DOI: https://doi.org/10.71317/kjard.2.11.2026.942

Kashmir Journal of Academic Research and Development

Journal homepage: https://rjsaonline.org/index.php/KJARD

Economic Connectivity and Maritime Power: Assessing the Strategic Implication of China's Maritime Silk Road in The South China Sea

Urooba Shahab
Student, Department of Political Science, Shaheed Benazir Bhutto Women University, Peshawar
Email: uroobashahab098@gmail.com
Sumaira Gul
Lecturer, Department of Political Science, Shaheed Benazir Bhutto Women University, Peshawar

ARTICLE INFO

Received:
September 06, 2026
Revised:
October 10, 2026
Accepted:
October 20, 2026
Available Online:
November 01, 2026

Keywords:
BRI, Maritime strategy, Navel Power, Silk Road, Economic Power, CPEC.

Corresponding Author:
Urooba Shahab
Email:uroobashahab098@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

The South China Sea has become a major arena of geopolitical competition due to its strategic maritime routes, natural resources, overlapping territorial claims, and importance to global trade. Although the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), Particularly the 21st Century Maritime silk Road aims to strengthen economic connectivity, its relationship to China Maritime strategy and regional security remains a significant concern. This Study examine how China economic and strategic objectives intersect in the South China Sea and explore the implications for regional maritime security. The study adopt a qualitative research approach based on documentary analysis of academic literature, policy documents and publically available material on China maritime activities and regional responses. Its draws on Alfred Thayer Mahan's Sea Power theory, complemented by a geo economic perspective, to analyze the relationship between maritime commerce, strategic infrastructure, navel capabilities and regional influence. The analysis suggest that the BRI economic connectivity objectives intersect with China's broader efforts to protect sea lines of communication, strengthen maritime capabilities and expend its regional influence. However the strategic implications of this interaction are shaped by competing territorial claims, regional resistance and the involvement of external powers, particularly the Unites States. The study argues that economic connectivity alone does not establish maritime dominance, its strategic effects depends on political conditions, security dynamics and responses of regional actors. By examining economic and security dimensions together this research contribute to understanding the relationship between china's connectivity initiative and maritime competition in the Indo-Pacific.

Introduction

The South China Sea plays a central role in China Belt and Road Initiative, because it connect China eastern coastline with South East Asia, the Indian Ocean the Middle East Africa and Europe through major maritime trade routes. A significant proportion of china international trade depends on these waters, making the region particularly important for the country economic activities. China major manufacturing and industrial centers, including Guangdong, Fujian and Shanghai rely heavily on maritime routes through the South China Sea to Transport goods to international markets. Therefore maintaining secure and uninterrupted access to these water is essential for china long term economic growth and the successful implementation of BRI. According to EIA (2024) through the initiative china aims to ensure the smooth flow of Trade, reduce transportation coast and delivery time, expand international market for Chinese products and address industrial overcapacity in sectors such as steel, cement, railway and construction. Furthermore the BRI creates the opportunities for Chinese technology telecommunications and infrastructure companies by expending their presence in regional and global markets. (Gresh ,2020)

South China Sea is classified as a semi-enclosed body of water in the Pacific Ocean's western waters which covers approximately 3.5 million square kilometers, spanning between the Malacca strait and the Taiwan Strait. It is bordered by China, Vietnam the Philippines, Brunei, Malaysia, Indonesia and Taiwan. It links Europe, Middle East and Asia. It holds potential reserves of oil and gas which make which makes it attractive .It is among the world's productive fishing areas, which underpin food security for up about 60 million people of Southeast Asia. Tuna, shrimp, shellfish and anchovy are found in abundant amount. (Morton, 2016)

Around 40,000 ships transits annually, approximately 40% of global seaborne trade transits this region. Maritime sea routes in the South China Sea are the busiest sea routes. It bears trillions of dollars of trade mostly include oil, gas, manufactured goods, food and raw materials, It links the Pacific Ocean and Indian Ocean, extending to Europe .Any disruption in trade can cause disruption in energy supply chain which mostly affect China as China is heavily depend on energy imports through the South China Sea maritime routes. Militarily the area act as a critical operational zone .It enables naval movement connecting the Pacific with the Indian Ocean. This area carry great significance especially for the US 7th Fleet and for China's naval strategy. (Akinga et.al, 2023).

Scholars argue that china consider South China Sea as vital national interest similar to that of Tibet, Taiwan and Xinjiang. Two interpretations are put forward by scholars; the maximalist view and moderate view. According to maximalist view China would ultimately demand full sovereignty over South China Sea. Alternatively moderate view argue for a strategic control of South China Sea without claiming full ownership to dominate nearby waters similar to how the US historically managed the Caribbean sea. However China cannot fully dominate South China Sea as the situation is more complex because China face threat from different angles notably South Korea ,Japan and Taiwan, in addition strong military presence of US in Indo Pacific restrict China's actions. Regional countries such as Taiwan, the Philippines, Brunei also strengthening their navies as well as military limitations, regional resistance geographical constraints and US continued presence create hurdles in the way of china to fully dominate the South China Sea maritime domain.(Yoshihara & Holmes, 2011).

According to the World Bank (n.d) In contemporary times, China has emerged as the world's second-largest economy, with per capita GDP increasing from $381 in 1978 to around $12,000 in 2021. In pursuit of sustained economic growth and global influence, China has launched several initiatives, among which the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) stands out as a key strategic ambitious project to enhance economic connectivity and development. Within BRI, the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road (MSR) plays a crucial role, linking China's coastal ports to the Indian Ocean and further to Europe through vital maritime routes, including the South China Sea. The South China Sea is strategically important for global trade, energy transportation, and natural resources. It serves as a significant sea corridor connecting Asia, Europe, and Africa, and is often described as a lifeline for both global and Chinese trade. About 50% of global trade passes through this region, making it indispensable for China's economy, particularly for its imports, exports, and energy supplies. Consequently, alongside Taiwan and Tibet china consider south china as a core national interest.

The Belt and Road Initiative which was originally introduced as the One Belt One Road Initiative has emerged as one of the most influential International Development strategies of the 21st century. This initiative is comprised of two complimentary components the Silk Road Economic , , that focuses on land based transport corridors and the 21st century Maritime Silk Road which stress the development of night time trade routes. Within the broader BRI framework 21st Century Maritime Silk Road possesses a particularly significant position because it depends on the sea routes connecting China with the Southeast Asia the Indian Ocean the Middle East and the Europe Southeast Asia which is a gateway for these maritime connections makes the region indispensable to the success of the initiative The South China Sea serves as the world's busiest shipping corridors carrying a substantial share of the global trade.(Blanchard (2018). Through BRI China has invested a great chunk of its economy on port as such as the Gawadar, Humbantuta and Chittagong to secure its trade routes and reduce dependence on the Strait of Malacca- which China often called as the "Malacca Dilemma". (Van, et.al, 2026)

Moreover South Asia lies at the core of the BRI because it connects major land and maritime corridors. CPEC and Hambantota ports are the major projects under BRI in the South Asia. The Digital Silk Road is an important component of the BRI. China is increasingly investing in telecommunications, data centers, smart cities and digital infrastructure in order to strengthen technological connectivity across the member states. Besides opportunities, such as digital transformation and economic modernization, they also brought challenges including concerns regarding cyber security , privacy and digital sovereignty. (Ammu & Ajitha 2026).

Chinas Maritime interest in South China Sea bust be understood through several related but distinct considerations, including the protection of commercial shipping, energy security, the development of navel capabilities and its territorial and maritime claims. These interests may overlap, but they should not be treated as evidence of a single, predetermined objective of regional domination. The expansion of Maritime infrastructure and navel capabilities has generated different interpretation among

scholars and policymakers concerning china's long term intensions. Some analysis emphasizes the economic and connectivity objective of Maritime Silk Road, while other examine whether infrastructure, Maritime presence and strategic access may also support broader geopolitical goals. Blanchard (2018) for example, highlights the constraints that China's own circumstances and South East Asian political and economic conditions place on the implementation of the Maritime Silk Road. This debate makes it necessary to investigate how economic connectivity interact with maritime strategy rather then assume BRI projects automatically produce strategic control. (Li, 2021)

Furthermore, the Maritime Silk Road extends from coastal cities such as Fuzhou in Fujian province, passing through Southeast Asia and the South China Sea, forming a critical component of China's global trade network. The maritime Silk Road has important strategic and political implications. The South China remains an area of overlapping territorial and maritime claims making it one of the most sensitive regions in Indo Pacific . The ongoing disputes , strategic rivalry among major powers , and concerns over regional security have the potential to affect the pace and effectiveness of Maritimes Silk Road projects. As a result the success of the initiative depends heavily not on economic investments but also on political stability, diplomatic engagement with the Southeast Asian States and the willingness of the regional states to cooperate despite existing security challenges The revitalization of the 21st century maritime silk road is also linked to the Chinese philosophical concept of Tianxia, meaning "all under heaven," which envisions a world without rigid boundaries. This perspective reflects China's broader strategic outlook and helps explain its expanding role and assertiveness in the South China Sea under the framework of the BRI, (Callahan,2008).

One of the distinguishing feature of the China's behavior in the South China Sea is the use of incremental tactics commonly known as the "salami slicing". Instead of making sudden or large scale territorial advances and engage into conflicts, China usually introduces small and gradual changes that individually appear limited out but collectively altered the region status quo over time. These strategic moves includes strengthening administrative control, enhancing maritime patrols and expanding of its naval presence on disputed features. By keeping each move below the threshold that would trigger a military response China minimizes the risk of armed conflict slowly and gradually consolidating its strategic position.(Hoang,2025)

In 2015 China has officially adopted strategy what the China called as "Near seas defense and far seas protection". This strategy is greatly inspired from the theory of Alfred Thayer Mahan who put great stress on sea power and protection of the strategic maritime routes. Near seas defense include the protection of the China's territorial claims, maritime rights, and national security in the East China Sea, South China Sea ,Yellow Sea, and the First Island Chain. Far seas protection includes protection of its broader economic interests, strategic sea routes, citizen abroad, and foreign investment. China considers its maritime trade routes as economic "lifeline". (Rice& Robb 2021)

Research questions

1. How china's maritime strategy evolved in the south china under BRI (maritime Silk Road)?
2. What are the implications of successfully implementing the maritime Silk Road initiative in the South China Sea?
3. What strategic objectives is china pursuing in the South China Sea?

Literature Review

Hu Jintao (2012), focused no transforming china into more advanced naval power .under Xi Jinping china focused on maritime rights and economic military interest. Xi launched BRI or Maritime Silk Road initiative to expand China's global trade networks , gain ports access abroad, increase diplomatic influence, and connects Asia, Africa and Europe .it integrates economic interest with the geopolitical ambitions. Expanding strategic space of influence , secure strategic resources and increasing political bargaining power serves as the principal drivers of China's policy towards the South China Sea .(Morton,K.2016)

Popescu (2024) Explores China's long term strategic orientation by connecting the idea of Chinese Dream with its objective of emerging as a leading maritime power. The article explains that China particularly under Xi Jinping's leadership is shifting its focus from a primarily land based security approach to one that prioritizes the maritime domain. This shift is largely driven by the country's dependence on sea based trade routes and energy supplies making the protection of these routes a central concern.

According to Holmes (2014) the Strategist Alfred Thayer Mahan Saw naval Power as a combination of commerce, navel strength, geographical features, overseas ports and bases and political will. It was about securing and protecting trade routes. James R Holems compare classical maritime theory and Mahan's theory to analyze geostrategic competition in the South China Sea. He incorporate modern factors such as alliance relations and underwater geography into Mahan's framework (position, Strength and resources) to present a broader picture .He argue that South China Sea has several gateways and strategic waterways notably the Malacca Strait, Sunda Strait , Lombok Strait Taiwan strait and Luzan strait.

Zhang (2017) provides a structural interpretation of the China's BRI .Uses the word system framework developed by Immanuel Wallerstein and extended by the Giovanni Arrighi the study argues that China's rapid economic upsurge since the late 1970s reflects its transformation from a semi peripheral to a more central position in the global economic hierarchy. However this growth has generated structural imbalances particularly in the form of capital over accumulation, rising production costs and declining profitability indicating a transition from expansion to stagnation within long term capacity cycles .In this context Zhang conceptualizes the BRI as the "spatial fix" through which China attempt to externalize domestic economic pressures by expanding investment, trade networks and infrastructure connectivity across Asia Europe and Africa. The initiative is not seen merely as a foreign policy tool but also interpret it as a type of economic strategy that uses both territorial expansion and capitalist logic to maintain economic growth and increase Chinas global influence

Despite substantial academic literature on China's maritime approach under the Belt and Road Initiative, several gaps remain within existing literature. First the existing literature lacks clear explanation of how the BRI influences china's maritime conduct practically in South China Sea. Second many studies analyze the maritime dispute in the South China Sea primarily through a security or economic lens, but fail to integrate these dimensions into a comprehensive analytical framework. Additionally while the 21st century Maritime Silk Road is widely examined as an economic initiative, its strategic and defense-related implications in the South China Sea remain underexplored. finally existing research often focuses on China's perspective, with limited attention to how regional actors respond to its expanding influence.

Therefore, this study endeavors to overcome these shortcomings through examination of China's maritime approach in the South China Sea within the wider BRI framework, highlighting the interaction among economic objectives, security considerations, and regional geopolitical dynamics.

Analysis

Progression of china's maritime strategy

China's strategic maritime approach has evolved gradually with the need of the time, leadership dynamics and its dependence on imported energy resources. During the last several decades China's maritime posture has transformed, shifting its focus on a coastal defense towards protecting strategic sea routes, expanding overseas connectivity and strengthening its position as a major maritime power . At the beginning of fifteenth century, during the voyage of Admiral Zheng, China was mostly considered as continental power despite having significant naval power. The end of Ming Dynasty marked a decline in China's naval exploration and focused mainly on land oriented strategies. During the 1990s rapid modernization has caused China heavy dependence on imported energy and maritime trade. President Jiang Zemin recognized the need for both continental and maritime strength. In the same era Admiral Liu Huaqing launched a new strategy for China naval expansion called The Three Island Strategy:

- Control over First Island chain
- Expansion into Second Island chain
- Global level reach by 2050

China's maritime strategy transformation accelerated under the Hu Jintao who mostly focused on transforming China into a maritime power by protecting sea lane, maritime resources and overseas economic interests. In 2013 with the launch of BRI under the Xi Jinping China's maritime strategy has greatly transformed. The BRI is comprised of two major components; Silk Road Economic Belt and the modern maritime Silk Road. More 140 countries had signed many projects related to the BRI by 2021One of the major component of the BRI is the 21st century Maritime Silk Road that connects China with markets across Southeast Asia, South Asia, Africa, Middle East and Europe through South China Sea region .South China sea is core to China's naval strategy because it bears a large chunk of China's maritime trade. (Valderrey, et.al, 2025).

China considers the blue economy as important for the maritime power. China's blue Economy extends beyond trade and shipping routs. It includes the offshore oil, sea beds, potential gas reserves, Fisheries, shipbuilding tourism, Desalination, marine Biotechnology, marine finance coastal infrastructure and renewable marine energy . China views the blue economy as a source of national power because it supports economic growth and also enables greater utilization of the maritime space. (Chan, 2024)

China maritime strategy evolved through several stages from historical focused on coastal defense to expand it to near seas defense, control of 1st island, expansion into the 2nd island and far seas protection. Contemporary China seeks global maritime influence through Blue water Navy, overseas logistics, long distance operation and naval modernization. China views ports, shipping routes, industrial corridors logistics hubs, and digital infrastructures as strategic assets .China frames its economic

strategy with the security strategy which reflect Mahan's theory of sea power who focused on protecting sea routs through strong Navy. China is increasingly modernizing its naval power through aircraft carriers, submarines, coastguard expansion, artificial islands militarized with radar system, airstrips and military bars. Beyond modernizing naval power China's maritime strategy represents a blend of bilateral diplomacy, coast guard operation, administrative control, economic diplomacy, historical claims of island in the waters of South China Sea and gradually salami slicing ,Quyet,2023).

Implications of successfully implementing the maritime silk road

The successful implementation of the twenty-first century Maritime Silk Road would have significant political, economic, security and strategic ramifications that affects china together with Southeast Asia and the wider Indo Pacific region. Alongside trade and connectivity it can also reshape the distribution of power in the Indo Pacific region. Successful implementation may generate economic implications such as reducing transportation cost, securing China's maritime trade routes, enhancing supply chain efficiency, diversify overseas markets and strengthening energy security. Belt and Road Initiative development infrastructure includes ports, industries, railways, dry ports, energy projects such as coal ,thermal hydropower and logistic networks could enhance China's relation with numerous States and increases its diplomatic leverage, political influence, international bargaining power and regional leadership. Economic reliance may mitigate resistance to China's maritime claims, (Green, 2018).

The China Silk Road diplomacy aims to extend political and Economic Cooperation with south East Asian countries. Through Silk Road China seeks to extend its influence through infrastructure investment, ports development and trade cooperation. The Silk Road initiatives are intended not only to expand international connectivity but also to promote economic development and cooperation in China's less western provinces by linking them to regional and global markets. (Szczudlik, 2013).

Moreover successful implementation can also enhance China's ability to secure and protect its energy imports, sea lines of communication, commercial maritime shipping and cross border investment. Greater naval presence can secure China trade from disruption or blockades. Many overseas ports such as Gawadar ,Hambantuta and Kyaukpu are viewed as a potential dual use projects, which can be used by China for naval exercises, increased military reach and for surveillance.

Additionally successful implementation can also escalate rivalry between China and the U.S. which includes Indo-Pacific competition, greater assertion of freedom of maritime passage by the US, greater military deployments and more stronger regional alliances, (Funaiole, 2018).

Furthermore the successful implementation of the Maritime Silk Road can improve infrastructure by expanding transport networks, port facilities and smart port technologies. It can also develop human capital by inculcating skills, attracting skilled professionals and encouraging education. Successful implementation of the silk road can also improves port management and logistical operations, (Huang et.al, 2025).

Finally China's growing influence in the South China Sea maritime domain can additionally intensify its rivalry with the claimants notably Vietnam, Malaysia, the Philippines and Brunei over maritime zones, sovereignty of islands fisheries, hydrocarbons and freedom of navigation. Many analysts view the Belt and Road Initiative framework as a debt-trap diplomacy and as a dual-use facility.

China's strategic objectives

China is pursuing a blend of economic-related, security, Political and Geopolitical Objectives in the South China Sea . The chief objective is to secure commercial shipping routes, including the production of the shipping lanes, securing global supply chain and guaranteeing undisrupted commerce. Secondly South China Sea contain potential hydrocarbon reserves, rich fishing grounds and seabed minerals deposits. Therefore China is extending its influence in the South China Sea through the contemporary Maritime Silk Road in order to secure natural resources essential for economic development, food security and industrial growth. Thirdly China endeavors to strengthen its influence over the Southeast Asia through potential partnership, trade, infrastructure, investment and economic diplomacy. China wants to maintain naval superiority in the South China Sea through:

1. Conducting naval exercises
2. Constructing artificial islands
3. Deploying national coast guard service
4. Enhancing surveillance system

China seeks to reinforce its maritime claims in the South China Sea such as the Nine-Dash line, historical rights and the Four-Sha-Concept through legal, administrative and physical presence across disputed waters in the South China Sea. China has been striving to defend its territorial claims by establishing administrative control, coast guard presence in the south china sea , construction projectson disputed islands , and setting up civilian and military bases on disputed territories. China usually avoids solving territorial disputes immediately and chooses for gradual increase of its influence across the region without resorting to large scale defense-related conflict. (O'Rourke, 2025).

Finally, China's national policy in the South China Sea must be understood and viewed in terms of China's general objectives of national rejuvenation and becoming the maritime superpower. President Xi Jinping's vision of "Chinese Dream" includes return of China to its historic role of being one of the world's leading nations and having influence over international affairs. In this context, the Maritime Silk Road Initiative is not only limited to economic projects and objectives but also represents the means of spreading China's influence over Indo-Pacific and other regions. Therefore maritime connectivity, naval modernization, overseas infrastructure projects, and regional diplomatic initiatives reflects that the objectives of China go beyond territorial disputes in the region. Instead, they are components of China's comprehensive national strategy focused on enhancing China's economic security, strengthening national security, gaining regional leadership and increasing its influence on the international stage, (Chubb,2019).

Moreover China has adopted the policy of bilateralism according to which China prefer to negotiate with the claimants of the South China Sea separately in order exploit differences among the ASEAN states instead of a unified negotiation on ASEAN platform. This aims to weaken ASEAN credibility and its ability to become an effective unified organization to solve problems. (Van & Huong, 2026).

China offers foreign aid to ASEAN states what the author called as "buying silent strategy". China offers aids and loans to ASEAN states, which serves as tool to keep them silent , avoid opposition to Claims South China Sea And discourage them from internationalizing the South China Sea dispute,(Lee & Kim, 2026).

Recommendations to minimize regional rivalry and to foster collaboration among ASEAN states and China

China and Asian Member States should engage in dialog in order resolve maritime disputes peacefully

All parties to the conflict and claimants should respect international maritime law particularly the United Nation Convention on the Laws of the Seas 1982

China should maintain greater transparency regarding the BRI infrastructure projects in order to reduce concerns over the potential dual use nature and debt trap diplomacy

Economic cooperation and modernization should not threaten this of territorial sovereignty and territory integrity of the coastal states

All stakeholders should promote confidence building measures including maritime patrols information sharing and crisis communication mechanisms and should adopt a multilateral rather than a unilateral approaches to resolve South China Sea disputes

Major powers and international actors Including the United States Australia, India, Japan and the European Union should support regional stability Rather than intensifying geopolitical rivalry

states that have overlapping claims should engage in joint development arrangements and potential energy resources exploration ,to be benefited equally without any prejudice

People to people tie should be strengthened through educational exchanges, scholarships, Scientific collaboration among the neighboring states and joint marine research initiatives to foster trust and long term regional corporation

Developing coastal states should diversify their economic partnerships and collaborations in order to reduce dependence on a single external power.

Think tanks, universities and Policy Research institutions should strengthen research collaboration and track 2 diplomacy to present practical solutions for maritime security challenges .

References

Akinga, A. Y., Umar, A. Y., & Yusuf, D. J. (2023). The strategic importance of South China Sea to international geopolitics. *ACADEMICIA: An International Multidisciplinary Research Journal, 13*(1), 24–34. https://doi.org/10.5958/2249-7137.2023.00006.X

Ammu, S., & Ajitha, S. (2026). Exploring 11 years of China's Belt and Road Initiative: What makes it unique in shaping South Asia's future? *Journal of World Affairs, 2*(1), 72–91. https://doi.org/10.1177/29769442251405653

Blanchard, J.-M. F. (2018). China's Maritime Silk Road Initiative (MSRI) and Southeast Asia: A Chinese "pond" not "lake" in the works. *Journal of Contemporary China, 27*(111), 329–343. https://doi.org/10.1080/10670564.2018.1410959

Callahan, W. A. (2008). Chinese visions of world order: Post-hegemonic or a new hegemony? *International Studies Review, 10*(4), 749–761. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2486.2008.00830

Chan, E. S. Y. (2024). China's maritime power discourse: A five-dimensional framework. *Journal of Contemporary China, 33*(148), 433–449.

Chubb, A. (2019, January 22). *Xi Jinping and China's maritime policy*. Brookings Institution. https://www.brookings.edu/articles/xi-jinping-and-chinas-maritime-policy/

Funaiole, M. P., Hart, B., & Powers-Riggs, A. (2018, August 2). *China's Maritime Silk Road Initiative: Economic drivers and challenges*. Center for Strategic and International Studies. https://www.csis.org/analysis/chinas-maritime-silk-road-initiative-economic-drivers-and-challenges

Green, M. J. (2018, April 2). *China's Maritime Silk Road: Strategic and economic implications for the Indo-Pacific region*. Center for Strategic and International Studies. https://www.csis.org/analysis/chinas-maritime-silk-road-strategic-and-economic-implications-indo-pacific-region

Gresh, G. F. (2020). China's Maritime Silk Road and the South China Sea. In *To rule Eurasia's waves: The new great power competition at sea* (pp. 172–204). Yale University Press. https://doi.org/10.12987/yale/9780300234848.003.0006

Hoang, Y. T. H. (2025). The art of incremental dominance: China's coordinated power play in the South China Sea. In *Contemporary issues in the South China Sea: Security, strategy and regional dynamics* (Chap. 10). IGI Global. https://doi.org/10.4018/979-8-3373-4470-6.ch010

Holmes, J. R. (2014). Strategic features of the South China Sea: A tough neighborhood for hegemons. *Naval War College Review, 67*(2), Article 5. https://digital-commons.usnwc.edu/nwc-review/vol67/iss2/5/

Hu, J. (2012, November 8). *Full text of Hu Jintao's report at 18th Party Congress*. The State Council of the People's Republic of China. https://newyork.china-consulate.gov.cn/eng/xw/201211/t20121127_4701444.htm

Huang, S., Huo, Y., & Xiao, G. (2025). Impact of the "21st Century Maritime Silk Road" construction on the efficiency of China's coastal ports. *Sustainability, 17*(2), 700.

Huang, Y., & Yu, M. (2025). Approaches to legal governance in constructing Nanhai National Marine Park. *Frontiers in Marine Science, 12*, Article 1683006. https://doi.org/10.3389/fmars.2025.1683006

Lee, J., Cho, J., & Kim, M. (2026). Buying silence: Maritime disputes in the South China Sea and Chinese aid allocation patterns for target countries. *Journal of East Asian Studies, 26*(1), 44–67. https://doi.org/10.1017/jea.2025.10018

Li, Y. (2021). China's security interests and strategies in the South China Sea. In G. Houlden et al. (Eds.), *Security, strategy, and military dynamics in South China Sea: Cross-national perspectives* (pp. 63–78). Policy Press. https://doi.org/10.1332/policypress/9781529213454.003.0004

Morton, K. (2016). China's ambition in the South China Sea: Is a legitimate maritime order possible? *International Affairs, 92*(4), 909–940. https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-2346.12658

O'Rourke, R. (2025, May 1). *U.S.-China strategic competition in South and East China Seas: Background and issues for Congress* (CRS Report No. R42784). Congressional Research Service. https://www.everycrsreport.com/reports/R42784.html

Popescu, A. I. C. (2024). The "China Dream"—The grand strategy of transforming China into a global maritime power. *Cogent Social Sciences, 10*(1), Article 2414873.

Quyet, N. H. (2023). Chinese strategy in the South China Sea: A growing quest for vital economic and strategic interests. *World Affairs, 186*(3), 687–716. https://doi.org/10.1177/00438200231181141

Rice, J., & Robb, E. (2021). *The origins of "near seas defense and far seas protection"* (China Maritime Report No. 13). China Maritime Studies Institute, U.S. Naval War College. https://digital-commons.usnwc.edu/cmsi-maritime-reports/13/

Szczudlik-Tatar, J. (2013). *China's new Silk Road diplomacy* (PISM Policy Paper No. 34 [82]). The Polish Institute of International Affairs. https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/174833/PISM%20Policy%20Paper%20no%2034%20%2882%29.pdf.

Valderrey, F. J., Trigos, F., & Kaltenecker, E. (2025). Belt and Road Initiative: Building or buying a New Silk Road? *European Journal of International Management, 27*(4), 533–565. https://doi.org/10.1504/EJIM.2025.150039

Van, T. T. T., Huong, N. T., & Kiet, L. H. (2026). China deploys maritime Silk Road infrastructure and economic leverage to pursue South China Sea territorial ambitions in Southeast Asia. *Discover Global Society, 4*, Article 98. https://doi.org/10.1007/s44282-026-00455-x

World Bank. (n.d.). *GDP per capita (current US$) – China*. World Bank Open Data. https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.PCAP.CD?locations=CN

Yoshihara, T., & Holmes, J. R. (2011). Can China defend a "core interest" in the South China Sea? *The Washington Quarterly, 34*(2), 45–59.

Zhang, F. (2017). Chinese thinking on the South China Sea and the future of regional security. *Political Science Quarterly, 132*(3), 435–466. https://doi.org/10.1002/polq.12658

Zhang, X. (2017). Chinese capitalism and the Maritime Silk Road: A world-systems perspective. *Geopolitics, 22*(2), 310–331.

2026 by the authors; Journal of *Kashmir Journal of Academic Research and Development*. This is an open access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC-BY) license (http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).