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## The South China Sea

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❶ 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.

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.

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>

❷ 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.*



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