

Both documents represent the American standpoint. While the first one describes the economic stakes in the South China Sea, the second one exemplifies the geopolitical tensions, with the picture of a major naval asset.

§1 assesses the importance of the SCS in the context of the global economy. China has become the industrial powerhouse of the world, but it needs raw materials and, above all, energy supplies (oil, natural gas).

## The South China Sea

One third of the world's oil trade runs through the SCS.

① More than 30% of global maritime crude oil trade moves through the South China Sea. Source: **US Energy information administration, 27 August 2018.**

The South China Sea is a major trade route for crude oil, and in 2016, more than 30% of global maritime crude oil trade, or about 15 million barrels per day (b/d), passed through the South China Sea. More than 90% of crude oil volumes flowing through the South China Sea in 2016 transited the Strait of Malacca, the shortest sea route between suppliers in Africa and the Persian Gulf and markets in Asia, making it one of the world's primary oil transit chokepoints. In addition, a significant amount of crude oil (about 1.4 million b/d) passes through the strait on its way to Singapore and the west coast of Peninsular Malaysia, where it is refined before transiting the South China Sea in the form of petroleum products.

§2: the SCS is of vital importance for the oil exporting countries of the Middle East.

The South China Sea is a major trade route for the Middle East, which accounted for more than 70% of total South China Sea crude oil shipments in 2016. Saudi Arabia is the largest source of crude oil, making up almost one-fourth of crude oil volumes traversing the South China Sea. More than half of Saudi Arabia's global crude oil shipments traveled through the South China Sea in 2016.

Conversely, the SCS is also extremely important for China. The Chinese have a major interest in controlling the area to protect their supply line. So do the Japanese. About 90% of China's 2016 maritime crude oil shipments were transported through the South China Sea. About 90% of the crude oil imported by Japan and South Korea was shipped through the South China Sea in 2016. Most of Japan's and South Korea's imports are from Middle Eastern suppliers and are transported through the Strait of Malacca and then the South China Sea.

<https://www.eia.gov/todayinenergy/detail.php?id=36952>

② The aircraft carrier USS Theodore Roosevelt transiting the strait of Malacca on 1 April 2018.

*This nuclear-powered carrier is one of eleven American aircraft carriers. It carries up to 80 state of the art fighter-bombers, that make it the strongest air force base in any area where it cruises.*



When there is an obvious connection between your documents, you should always insist on that <=> compare the documents.

US aircraft carrier are the very symbols of US sea power. Sometimes, they are called "100, 000 tons of diplomacy". Indeed, the aircraft carriers can back US diplomacy by force anywhere in the world. The air wing of a carrier is usually superior to any air force in the area.

In that case, it means that the US is committed to keep the Strait of Malacca open, and to guarantee freedom of navigation. The deployment of one or several carriers may deter any attempt to block the choke point.

Besides, such pictures are means of propaganda. Carriers are impressive, but in a situation of crisis,

the bridge would not be crowded with aircraft.

> Using the documents and your knowledge, discuss the importance of the South China Sea in the world economy and its geopolitical consequences.