



DOES CHINA RULE THE WAVES

China and Greece maritime relationship, is it a positive adventure.

Peter Adamis 12 June 2014.

Does China rule the waves alongside Greece by default is a question that has been overlooked. Will Poseidon and the Dragon stop piracy and will their joint maritime venture bring calm seas.

Now with the global financial crisis almost behind us, nations have been restructuring the economies to be in line with the allegedly new world order that has now been presented to us. Economic assistance and exchange of cultural identities are a welcome interlude from the constant distractions of a world still in turmoil. A world where battles are fought over resources and populations by the use of ideological and religious practices to achieve their objectives. China and Greece maritime relationship may yet prove to be stabilising factors that bring about closure to some of these conflicts that are fast becoming a sideshow for some and a great matter of concern for others.

Despite these joint ventures, the author also questions their long term relevance and whether they are truly of an economic nature or are they also to include diplomatic and defence matters that may cause some consternation with other democratic countries and upset the status quo in the Mediterranean region. If this is the case, will China take military action to safe guard its maritime interests or seek a peaceful solution involving the economic interests of Greece if challenged in the Mediterranean by its neighbours.

We are living in an era of a new world order where China and India are competing for new markets as an expression of the new wealth and power. Zou Xiaoli the current ambassador to Greece speaks with Ekathimerini, a Greek and English language newspaper located in Greece. Zou Xiaoli believes that there is a great future in the sea between China and Greece. What does this mean to those on the United Nations council is a matter of conjecture and only time will tell. Aside from politics and ideological differences, I am of the belief that it will be a positive and long term relationships that will benefit all nations. Read Zou Xiaoli interview with Ekathimerini below.



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THE FUTURES OF GREECE AND CHINA LIE IN THE SEA

Zou Xiaoli Ekathimerini Tuesday June 10, 2014.

Over the years, the China Classification Society (CCS) has played a significant role in promoting the R&D capability of Chinese-owned intellectual property in high value-added ships. It has also contributed to strengthening maritime exchanges and cooperation between China and the world at large, Greece in particular, thus becoming a bridge between the two sides. Among the Greeks present here are those who are not only business partners of Chinese companies but also friends of China.

You have rendered from time to time precious help to my country and the Chinese Embassy in Athens. I take this opportunity to extend to you my heartfelt thanks. Serving as Chinese ambassador to Greece, I have enjoyed more opportunities to be close to the sea and to contact people from sea-related circles. My thinking and sentiments have hence headed towards the sea, and one perception is gradually becoming explicit and consolidated. That is, the friendly cooperation between China and Greece came initially from the sea and its future lies in the sea.

Greece is a good friend that New China has made through the sea. We will never forget that more than a half century ago, when diplomatic ties between China and Greece had not even been established, some visionary and courageous Greek shipowners, despite the embargo imposed on China by Western powers, transported strategic supplies for the People's Republic. Today, their offspring still maintain ties of traditional friendship with China.

In 2011, Greece once again extended a hand to China in helping evacuate by sea tens of thousands of Chinese nationals from Libya. The Chinese navy conducts escort missions for the Greek fleet in the Gulf of Aden and has rescued Greek merchant vessels from pirate attacks. The deep friendship and mutual trust built up on the seas have laid a solid social foundation for the growth of bilateral relations.

The Sino-Greek maritime cooperation has run to the global forefront. Greece has the world's largest merchant fleet, which carries 60 percent of China's imported crude oil and more than half of its foreign trade commodities. The Greek shipowners' support of Chinese manufacturers has contributed significantly to the growth of the Chinese shipbuilding industry. At the crucial moment of international financial crisis in the year

2010, China Development Bank established a US\$5 billion fund to help Greek shipowners buy Chinese-made vessels, injecting confidence and strength into our two countries' long-lasting maritime cooperation.

What is more encouraging is that COSCO's Piraeus Container Terminal has enjoyed the fastest-growing throughput in the world for the last three consecutive years. More and more international shipping and logistic enterprises are being drawn to establish a presence at Piraeus port. What China and Greece have achieved at the port has set a good example of mutual benefit and win-win cooperation not only in Europe but even worldwide, and its influence and significance go beyond the shipping field. This is a common pride of our two nations.

The sea to Greece is like blood to the human being. Since ancient times, the sea has always played an indispensable role for Greeks in their livelihood, productive activities and external exchanges. In ancient China, early sea civilizations were also conceived and nurtured. Archaeological discoveries in China's Zhejiang Province, where I was born, show that more than 7,000 years back, people there had grasped the primitive skill of sea fishing, and crossed the sea.

The maritime Silk Road opened up by our Chinese ancestors wrote a magnificent chapter in the world history of trade and civilization exchanges. However, never before has China's resolve been so determined and its steps so firm in marching towards the sea. We shall be grateful to the era we are living in today. After thousands of years, China and Greece, two nations of ancient civilizations, have come together via the sea, forging a community of destiny for a brighter future.

Now, I would like to share with you my observations on further expanding Sino-Greek maritime cooperation. First, we need to improve coordination and overall planning. Nowadays, maritime shipping is becoming more interconnected with air, road and railway networks and more interactive with the development of regional and subregional economies. Therefore, our relevant government bodies will strengthen communications and coordination regarding economic development strategies.

Special emphasis will be put on the construction and renovation of major projects related to transportation infrastructure. In order to keep pace with the changing global and regional economic layout and seize the opportunity to be more proactive in facing international competition, it is advisable for the shipping communities to pay close attention to the trend of economic cooperation between China, Central Europe, the Middle East and North Africa, and to the progress of building the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road.

Second, we need to increase input of science and technology. A Chinese saying goes that the water supporting the boat can also upset it. To ensure safety as well as achieve green and sustainable development of maritime shipping, more headway will be made in the fields of sea forecast, marine environment detection, maritime rescue, energy saving and emission reduction of ships.

China has strengths in equipment manufacture, scientific research and finance. Greece enjoys the advantage in geographical location, technique and experience, standard and regulation. I believe, with joint efforts, we can widen cooperation in broader areas and at a higher level so as to develop a more secured service and logistics system for our fleets.

Third, we need to adhere to the principles of equality, openness, inclusiveness and mutual benefit. The Sino-Hellenic maritime cooperation is not only in the interests of our two countries, but represents an important part of the economic ties between China and Europe as well. It has a far-reaching impact on easing the difficulties inflicted upon the European economy by the international financial crises. It is also conducive to the more balanced economic development of the region. Furthermore, it will help to optimize the maritime transportation network connecting East Asia, the Middle East, North Africa and Southern Europe.

China welcomes other EU states and Mediterranean countries to be involved in the Sino-Greek maritime cooperation. The COSCO PCT and Mediterranean Committee initiated by CCS may serve as cases of success. Protectionism in any form will be opposed, for it runs against the market rule of fair competition and slows down the regional economic integration process. In the long run, it will hinder the sustainable recovery of the world economy.

Fourth, we need to give an important role to culture and education. The sea has provided humankind with tremendous tangible wealth as well as inspiration for thinking and culture. A lot of myths, legends, art treasures and works of literature related to the sea have been created in our two countries.

In 2008, China launched the Day of the Sea to raise national awareness about the sea, and expand knowledge and culture about the sea. Europe, and Greece in particular, launched such initiatives much earlier and accumulated more experience than China. Our exchanges regarding sea culture and education will open new fields for dialogue between different civilizations, help develop related industries, and upgrade the global influence of our maritime cooperation.

The future of Greece lies in the sea, and so does that of China. I believe that when China and Greece, two great ancient civilizations, go towards to the sea hand in hand, a more harmonious, prosperous and beautiful blue homeland will appear.

Zou Xiaoli is China's ambassador to Greece. This is the text of the speech he gave at the Sino-Hellenic Maritime Seminar in Athens last week.

http://www.ekathimerini.com/4dcgi/_w_articles_wsite3_1_10/06/2014_540460