

## **Research project: *The Role of Local Governments in China's Foreign Policy***

### **Description for General Public**

The growing role of the People's Republic of China, both at the regional stage and global affairs have become more than evident. Ever since China undertook its mission of modernization and opening up, the role of local governments has changed. The research project *The Role of Local Governments in China's Foreign Policy* explores, discusses and models the role of local governments in Beijing's external actions. The growing interaction with the Western World allowed Chinese local policy makers to play more independent role in shaping their own interest and policies. This tendency played an important role in shaping China's external policy. In 1980s. and 1990 s. and especially after the fiscal reform in 1994 was given a special leverages to play more independent role. But in fact, this phenomena built the basis for regions' competitions and in the eyes of central government has created chaos within the political system. It became more visible that the current leadership under Xi Jinping has tried to centralized the actions taken by the local authorities. The project was prepared due to the growing, planned role of Chinese local governments in the proposal (*changyi*) of the New Silk Road concept of "One Belt, One Road". It seems that under the umbrella of official proposal the central government named different provinces, autonomous regions and municipalities to play the particular roles in the Xi Jinping's strategy. In the first part we discuss the issue of paradiplomacy both in Western and Chinese discourse in political science. Second, the general plan of the research is concerned about comparing four selected cases of the provinces of Sichuan, Guangdong, Heilongjiang and the autonomous region Xinjiang. The cases were selected based on four criteria: their economic dependence on foreign countries (Guangdong), the role given by the central government (Guangdong, Heilongjiang, Xinjiang, Sichuan), cooperation with local governments in Europe (Sichuan, Xinjiang), playing a special role in China's nationhood policy (Xinjiang, Heilongjiang). In this regard the research team discusses the differences and similarities between provinces such: location, resources of the region, province, autonomous region or municipality, socio-economic needs, local values, traditional roles in the past, public opinion and political needs. Based on the abovementioned assumptions the research team will map the role of local governments in China's foreign policy. To sum up, we need to take into consideration the practical use of the research project. The outcome of the undertaken research will be used by local self-governments and central authorities in planning and executing actions towards China. Moreover, the research project will be conducted with the collaboration of a partnership unit in China: Zhou Enlai School of Government at Nankai University in Tianjin.