian Niccolò da Conti who had traveled through Asia over the course of 25 years (1419-1444) and become acquainted with Zheng He’s deeds. The chronicles or stories about these journeys would have circulated first as manuscripts and influenced Italian cartography of the time, namely the Genovese School (1447-1457) and Friar Mauro, from whom the Portuguese King Afonso V ordered a circular planisphere, completed in 1459.

Menzies' next step was to claim that the Portuguese Prince Pedro secretly brought a world map back from Venice in 1428 in which the Cape of Good Hope and the Strait of Magellan were already represented, thanks to the expeditions of the Chinese eunuch Admiral. Menzies quotes António Galvão, the Portuguese author of the **Tratado dos Descobrimentos** (Discoveries Treaty) published after his death in 1563; however, the supposed precious secret that Pedro had brought from Italy **has still not been proven today**.

As many questions related to the map that came to light in 2006 are still unanswered, the controversy in relation to Chinese pioneering will no doubt endure for some time – Menzies will publish a new book in June 2008 in which he refers the supposed 1428 “link”.

What has been accepted by the Chinese and foreign scientific community so far is that the Chinese would have traveled over much of the Pacific and Indian Ocean, covering more than 50 000 kilometers (100,000 “li” in the Chinese traditional unit of distance) and visited more than 3000 “barbarian” locations (or 30 countries²) in less than 30 years), as reported by the Admiral himself in 1431. One expedition was made up of 62 great junks carrying 17 800 soldiers on board! It all began with an incipient desire to re-establish the protectorate over the Sunda Islands (now including Borneo, Java, Sumatra, Bali, Flores, as far as Timor), which supplied China with gold and spices, as Fernand Braudel states in his **Grammaire des Civilisations**.

Between 1405 and 1433, seven expeditions would have reached Indonesia, Indochina, India (Calicut), Ceylon (now Sri Lanka, where a garrison was erected), Hormuz at the entrance to the Persian Gulf, Jeddah (now the second largest city in Saudi Arabia) in the Red Sea, and finally the Eastern coast of Africa (Mogadishu, in modern Somalia, and Zanzibar). The Chinese regarded Malacca and Calicut as military bases and strategic commercial “hubs” on these voyages and routes. Much to the surprise of the Chinese at home, the explorers brought back giraffes from Africa (qilin in Chinese) which the Ming Emperor almost immediately transformed into a magical creature.

Chinese scholars continue to study the many reasons behind the abrupt termination of the Expansion. An imperial proclamation in 1433 – the Hai jin – proclaimed the end of maritime expeditions for a period not well defined today. New imperial edicts were issued in 1449 and 1452. Around 1479, the vice president to the Ministry of War submitted a proposal to the Ming Imperial Court for the records of these expensive expeditions to be destroyed; at the same time Confucian bureaucracy won the campaign against the endeavors toward exterior regions. Building a seaworthy

junk with more than two masts was punishable by death and in 1525 the order was given to destroy all such junks. Formally, the proclamation was only lifted in 1550 – by coincidence, at the same time as the Portuguese established their first contacts with Macau. But, even in 1551, espionage was redefined to include anyone who went to sea in a multi-mast ship.

At that time, the Portuguese António Galvão – mentioned above – was told about early Chinese navigations when he visited China in 1555.

Just as during the Sung Dynasty from the 10th to the 12th century, China again forfeited geostrategic opportunities of playing the role of a leading world power in the mid-15th century. But China missed this great opportunity, as Chinese Prime Minister Wen Jiabao recognized recently in Singapore. It was the first of three historical opportunities missed (the others being the closed policy of the 17th and 18th centuries, and the Maoist Cultural Revolution of the 1960's).

THE CHINESE MATRIX

For simplicity, the 10 ingredients (main characteristics) of the Chinese Navigations of the 15th century are summarized below:

- **Strategic intent:** China had to reemerge and regain world leadership from the Golden Age of Sung Dynasty; the outside world had to be aware of China's greatness;
- **Maritime DNA:** A long tradition of maritime voyages of discovery dated from the Sung Dynasty (10th – 12th century), the Golden Age of the Chinese hegemony of the world, and later on with the fleets of Kublai Khan (grandson of Genghis Khan, he was the founder in 1271 of the Chinese Yuan Dynasty) in the 13th Century; by 1430 China probably peaked the development of its naval power – the Ming navy outclassed that of any other Asian nation at any time in history and would have been more than a match for that of any contemporary European state or even a combination of them. Felipe Fernández-Armesto, in his research on Civilizations (**Civilizations – Culture, Ambition and the Transformation of Nature**, 2001) considered South China a “seaboard civilization of maritime Asia”;
- **Early maritime technologies, weaponry and logistics:** skills in astro-navigation and some methods of determining longitude, not fully resolved; sea-water desalination techniques; Chinese ships were already armed with gunpowder weapons, brass and iron canons, mortars, flaming arrows and exploding shells; the Chinese manual of the arts of seamanship and naval warfare was summarized in the **Wu Pei Chi**, the originals of which are in Beijing although the British Library holds copies; focalization on human details (the fleets carried concubines!);
- **Scientific commitment:** the Emperor set up a committee of distinguished astro-

nomers to “compare and correct the drawings of the guiding stars” (**Shun Feng Hsiang Seng** [Fair Winds for Escort], anonymous author, c. 1430); idea of a network of astronomical observatories in other Asian countries, like Japan and Korea (two countries brought into the Chinese tribute system), linked with the Beijing great observatory, supposed to be the center of the known universe; attraction of foreign navigators and cartographers; setting up of one of the earliest world records (**I Yu Thu Chih** [The Illustrated Record of Strange Countries], published in c.1430), a compilation of people, animals and places known to the Chinese of the early 15th century;

- **Soft power strategy:** the aim of the navigations and their vast armadas was to be a new diplomatic tool to impress and intimidate foreign rulers of the Indian Ocean, bringing those regions into China’s tribute system; rulers paid tribute to China in return for trading privileges and protection against their enemies; but the Chinese always gave their trading partners a greater value of goods (like silks and porcelain at discount prices), thus creating a psychological debt; Chinese preferred to pursue their geostrategic aims mainly by trade, image, influence and bribery rather than by open conflict, brute force and direct territorial colonization – hard power came later, if and when needed, as a last political resort;
- **World knowledge city:** The plan was to transform the new capital city, Beijing, into the world intellectual capital with encyclopedias and libraries covering every subject known to man; the great Yong-le-Dadian project began in December 1404 involving 2180 scholars; establishment of a language school in Nanjing (1407) to train interpreters who accompanied the voyages in the languages of the lands being visited;
- **Religious tolerance, non-ideological evangelization:** it was usual for the Chinese armadas to carry Muslim, Hindu and Buddhist servants to provide advice and guidance;
- **Network of hubs and ports-of-call around the Indian Ocean:** like Malacca (in the Straits of the same name) used as a forward base and Calicut (in India, where the Portuguese Vasco da Gama subsequently arrived) recognized by the Chinese as the meeting port of all foreign merchants; the Chinese made extensive use of the Muslim ports of Hormuz in the Persian Gulf, Malindi, Kilwa, Zanzibar, Sofala and Mombasa, the sultanates in East Africa;
- **Network of settlements abroad:** some authors state that the Chinese navigators of the 15th century would also have set up longer-term settlements namely to exploit the mineral riches they discovered on their voyages;
- **Bi-hegemony of the Indian Ocean:** the Chinese managed a geopolitical situation with the Muslims from Egypt, the Gulf States, the Gujarat (in India) and the confederation of Muslim sultanates in coastal East Africa based on their mutual interests.

The problem with China was the political backlash and the reversal of geostrategic policies after the death of Emperor Yong Le Ming. This led to a decline in power and by the middle of the 16th century almost nothing was left of its former grandeur.

Nevertheless, this account of Yong Le's 20-year Power Projection Plan reminds us that China is an older power with strategic intelligence. China is usually referred in the West as the master of **The Art of War** – the famous military treatise written by Sun Tzu. But the art of strategic intelligence is even **more important**, albeit less referred and quoted in the West.

THE PORTUGUESE MATRIX

The main impact of the Portuguese expansion is still felt today, and regards what we call the Portuguese **difference** that gave rise to its status as a globalization pioneer. This is the main argument of the above mentioned book **Pioneers of Globalization** and is the historical root of this small nation located in the western corner of Europe. We coined it the 'Discoveries Matrix' and we will set out the ten differentiating aspects of the Matrix later in this paper.

Before presenting the Matrix, the concluding remarks of our research are summarized below:

- The Portuguese Expansion from the 14th to the 16th century was a typical evolutionary process that allows us to design a profile of '**being Portuguese**'. We coined this set of distinctive differences "the Discoveries Matrix".
- Research on that inheritance led us to the 10 characteristics which indeed **made a difference** during that period of time: strategic intent; globalist vocation; scientific commitment; knowledge management; out-of-the-box thinking; control of asymmetric information; incrementalism; critical attitude; geostrategic 'cleverness' and organizational improvisation.
- The hypothesis formulated and presented in this book is that the Portuguese in the 21st century can use these **strengths** of the Discoveries Era as starting points to trace their professional and collective path. This, however, does not admit moral connivance with brutal violence, state terrorism, barbarity, mercenary spoliation and plundering, slavery and imperialism that, at the time, branded the global projection of the small rectangle at the corner of Europe.

Our book considers this geostrategic inheritance as the fundamental asset for **the country's intellectual capital**.

THE DISCOVERIES MATRIX – THE PORTUGUESE DIFFERENCE – 10 INGREDIENTS

- **Strategic intent.** The Portuguese people are only pro-active if they have “an enterprise to undertake” (as stated by the Portuguese philosopher Agostinho da Silva); the Portuguese stated a long-term vision for power projection from 1412 that evolved in a evolutionist process, changing strategic objectives throughout the early 15th century;
- **Globalist vocation.** The Portuguese poet, Fernando Pessoa, once said in relation to “being Portuguese”, that this figure could not live the “narrowness of only one personality” and that it was “everything in all manners”. Indeed, the extension of the Discoveries points to a world strategy presenting a variable geometry. The Portuguese global spirit historically opposed the strict geostrategic options (as the Iberianism wanted during periods of identity crisis, the ‘Lusitanian community’ from the time of the fascist dictatorship of Salazar or the modern version of the “priority of priorities”, erratically defined at the mercy of contexts);
- **Scientific commitment.** The oldest ‘Lisbon [European] Agenda’ in research and development was the 15th century saga – an incredible investment in material and human resources hitherto unseen;
- **Knowledge management.** The Discoveries were an example of the establishment of innovative structures and dynamics (Prince Henrique’s think tank; the Cosmographer’s Commission created by King João II; the boom in academic mobility with the King’s scholars in Europe and the foreign scholars in Portugal in the last quarter of the 15th century and the first half of the 16th century; and the elaboration of a pool of “knowledge workers” – an interpretation offered by the late Peter Drucker, the “Father of Management”);
- **Looking abroad.** An out-of-the-box thinking which went beyond the boundaries of geopolitical dispute in Europe (then the Mediterranean in the 14th and early 15 centuries) occupied by the dominating powers and the challengers of the time;
- **Control of asymmetric information.** The Discoveries were the golden years of “the worship of the unpredictable: when faced with the known and the unknown, the Portuguese chose the latter” (as Agostinho da Silva said), which, at the time, guaranteed a strategic advantage;
- **Incrementalism.** During strategy formulation, the place of honor was attributed to the role of ‘trial and error’ and pragmatic correction. The Discoveries process was not straightforward. The evolutionism of geostrategic system building was evident;
- **Critical attitude.** There was a clear emergence of thought against dogmatism and scholastics – “examining the own things – this is the true pathway to find knowledge” (in the words of the Portuguese scientist Francisco Sanches, **Que nada se sabe** [That nothing is known], 1581). The scientists of the Discoveries explicitly

formulated their results: “Construct a new science, as your first science is now false” (again in the words of Francisco Sanches);

- **Geostrategic ‘cleverness’.** The most distinguished “Prince” from the Renaissance in the art of secrecy and counterintelligence/disinformation, of geostrategic espionage and of searching for intelligence, was João II, also known as “the Perfect Prince”;
- **Organizational improvisation.** The Portuguese generations engaged in the Discoveries managed a ‘mix’ between the true Portuguese lifestyle of improvisation on one hand (“that Portuguese characteristic which is censured worldwide” – quoting Agostinho da Silva) that would have been essential in the real expansion occurring on a day-to-day basis and, on the other hand, a clear strategic intent (a direction, sense of discovery and destiny), the highest level of scientific accuracy possible at the time (all the nautical instruments which the navigators carried on their journeys and were gradually improved), and a remarkable logistic scheme (of the journeys and later of the global projection network).

CORE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE TWO MATRIXES

There are four main differences:

1 – Enduring Scientific Commitment; a Portuguese advantage

Due to the change of policy in China after Yong Le death, scientific commitment was put to an end. Hence, the Portuguese had the advantage in their systematic and long-term scientific commitment.

For the **first time** in the history of civilization, the systematic and long term use of science was observed as an instrument of economic development. This was truly begun by the Chinese long-range oceanic activity between 1405 and 1433, mainly in the Indian Ocean, in the fields of astronomy, cartography, ocean logistics, naval warfare, soft diplomacy, hub network, language translation, etc., but they lacked continuity and failed to master the use of the sun to obtain latitude: This was first achieved by the Portuguese decades later.

The Portuguese navigations had a radical impact on world science. The Portuguese empiricist generations of the 15th and 16th centuries almost completely changed the incumbent science.

2 – International Commerce, globalized trade; the Portuguese as the creators of world commerce

Even from the Asian perspective, the Portuguese geopolitical and geo-economic im-

pacts in the Indian ocean can be summarized as five main changes, according to Sanjay Subrahmanyam (**The Portuguese Empire in Asia, 1500-1700: A Political and Economic History**, London and New York: Longman, 1993): the development of a true global commercial link, embracing Europe, Asia and the Americas over two centuries; the interaction with local states, changing their profile, raising a new type of “mixed” state, half-agrarian, half commercial, as happened with Iran, the Moghul empire, Golkonda, and even Burma; the spread of a lingua franca based on Portuguese mixed with Malay, Tamil, Arab and other languages; the propagation of fire-arms; and the development of precious metals as means of payment linked with the commercial boom.

In terms of world economy, the geo-economic impact of the Portuguese discoveries was radical. The economic historian Leo Huberman attributes the Portuguese of that period with the role of “creators of a truly international commerce”. Nevertheless, this does not mean that the Portuguese were the dominant traders in the world spice cycle: in the Far East, the Portuguese had to be satisfied with the role of minor participants; the Far East dominated the spice market – China alone detained almost 75% of the world consumption of pepper.

But the Portuguese won a special award: it was the 15th and 16th century navigators more than any others who linked the various emerging trading systems in the world, as referred by Professor Malyn Newitt in his book **A History of Portuguese Overseas Expansion 1400-1668** (Routledge, 2006).

3 – Soft power vs. hard power; the Chinese political knowledge mastering the art of image, impressing and charm offensive before brute force

Due to the context of the Indic Ocean, the Portuguese rapidly adopted the hard power strategy that marked the entire Portuguese Expansion in Asia, even though they had originally considered a soft power strategy on finding Christian allies in India. Power was based mainly on naval military advantage, a network of island and coastal fortresses in strategic hubs and systematic use of state terrorism. The Chinese also had impressive naval military power in the early 15th century but did not use canons as a primary political tool.

The Portuguese were intruders in the “Muslim and Chinese lake” – they wanted to capture the Spice Routes but had nothing to offer of high market value. They disrupted the balance in the Indic Ocean. They came as brutal competitors rather than partners, although the original ideological aim had been to search for Christian allies in Eastern Africa (Ethiopia of the mythical Prester John) and India so as to surround the Muslims in Egypt and the Middle East.

The Chinese were part of the Indian Ocean trade routes. They were big clients and important suppliers of high value commodities. They came to the Indian Ocean to partner in bi-hegemony with the Muslims. Their interests were convergent, not divergent.

Even today the Chinese give predominance to soft power before using the language of hard power. The so-called Chinese “charm offensive” (title of the recent Joshua Kurlantzick’ book) in Asia, Africa and Latin America is a clear example of its mastering of soft power in a period of steady (e.g. US, European Union) or open (e.g. Russia) decline of several great powers in the world.

4 – Religious ideology vs. cultural superiority ideology; the Chinese advantage

The Portuguese considered Christian Evangelization as a sacred aim of the navigations. The Portuguese religious proselytizing with its intolerance and its mandatory commitment were part of the problem, not part of the solution.

The Chinese based their expansion on a variable geometry of religions within their armadas. They used multiple religions as political tools for partnering. They made efforts to support local religions as a political sign of magnificence and superior cultural status.

CONCLUSION

Nevertheless, a long pattern of great power politics was established in the Indian Ocean from the end of 15th century due to the political approach taken by the Portuguese. As the great Indian historian M.N. Pearson once stated³, the world has an ironic debt – albeit dubious – to the Portuguese: they brought geopolitics to the Indian Ocean.

The Chinese soft power politics died with the Confucian backlash. The test of history for a soft power projection strategy was something to be proved. This ‘lesson’ from late medieval times may be of interest nowadays when scholars and analysts follow China’s current soft power strategy around the world with great curiosity. Perhaps this time the test of history can provide an answer.

(c) Portugal, Pioneer of Globalization Project, 2006-2010.

NOTES

1. Co-authored with Professor Tesselano Devezas and published in January 2008 by Centro Atlântico, Portugal. Available at: <http://www.centroatlantico.pt/globalization>.

2. About this figure – 3000 locations or 30 countries – there is great controversy about the interpretation of Chinese inscriptions ordered by Zheng He as a testament on stones at the port of Liujiagang in the Yangtze river and at the anchorage at Changle in Fujian province as the fleet was preparing to sail on its 7th and last voyage (1431-1433).

3. **The Portuguese in India**, Cambridge University Press, 1987.