

# On the Historical Evolution of China's "Land-Ocean Integration" (*Luhai Tongchou*) Policy

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**How to cite this paper:** Zhang, T. (2023). On the Historical Evolution of China's "Land-Ocean Integration" (*Luhai Tongchou*) Policy. *Open Journal of Social Sciences*, 11, 70-79.

<https://doi.org/10.4236/jss.2023.116006>

**Received:** April 21, 2023

**Accepted:** June 11, 2023

**Published:** June 14, 2023

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## Abstract

Land-ocean integration is an important strategic measure for China to build a maritime power, which was originally proposed to describe the overall consideration of the protection of land and marine ecological environments, and later this concept gradually evolved into the coordinated development of ocean and land, and the application fields of this measure have gradually expanded from the environmental field to economic, political, cultural and other fields. By summarizing and analyzing classical Marxist literature and policy documents of the Communist Party of China, this paper aims to delineate the historical evolution of China's land-ocean integration policy, and argues that this policy is built on the solid foundation of absorbing the classical Marxism theory and inheriting as well as developing the views and thoughts of several generations of Chinese Communists. It also discusses in detail the development conditions, roads, goals and methods of the land-ocean integration policy.

## Keywords

Land-Ocean Integration, Coordinated Region Development, Communist Party of China

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## 1. Introduction

As one of the main marine strategies composing Xi Jinping Thought on socialism with Chinese characteristics for the new era, the "land-ocean integration" (*luhai tongchou*) policy is established on the basis of the new situations of the development of China's marine industry, aiming at accelerating the construction of a maritime power for China. Land-ocean integration was originally used to describe the overall consideration of the protection of land and marine ecologi-

cal environments, and later gradually evolved into the coordinated development of sea and land, and its application fields have gradually expanded from the environmental field to economic, political, cultural and other fields. It is an important strategic measure for China to build a maritime power, as emphasized by Xi Jinping in the 19th National Congress of the Communist Party of China (CPC) in 2017: “we will pursue coordinated land and marine development, and step up efforts to build China into a strong maritime country.” (Xi, 2017). In the 20th National Congress of CPC, Xi Jinping further emphasized the importance of building China into a strong maritime country (Xi, 2022). By summarizing and analyzing classical Marxist literature and policy documents of the CPC, this paper aims to delineate the historical evolution of China’s land-ocean integration policy, and argues that this policy is built on the solid foundation of absorbing the classical Marxism theory and inheriting as well as developing the excellent ideas of several generations of Chinese Communists.

## 2. Theoretical Foundations: Classical Marxist Views on Oceans

The development of capitalism and socialized mass production has been closely linked to the ocean from the very beginning. Marx and Engels deeply analyzed capitalism and unraveled the relationship between capitalism and ocean routes, ocean shipping and sea power of states, which constitute the basic elements of globalization.

### 2.1. The Logic of Appreciation and Circulation of Capital

Capital is the basic concept of Marxist political economy. Capital not only refers to the accumulation of materials, but also represents a relationship. As put by Marx, “the great historical aspect of capital is the creation of this surplus labour” (Marx, 1986: p. 250) and “this is why capital is productive, i.e. an essential relationship for the development of the productive forces of society” (Marx, 1986: p. 251). The purpose of capital is to realize value appreciation and accumulate surplus labor to generate more capital. As explained by Marx, “but since capital represents the general form of wealth—money—it has a boundless and measureless urge to exceed its own limits” (Marx, 1986: p. 259). The nature of capital forces it to continuously transform surplus labor into surplus value in the process of production, and then transformed into capital, which makes the production scale of capital continue to expand and so forth.

Following this logic, capital promotes the development of social productivity, and at the same time promotes the transformation and innovation of science and technology. With the reduction of socially necessary labor time, it will inevitably lead to the infinite expansion of production scale and the infinite surge of commodity output, so that it is necessary to constantly seek broader and broader sales market to realize the monetary form of capital. Therefore, as summarized by Marx, “hence the tendency of capital 1) to continually enlarge the periphery

of circulation; 2) to transform it at all points into production carried by capital” (Marx, 1986: p. 335).

## **2.2. Ocean Shipping as a Channel for Capital Circulation and Market Expansion**

The great geographical discovery and the opening of new shipping routes have brought together continents and lands that were originally isolated from each other by the ocean, which has promoted the formation of a vast world market and provided the possibility for the completion and realization of capital logic. As discussed by Marx, “manufacture and the movement of production in general received an enormous impetus through the extension of intercourse which came with the discovery of America and the sea-route to the East Indies...the expeditions of adventurers, colonisation, and above all the extension of markets into a world market, which had now become possible and was daily becoming more and more a fact, called forth a new phase of historical development” (Marx & Engels, 1976: p. 69). The progress of science and technology and the continuous expansion of capital also promoted the formation of the world market from another direction, as put by Marx, “the colossal expansion of the means of transportation and communication—ocean liners, railways, electrical telegraphs, the Suez Canal—has made a real-world market a fact.” (Marx, 1998: p. 488). Marx also argued that “with this flow of capital into overseas steamship services and the canalisation of the American isthmus, the foundation has already been laid for over-speculation in this field” (Marx & Engels, 1978: p. 506), and “one can really say that the earth has only begun to become round since this world-wide ocean steam navigation has become necessary” (Marx & Engels, 1978: p. 506).

## **2.3. Ocean Control as an Important Guarantee for International Market Competitiveness**

Engels defined navy as “a collective term for the vessels of war belonging to a sovereign or nation” (Engels, 1982: p. 364). The real purpose of the standing navy in the modern sense is to ensure the development of capitalist colonial rule and trade. As Engels further expounded at this subject: “The same causes which had produced standing armies on land, now produced standing navies afloat.... The era of colonial enterprise which now opened for all seafaring nations, also witnessed the formation of large fleets of war to protect the newly formed colonies and their trade; and a period followed richer in naval struggles and more fruitful to the development of naval armaments than any that preceded it.” (Engels, 1982: p. 365).

Considering the close relationship between sea power and a state’s comprehensive strength, the gap in economic strength between countries will inevitably affect the strength of ocean control. In particular, a strong maritime force can promote the development of the country’s oceans, while a weak maritime force may result in the failure of a state in war, even being turned into a colony. This

would turn the advantages of being close to oceans into a fatal weakness for a state. Since countries involved with the ocean cannot avoid being integrated with the world market, China's modern maritime history is the most vivid commentary on above statement. This was also described clearly by Marx: "that a giant empire, containing almost one-third of the human race, vegetating to the teeth of time, insulated by the forced exclusion of general intercourse, and thus contriving to dupe itself with delusions of Celestial perfection—that such an empire should at last be overtaken by the fate on occasion of a deadly duel." (Marx, 1980: p. 16). Therefore, only by actively developing the ocean and taking advantage of it to go global, will a state occupy a favorable position in the international market competition.

#### **2.4. Maritime Shipping, Capital and Markets Form the Basic Elements of Capitalist Globalization**

Capital appreciation needs to seek a larger scope of circulation (namely, world market). The development of sea routes and ocean-going shipping, as well as the control of the ocean, can promote the self-appreciation of capital through the world market. On the contrary, the development of sea routes and ocean-going shipping and sea control is based on capitalist socialized large-scale industrial production. "On the prosperity of industry depends the prosperity of the whole domestic trade, of the Hamburg and Bremen and, to some extent, Stettin sea trade, of banking." (Engels, 1976: p. 86). The development of industry is based on the accumulation of a large amount of capital, "one of the most indispensable conditions for the formation of manufacturing industry was the accumulation of capital, facilitated by the discovery of America and the import of its precious metals." (Marx, 1976: p. 185). The formation of modern large-scale industry needs to be accelerated by the expansion of maritime trade and overseas markets. "The great geographical discoveries, and the colonisation following upon them, multiplied markets and quickened the transformation of handicraft into manufacture." (Engels, 1989: p. 313). The continuous expansion of capitalist industry will inevitably lead to the trend of globalization, and it is precisely the ultimate goal of the bourgeoisie to incorporate the entire world into the system of the capitalist world. "The proper task of bourgeois society is the creation of the world market, at least in outline, and of the production based on that market. Since the world is round, the colonisation of California and Australia and the opening up of China and Japan would seem to have completed this process." (Marx, 1983: p. 347) By it can be seen that "the circulation of commodities is the starting-point of capital. The production of commodities, their circulation, and that more developed form of their circulation called commerce, these form the historical ground-work from which it rises. The modern history of capital dates from the creation in the 16th century of a world-embracing commerce and a world-embracing market." (Marx, 1996: p. 157). Capital and the ocean, industry and shipping, maritime trade and the world market, constitute the essence and panorama of capitalist life.

### **3. Experiences from Practice: The Development of Contemporary China's Maritime Strategy**

#### **3.1. From 1949 to 1976: The Maritime Strategy of "Nearshore Defense"**

After the founding of People's Republic of China (PRC), based on the international environment of the US-Soviet struggle for hegemony and the tense situation in the Taiwan Strait, the maritime strategy focusing on coastal defense was an inevitable choice affected by the dual influence of the international and domestic environments at that time for China. The first generation of CPC leaders with Mao Zedong as the core collectively recovered China's maritime sovereignty, built a modern navy to carry out "near-shore defense", and took maintaining national maritime security as the top priority, laying the foundation for the construction of the Chinese navy and coastal defense. Due to the limitations of the historical era, the first generation of CPC leaders with Mao Zedong as the core mainly focused on military defense for maritime powers, and relatively ignored the use of marine economy and marine resources.

#### **3.2. From 1977 to 1992: "Offshore Defense" and the Open Sea Strategy**

After the reform and opening up, with the promulgation of the "United Nations Convention on the Law of Sea", international maritime disputes have become increasingly frequent and complex. Based on considerations of economic development and national security, the second generation of CPC leaders with Deng Xiaoping as the core paid more attention to maritime rights and interests, especially in terms of economy and security, and determined that "enter the ocean and benefit the people" (*jinjun haiyang, zaofu renmin*) under the goal of peaceful development. This means to use the ocean as a channel open to the outside world, to develop and utilize marine resources, and to build a capable navy to achieve offshore defense. A notable policy under this spirit is that "shelve disputes and jointly develop" (*gezhi zhengduan, gongtong kaifa*), which aims to peacefully resolve maritime disputes with other countries or regions. On the basis of inheriting and developing the ideology of the first generation of CPC leaders, the second generation of CPC leaders attached great importance to the utilization of marine economy and resources under the goals of peaceful economic development, but underestimated, to some extent, the long-term situation and complexity of maritime disputes, and had left some difficulties in terms of maritime rights and interests.

#### **3.3. From 1993 to 2002: Enhancing Ocean Awareness and Building Ocean Power's Ocean Strategy**

Under the theme of the era of peace and development, the third generation of Chinese leadership group with Jiang Zemin at the core, on the basis of inheriting and developing their predecessors, creatively raised the ocean issue to the level of

the country's overall layout in a spirit of "to understand the ocean from a strategic perspective, and to enhance the marine consciousness of the whole nation". They set a goal of building a maritime power. The specific goals included developing the marine economy and marine industry, building a modern navy to defend maritime sovereignty and rights, enhancing the marine cognition, and protecting marine resources and promoting sustainable development. For the first time, the third generation of Chinese leaders included the protection of marine rights and interests in the party's political report, making marine issues an important part of the country's long-term development plan, but it did not form a complete ideological system for a maritime power.

### **3.4. From 2003 to 2012: Building a "Harmonious Ocean" and a Marine Strategy for a Powerful Ocean Country**

Based on the thesis that the 21st century is the century of the sea and the reality that China is a regional maritime power with both land and sea, the central leadership of the CPC with Hu Jintao as the general secretary, under the guidance of the idea of "harmonious world" (*hexie shijie*), called for the construction of a "harmonious ocean" (*hexie haiyang*) and earnestly maintained national security and maritime rights and interests, building a maritime power. The Twelfth Five-Year Plan included the strategy of "land-ocean integration" (*luhai tongchou*) in the national development plan for the first time. It stated that "[we shall] develop the marine economy, adhere to land-sea overall planning, formulate and implement marine development strategies, improve marine development, control, and comprehensive management capabilities, and scientifically plan the development of the marine economy, develop the industries of marine oil and gas, transportation and fishery, utilize marine resources rationally, strengthen the construction of fishing ports, promote the protection of islands, coastal zones and marine ecological environment, and guarantee the safety of sea passages and safeguard the country's maritime rights and interests." (QGRMDBDH, 2011). The report of the 18th National Congress of the CPC put forward the strategy of making China a marine power for the first time, which aimed to "improve the development of marine resources, develop the marine economy, protect the marine ecological environment, resolutely safeguard the country's marine rights and interests, and build a powerful marine country" (Hu, 2012), which mentioned the term "marine power" (*haiyang qiangguo*) for the first time. At the height of the strategy, its goal is to resolutely safeguard the country's marine rights and interests, and its specific path is to improve resource development capabilities, develop marine economy, and protect the ecological environment.

### **3.5. From 2013 to Present: Adhere to the Overall Planning of Land and Sea, and Build a Marine Strategy of a Powerful Ocean Country**

As socialism with Chinese characteristics has entered a new era, the new generation of Chinese leaders with Xi Jinping as the core inherited and deepened the

idea of strengthening the country by ocean, and strengthened the top-level design of the ocean strategy. On July 30, 2013, when Xi Jinping presided over a collective study on the theme of building a maritime power, he clearly explained China's path and model for building a maritime power (Xi, 2013): "China is both a land power and a sea power, and has extensive maritime strategic interests. After years of development, China's marine industry has generally entered the best period of development in history. These achievements have laid a solid foundation for us to build a maritime power. We shall focus on the overall development of the cause of socialism with Chinese characteristics, and coordinate the domestic and international situations. We must adhere to the strategy of land-ocean integration, adhere to the development path of enriching the country by relying on the sea, strengthen the country by the sea and realize harmony between the people and the sea in a win-win cooperation, and solidly promote the construction of a strong maritime power through peace, development, cooperation, and win-win." He also proposed the "four transformations" (*sige zhuanbian*) of marine development (Xi, 2013): "[we must] improve the ability to develop marine resources, and focus on promoting the transformation of marine economy to quality and efficiency; [we must] protect the marine ecological environment and strive to promote the transformation of marine development methods to recycling; [we must] develop maritime technology, transforming technology into innovation-led ones; [we must] safeguard national maritime rights and interests, and strive to promote the transformation of marine rights protection into a comprehensive and comprehensive approach."

In 2014, Prime Minister Li Keqiang emphasized in the government work report of this year: "The ocean is our precious blue land. [We must] adhere to land-ocean integration policy of land and sea, fully implement the ocean strategy, develop the ocean economy, protect the ocean environment, resolutely safeguard the national ocean rights and interests, and vigorously build a maritime power", which clarifies the national strategy of land-ocean integration, and takes the road of a maritime power with Chinese characteristics. In 2015, in the government work report, Li Keqiang reiterated the cooperative construction of the Belt and Road Initiative (*yidai yilu*) and actively promoted the pilot program of coastal free trade zones, and pointed out that "since China is a large country with vast ocean resources, we must formulate and implement marine strategic plans, develop marine economy, protect marine ecology, improve the level of marine science and technology, strengthen comprehensive marine management, resolutely safeguard national maritime rights and interests, properly handle maritime disputes, actively expand bilateral and multilateral maritime cooperation, and move towards the goal of a maritime power". October 2015, in the Fifth Plenary Session of the Eighteenth Central Committee of the CPC it was proposed to "expand new space for development and form vertical and horizontal economic axis belts along the coast and along the river, respectively, carry out the 'Blue Bay Improvement Action' (*lanse haiwan zhengzhi yundong*), support coastal areas to fully participate in global economic cooperation and competi-

tion, and promote the construction of the Belt and Road Initiative to achieve mutual benefits and win-win cooperation in multiple fields between different countries and regions, promote international production capacity and equipment manufacturing cooperation, and create a new pattern of comprehensive opening-up with linkage between land and sea and overseas, and two-way opening between the east and west". These are the concrete implementation of land-ocean integration strategy.

In 2017, the 19th National Congress of the CPC clearly proposed to implement the strategy of "adhering to the land-ocean integration principle and accelerating the construction of a maritime power" under the requirements of coordinated regional development. As a basic national policy, in order to persist and develop this strategy for a long time, it is necessary to clarify its development conditions, roads, goals and methods.

First of all, China has the conditions for implementing the strategy of a maritime power. China is a land-based land-sea composite power, with extensive maritime strategic interests. With the development of socialism with Chinese characteristics entering a new era, China's ocean development has also entered a period with great historical opportunities. These are the prerequisites and foundations for China's strategy of developing a maritime power.

Second, the road to implement the strategy of a maritime power should also be clarified. We must focus on the overall development of socialism with Chinese characteristics, take into account both domestic and international situations, adhere to the land-ocean integration policy, and adhere to the development path of enriching the country with the sea, strengthen the country with the sea, realize harmony between the sea and the people, and achieve win-win cooperation. Internally, it is an important part of the overall development of socialism with Chinese characteristics to realize the prosperity of the country by relying on the sea and the strengthening of the country by the sea. It is also an important part of realizing the Chinese Dream of the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation. It is also a critical component of building a community with a shared future for mankind and promoting the reform of the global governance system.

Thirdly, we should elucidate the goals of implementing the strategy of becoming a powerful maritime country. The primary principle is to achieve win-win cooperation on the basis of peaceful development. In terms of economy, we must implement new development philosophy in ocean utilization, and share the interests of ocean space and resources. In terms of national security, we must resolutely safeguard national sovereignty, security and development interests. In terms of culture, we must build a "harmonious ocean" and an open and inclusive marine culture. In terms of ecology, we must protect the marine environment, build a sustainable marine ecological environment, and realize the green and sustainable development of the ocean.

Finally, we should also specify the ways to implement the strategy of maritime power. In terms of marine development, we must adhere to the overall planning

of land and sea, promote the integration of land and sea, coordinate the unified development planning of coastal land areas and ocean areas, and realize the effective allocation of sea and land resources and the coordinated development of regional economy. Moreover, we should coordinate the global five-dimensional space of “land, sea, air, sky and network” (*lu, hai, kong, tian, wang*), promote the Belt and Road Initiative and 21st Century Maritime Silk Road, and establish an open pattern of two-way mutual assistance between the East and the West. In terms of maritime security, we must coordinate the overall planning of marine resources and the maintenance of marine security, transform the construction of the navy from offshore defense to remote sea defense, insist on putting national sovereignty and security first, and safeguard territorial sovereignty and maritime rights and interests.

#### 4. Conclusion

To summarize, this paper aims to delineate the historical evolution of China’s land-ocean integration policy. It first argues that this policy is built on the solid foundation of absorbing the classical Marxism theory, by analyzing the classical statements and arguments from Marx and Engels’s works. On this basis, this paper attempts to describe and analyze the development of the views and policies of several generations of CPC leaders on the maritime strategy, which has transformed from a near-coastal defense strategy at the beginning of the founding of the PRC to the goal of becoming a great maritime power in the current new era. This paper further argues that the current land-ocean integration strategy actually originates from the ideas of several generations of Chinese Communists, and can be combined with other policies like the Belt and Road Initiative. It also discusses in detail the development conditions, roads, goals and methods of the land-ocean integration policy.

#### Acknowledgements

The author gratefully acknowledges the support of University Youth Teacher Training Funding Program of Shanghai (ZZSZF21004) and Young Faculty Startup Fund of Shanghai University of Political Science and Law (Q-06-19-007-13).

#### Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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