

The New Development of China's Maritime Security Strategy

Thoughts Based on the View of 21st-Century Maritime Silk Road

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Abstract—The 21st century is the time of ocean. Under this background, China has proposed the idea of building 21st-Century Maritime Silk Road, which makes Chinese maritime security strategy enter a new stage of development. Based on the information of 'One Belt One Road', there are some core points through the methods of comparative analysis as follows. First, the concept and guideline of China's maritime security strategy have been changed with a higher level and a wider scope. Second, maritime security policy focuses more on non-traditional security problems instead of traditional conflicts, especially in the fields of economical development, the establishment of channels and transnational crimes. Third, the practice highlights the role of South China Sea, as well as the existing bilateral and multilateral cooperation mechanisms. This paper discusses a popular topic at present, which also contributes to the research of strategic choice and maritime development of China.

Keywords—Maritime Security Strategy; 21st-Century Maritime Silk Road; Non-traditional Security; Development; China

I. BACKGROUND

With the improvement of comprehensive national power, and the expansion of overseas interests, China has increasingly paid attention to the security and development of sea. This is not only because China has the fourth length of coastline, the fifth largest continental shelf and the tenth wildest area of 200-mile exclusive economic zone, but also under the promotion of globalization and shipping business, the scope of navigation in China has been enlarged continuously, and ensuing marine issues have been closed more to political, economical and secure fields.

In September 2013, Premier Li Keqiang visited China-ASEAN EXPO and stressed the demand to pave the Maritime Silk Road faced with ASEAN to forge strategic fulcrums to drive the development of hinterlands in China. In October, when attending APEC informal leadership meeting, President Xi Jinping put forward to an initiative of building 21st-Century Maritime Silk Road. After brewing for more than one year, National Development and Reform Commission, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Ministry of Commerce of China officially announced the roadmap of 'One Belt One Road', and issued jointly the 'Vision and Proposed Actions Outlined on Jointly Building Silk Road Economic Belt and 21st-Century Maritime Silk Road' (hereafter referred to as

'Vision and Action') on March 28th in 2015. The maritime route was connected from China to Indian Ocean and Eastern Africa through South China Sea, and then extended from Red Sea to Europe through Mediterranean Sea; and reached to South Pacific through South China Sea.

'One Belt One Road' exerted a profound impact on the maritime security strategy of China. On the one hand, it indicated the future development direction of maritime policies; on the other hand, it required this strategy to make appropriate adjustments to ensure a smooth implementation of the 'One Road'. Based on the framework of 21st-Century Maritime Silk Road, this paper is going to summarize the changes of connotation, policies and practices of China's maritime security strategy, as well as making some predictions.

II. NEW CHANGES OF THE CONNOTATION

A. The Concept

The concept of maritime security is relatively vague because it relates to concrete maritime issues, combining different parties, times, venues and so on [1]. Western scholars usually define the concept of maritime security in two layers. One is some intimidating factors focusing on maritime secure area, while the other is valuing the blue economy and maritime development. And Chinese scholars generally define maritime security as a status that national maritime is not being violated and faced with risks [2]. These two explanations are roughly similar, but the subjective and objective factors are more obvious in the latter one. Furthermore, national maritime security strategy can be regarded as a series of general guidance for a sovereign state in order to protect its maritime interests from threats on both subjective and objective levels, including definitions, purpose, goals, policies and guidance theory.

Nevertheless, the conventional definition of maritime security has been changed quietly due to a proposing of the strategy of 21st-century Maritime Silk Road. It demands researchers to expand existing understanding to a more macroscopic and positive angle. Firstly, the scope of the concept has been expanded. Determinate factor of the existing concept to maritime security is maritime interest, which includes the aspects of survival and development. The new Silk Road strategy displays the level of national security from the

low survival security to an autonomous and even dominant extent-- China starts building a framework of cooperation in line with its own interests. Secondly, the character of the concept has been changed. Inherent definitions mean China's negative attitude to maritime affairs in a degree because of a weak maritime power since the modern time. But 'One Belt One Road' is a significant turning point. It not only reflects the enforcement of China's maritime power and an increase in comprehensive national strength, but also symbolizes China's switching from a policy limited in defense to a self-building comprehensive strategy in maritime affairs, from a passive condition contained by outside world to a striking positive attitude for inside out.

B. The guideline

The maritime trade between China and countries around can be traced back to Qin dynasty and the formal record of maritime trade routes began in Han dynasty. With the development of navigational techniques and economy gravity moving to south, Song had entered into a summit period of maritime trade and economical prosperity. Right after it, however, in order to avoid the threat from overseas enemies, Ming and Qing dynasties had carried out 'sea ban' policy for half a century and stopped this prosperity abruptly. After the founding of the new China, the guiding principles of China's maritime security strategy had initially changed. From 1950s to 1970s, the theory of maritime security strategy was mainly about protecting coastal security and preventing enemy invasion. After 1980s, the recognition of maritime security was gradually deepened which formed a positive policy to maintain the stability in Asia-Pacific, build a surrounding environment in favor of China's long term development and handle sovereign maritime disputes with surrounding sea neighbors under the principle of shelving disputes and seeking common developments [3].

After entering into 21st century, there have been new changes to guidance principles from stressing national defense construction to a deepened cooperation phase with more comprehensive angles, which is further reconfirmed in scheme of the new Maritime Silk Road. The first is peace and cooperation. The fighting of maritime supremacy in western world in history did not bring the world real stability and prosperity. The supremacy rotation among Spain, Netherlands, Britain and America was just defeating other in the way of consuming resources, and meanwhile weakened their own strength, bringing grave disasters to people in other countries and of the world. Therefore, facilitating the cooperation steadily is the right choice for the development of China and the peace of the world. The second is a win-win situation. In the history, Maritime Silk Road had facilitated the development and prosperity of world trade and spread Chinese traditional culture around the world. Therefore, in the new century, China will hold adhere to the principles of co-discussion, co-construction and sharing, revive the ancient Silk Road and eventually realize a good situation of mutual support and co-development. The third is common governance. One of the characters of international phase of 21st century is the rising of global issues, the increase of threats in unconventional security area in particular. This requires states shall unite and respond

together, strengthen communication to enact positive and effective prevention measures.

III. NEW FOCUSES OF POLICIES

A. Enhance the construction on maritime channels

Maritime channels are usually treated as the bonds to the connections of outside world by coastal countries. In the maritime transportation network of the world, some important international channels can even be the keys to contain national security. China's economy heavily relies on foreign trade, and foreign trade heavily relies on maritime transportation, and also maritime transportation heavily relies on a few maritime channels, so once these passages are blocked or sabotaged, it must damage the essence of China's economy and even intimidates the stability of the society [4]. Therefore, in order to make sure all the ways are smooth; China's maritime security policy should enhance the construction of important passages along the routes.

The crucial directions of the Maritime Silk Road are as follows: one is from Chinese coastal harbors through South China Sea to Indian Ocean, extending to Europe; one is from Chinese coastal harbors through South China Sea to south Pacific Ocean. Meanwhile, clear and efficient transportation lines will be built jointly based on the important harbors as nodes. According to the roadmap, the route goes through some international channels such as Strait of Malacca, Suez Canal and accident-prone waters such as Bay of Bengal and Gulf of Aden. Important harbors include Chinese southeast coastal cities as Fuzhou, Quanzhou, Guangzhou, Zhanjiang, Haikou and Beihai; Southeast Asia cities as Hanoi, Kuala Lumpur, Jakarta, Bay of Bengal as Calcutta, Colombo; Kenya's capital Nairobi in eastern Africa; also important European Harbors as Athens and Venice. The New Maritime Silk Road attempts to establish an international navigating connection crossing three continents of Asia, Europe and Africa. Through building highways, railways, harbors and energy passages, China can deepen the trade communications with surrounding countries, offset America's influence, and include Indian Ocean countries into China's influential scope, to create a broader strategy space for its development [5].

To safeguard the clearness of lanes, it needs to facilitate the co-construction of harbors and basic navigating facilities, and then realize a combination of spots, lines and rounded connections. In addition, in order to realize the high efficiency of transportation passages, China shall carry forward emphatically the unified whole process of a coordination mechanism and realize a quick and efficient link in sectors of customs, reloading and intermodal transport, gradually forming specific transportation rules that are regularly compatible, at the same time promoting the convenience of international transportation. Meanwhile, enhancing the communication with countries along the routes, increasing the runs of maritime navigation and sharing maritime logistics information will all be beneficial to the consistent development of path construction.

B. *Expand maritime economic cooperations*

In recent years in China, the maritime economy rises dramatically and becomes one of the main engines of consistent economic development. Maritime industry plays a positive role in financial growth, social livelihood, resources supporting, ecology of environment, technique innovation, and management safeguard and so on. Areas along with the Maritime Silk Road contain abundant maritime space resources, fishing resources and submarine mineral resources, providing a material foundation for the economic cooperation between China and other countries along the route. According to the statistics of FAO, global fishery production increased steadily in the past 50 years, and the average consumption in fishery reached 19.2 kg in 2012[6]. Among this, China has become the main force of the development of global fishery due to its broad waters and the expanding of aquaculture. Additionally, South China Sea is one of the four maritime oil and gas gathering spots. The reservation of its coastal ore resources is also really optimistic, playing a significant role in the economy development of relevant coastal states.

Cooperation in investment and trade is an essential part of the construction of 'One Belt One Road'. It requires China to expand the investment of maritime economy, deepen the transnational cooperation in maritime industries, and meanwhile keep the investment following with the trade by completing security policy consistently. First, although there have been controversies in the division of ocean resources, China is willing to facilitate the cooperation between states along the route, focusing on fields like mariculture, ocean fishing and energy exploitation. 'Vision and Action' especially points out the importance of energy cooperation. On the one hand, it requires further energy resources exploitation such as coal, oil, gas and metal minerals; on the other hand, it demands an impetus on joint actions in clean and renewable energy such as hydropower, nuclear power, wind power and solar power, forming an integrated industry chain of both high and low levels in energy fields. Second, the secondary and tertiary industries relevant with ocean will present a better vigor of development in the future, which needs the maritime security strategy in China to include emerging maritime industries and other crossed industries, and for example, upgrading desalination technology, improving water supplying structure in coastal areas, enlarging oceanic tourism and special cruises program for Maritime Silk Road, developing information technology of laying maritime optical cables across the continents and along the Silk Road.

C. *Fight maritime transnational crimes*

Maritime transnational crime mainly includes piracy, terrorism, illegal immigration, drug dealing, smuggling and other kinds of forms. Involved states can punish the crimes in accordance with their own criminal laws and codes. Due to the facts that maritime transportation is cheap, the governing and administration is difficult, the international law is imperfect and criminal standards are different in different countries, maritime transnational crimes have showed the tendency of expanding and being more complicated in recent years, causing serious threats to maritime channel security and national mutual cooperation. According to 2014 global piracy report

pressed by IMB, there were totally 245 piracy attacking cases in global scale, while 183 cases happened in Southeast Asia, with 22% increasing than that in 2013; only 11 cases happened in Somali region but 33 crews were kidnaped [7]. In addition, in recent years, some drug cartels in domestic area or abroad have taken advantage of the weak links in maritime governing, finding ways to open up maritime navigation for drugs dealing, so the dealing and smuggling of drugs and chemicals in ocean happened consistently[8]. Meanwhile, human trafficking and illegal immigration are getting worse and worse. In 2015, several thousand illegal immigrants were held up in South China Sea while those Southeast Asian countries rejected to accept them. Although there are appeals from relevant international organizations, the livelihood of illegal immigrants is still serious while the surrounding countries remain at the deadlocked stage and keep evading responsibilities.

Fighting maritime transnational crimes is a policy with comprehensive effects because any policy should be based on a regional stability. States need to carry out cooperation initially and positively, and not only participate in relevant international mechanism to improve international law system but also fight jointly and punish transnational crimes within the regions. Thanks to the united navy convoy among different countries, the situation of Somalian piracy in Gulf of Aden has been greatly improved. But the piracy issue in Southeast Asia is not optimistic, which presents a fast growing in absence of governing. Moreover, the transnational illegal immigration, drug dealing, smuggling and other crimes happen occasionally, which usually have the characters of discreet inner organizations and distinct division of labors. Based on a huge amount of profits from crimes, they bring great challenges to the security and stability of the regions along the Silk Road. Therefore, China should emphatically pay attention to, monitor and enhance effective governing on these series of transactional crimes in the future maritime policy.

IV. NEW FEATURES OF PRACTICE

A. *Practice Highlights*

According to the roadmap of 'One Belt One Road', South China Sea will be the only way, which must be passed from China southeastern ports to South Pacific Ocean and to Europe via the Indian Ocean, which is of the passageway strategic significance. Meanwhile, due to the important location of traditional and non-traditional safety on the sea, the South China Sea is likely to be the priority of the ocean safety strategy in China in the future. With the variety of resources and complicated historical and political factors, each part of this area intends to get involved to pursue economic profits and exert a political influence. Otherwise, Straight of Malacca, as the throat connecting the Indian Ocean with the Pacific Ocean, is not only the important passageway of China imports and exports trade, but also the lifeline of energy safety. Once the international situation gets turmoil and Malacca is blocked, China energy safety will face a serious dilemma and about 80% of oil import will be threatened [9].

Facing the bottleneck, China changed the former negative attitude into more actively proving the sacred sovereignty of the South China Sea to the world. Some researchers named the

safeguard measures on Huangyan Island in 2012 as 'Huangyan Island Model'. It indicated in order to protect ocean interests, China took a series of measures with the field of law enforcement as the main part, the diplomacy as the supplementary, economic means as the support, military force as the backup strength, and the public as the basement, which was totally different from both diplomatic protections and force solution [10]. 'Huangyan Island Model' showed a landmark of transformation in attitudes and actions towards to South China Sea and was a successful attempt to solve the problem in a comprehensive way. In addition, China also tries to solve the ocean safety threat in another way. Taking Malacca dilemma as an example, instead of making all efforts to break the deadlock which was held by several parts, China uses a number of new ways to reduce the dependence of the ocean lanes, then to lower the risk of energy safety, e.g. China-Burma oil channels, China-Pakistan corridor plan, China-Thailand railway, etc. The most attractive thing is the officially signing of a cooperation memorandum of 'Carat Isthmus' between China and Thailand. The plan of Carat Canal originated from 17th Century. And after a heated debate over a decade years, it has made a great breakthrough pushed by China and Thailand. Compared with going through Malacca, Carat Canal could shorten the shipping distance by around 1200-1400 km, which is of great economic and strategic importance. It is still a new alternative to offer China a new transport channel, although this plan is just on schedule, as well as considering many disadvantages of time-consuming, costly and unstable political situation in Thailand.

B. Practice Methods

According to 'Vision and Action', establishing 21st-Century Maritime Silk Road will depend on a new cooperation system: targeting coordination and policy communication as priority, not pursuing uniformity intentionally, using present bilateral and multilateral cooperation system in all aspects to jointly build more diverse and open cooperation. This strategy highlights two characteristics of 'One Belt One Road' in practice, which also indicates some practice measures of China's maritime safety strategy. One is enlarging regional communication, which plays a role in a platform of bilateral conversation, multilateral system and other forums and exhibitions. The other is keeping flexible cooperation. Based on United Nation's principles and Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence, achieves flexible cooperation on different forms, contents and extents, and then inspires internal states to conduct dialogues to maximum extent in the area.

To be specific, it can be divided into three levels, jointly forming official and non-official, bilateral and multilateral, formal and informal cooperation in all aspects. Firstly regarding specific ocean problems in two states, it is critical to conduct communications and negotiations in multiple levels and channels, and fully use specific organizations in the field of trades, law and science cooperation to make various levels of commissions work. Secondly, the multilateral cooperation system is strengthened in the Maritime Silk Road to emphasize the solution to international problems. These organizations involve ASEAN, APEC, ASEM, ACD, CICA, GMS, and etc. Thirdly, make international forums and exhibitions of related regions play an important role in the platform, e.g. Boao Forum,

China-ASEAN exhibition, China-South Asia exhibition, China International Fair for Investment and Trade and etc. Meanwhile, encourage folks groups to conduct a variety of activities among historical memory, culture communication and trade transactions.

V. CONCLUSION

The plan of 21st-Century Maritime Silk Road promoted the comprehensive transformation of China's maritime security strategy. The conception of maritime security was expanded and steered from eliminating threats negatively and protecting its own safety to promoting cooperation positively and achieving regional peace and development. Also, the focus of maritime safety was inclined from traditional military security to other non-traditional secure fields such as the safety of sea-lanes, the cooperation in marine economy and the management of transnational crimes. In this process, the strategic position of South China Sea continued to be highlighted, and the importance of cooperation mechanisms was increased steadily.

However, the existing policies only provide idealized macroscopic guidance to certain specific and tricky problems. The new Maritime Silk Road needs to encounter more operational obstacles in practice under the complex ocean situation and the international pattern of various forces being intertwined. How to enhance practically the smooth execution of 'One Belt One Road', how to guarantee effectively the countries along the road to support and participate the strategy actively, and what measures should be taken to harmonize the disputes of interests within the region, will be the main challenge to the new Maritime Silk Road, even to China's security strategy in the next step.

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