



# **BBC World Service**

## **Macao 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary**

### **President Xi Jinping**

**Robert Lawrence Kuhn**

**December 19, 2019 (Live)**

**HOST:** There has been a flag-raising ceremony on the island of Macao to mark 20 years since the handover back to China. That followed 400 years of Portuguese colonial rule. But some islanders felt at the time that they were simply swapping one form of domination for another. China's President Xi Jinping is in Macao for the anniversary. His government holds up the territory as an example of stability and loyalty to China's "one nation two systems" policy in direct contrast to Hong Kong. And when some activists tried holding protests in solidarity with those pro-democracy demonstrations in Hong Kong, there were arrests. Well, joining us now is Robert Lawrence Kuhn a long-term adviser to China's leaders. Welcome to the program.

**HOST:** Do you think the reason for this visit is less to do with Macao and more to do with Hong Kong?

**KUHN:** It's to do with the "one country, two systems" policy which is integral and fundamental to how President Xi Jinping sees his vision of national rejuvenation as the fulfillment of

**the Chinese Dream — and Macao is held up as an example of the “one country, two systems” policy working well. Macao has prospered greatly. Its GDP has risen almost nine-fold since it was handed over 20 years ago. Hong Kong is not mentioned at all. But the clear subtext is there: the contrast between stability and prosperity in Macao and the what they would call the turmoil in Hong Kong.**

**HOST: There's a lot of prosperity in Hong Kong as well.**

**KUHN: the argument is that the lack of stability now — and some extreme words are being used, like rioting and turmoil — that is eroding the prosperity, eroding the opportunity, for Hong Kong to work in what's called the “Guangdong Hong Kong Macao Greater Bay Area” Integrated Regional Plan, a very big concept of building a huge GDP there by 2030 of \$3.5 trillion, almost in the top 10 of the world if it were a country. But the contrast between Hong Kong and Macao is clear: China is making that the obvious to everyone.**

**HOST: And I just wonder whether you feel it's a fair contrast say, for example, when it comes to Human Rights, Xi Jinping is saying Macao is a beacon of stability and so on. But we spoke to a dissident just an hour ago. He talks about repression, suppression — we hear about the courts always getting along with whatever the Beijing regime would want to see.**

**KUHN: Well, first of all there are very substantial differences between Hong Kong and Macao. The population of Hong Kong is maybe ten times as much as Macao, which is well under a million maybe 700,000. Hong Kong has something like 7.5 million. The GDP of Macao is a little over \$50 billion. It has a big rise. But the Hong Kong GDP is about \$370 billion, more than six and a half times; Hong Kong has a very diversified**

**financial industry, very sophisticated economy. Macao is totally reliant right now on gambling — 50 percent of the GDP and 80 percent of government revenues come from gambling. Macao gambling is seven times larger than Las Vegas; Macao's gambling industry is the largest in the world. So Hong Kong's diversification from Macao is different.**

**Then you look at the differences between the British and Portuguese rule. All of these things are very substantial differences.**

**So to compare Hong Kong and Macao on a superficial level, sure, we see some of these issues, but when you look down, there's a great deal of difference**

**HOST: Right and very briefly if the Chinese population on the mainland are watching at this visit on TV, do you think they would believe all this, that is there is a direct correlation between these two?**

**KUHN: I think the Chinese population will believe, yes, pretty much what they see — that Macao has succeeded because it has followed the "one country two systems" policy in contrast to Hong Kong, which they don't hear a lot about, but they do hear about the negative obviously — that it's a problem there. So, they will believe it, yes.**

**HOST: Okay. Well thank you very much for joining us. That's Robert Lawrence Kuhn**