Article

Building Up a Sustainable Path to Maritime Security: An Analytical Framework and Its Policy Applications

Lingqun Li [1,2]

1   School of International Studies, Nanjing University, Nanjing 210023, China; lingqun@nju.edu.cn
2   China Center for Collaborative Studies of the South China Sea, Nanjing University, Nanjing 210023, China

Abstract: Maritime security is currently a buzzword in international relations. The popularity of the term reflects an emerging consensus across the international community recognizing increasing challenges to world oceans and helps to rally support for serious efforts to cope with these challenges. However, the term is highly contested with regard to its conceptual meaning and empirical implications. The discipline of security studies provides a critical perspective revealing the state-centered ontology embedded in many of the discussions of maritime security. The complicated and intertwining nature of maritime threats in today's world oceans demands a systematic analytical framework to comprehend and address them, a framework that moves beyond statist ontology, military means, and zero-sum mentality to a people-centered, diversified toolkit and positive-sum mentality and opens space for a common, cooperative, and comprehensive security agenda. The evolving discourse on human security and sustainable development sheds light on a possible path to approach such an agenda in an effective and sustainable manner. It has also enlightened the mandates of major international institutions and a lot of states practices in the pursuit of maritime security. Against this background, this article aims to explore the conception of maritime security and provide an analytical framework for analyzing and guiding maritime security practices and explores a feasible path towards realizing sustainable maritime security that can meet the diversified challenges emerging in global maritime space today. To this end, the article draws on the discipline of security studies over the past few decades so as to structure a rigorous analytical tool for engaging maritime security as a theoretical concept and a set of policy objectives. Applying this framework to state practices, this article discusses the case of China, examining, on the one hand, China's understanding of maritime security and related policy practices and, on the other hand, exploring the value of the proposed policy framework as serving the foundation for bridging disagreements, forging consensus, and coordinating policy actions in the pursuit of sustained security and development in the maritime domain.

Keywords: maritime security; human security; sustainable development; ocean community; positive-sum mentality

1. Introduction

Maritime security is currently a buzzword in international relations [1]. It is listed as an important task on the work agendas of major international and intergovernmental organizations, and more and more countries throughout the world incorporate it into their national security mandates. Maritime security is also a term that attracts broad academic discussions, ranging from security studies, international trade, environment protection, climate change, to global governance, etc. The popularity of the term reflects an emerging consensus across the international society recognizing increasing challenges to world oceans and the urgent need for serious effort to cope with these challenges, and helps to mobilize political support for dealing with relevant issues.

However, as some observers have noted, the term "maritime security" has been applied to a quite extensive range of issues, and there seems to be a considerable degree

of ambiguity or disagreement as to its conception, scope, and related policy practices [1]. For example, the International Maritime Organization places an institutional emphasis on marine safety supported by the implementation of a series of IMO legislations [2]. In comparison, a core element in Britain's definition of maritime security is securing the waters of the UK and Overseas Territories and Crown Dependencies and the increasing security risks brought about by the ongoing Russian–Ukraine conflict [3]. China's definition of maritime security is rooted in its vision of "An Ocean Community of a Shared Future" that the maritime security is maintained through international cooperation of fighting against common threats and challenges. In the meantime, it attaches great importance to the challenge of maritime disputes in its surrounding waters [4].

Such ambiguity can be beneficial, as it allows different actors to participate in joint actions under the general abstract of the term while simultaneously disagreeing over local meanings [5,6]. However, it does not negate the imperative need for establishing a more well-defined conception of maritime security, which can serve as the foundation for coordinated policy practices and enlighten effective approaches to tackle various maritime security challenges. As Christian Bueger rightly pointed out, the 'laundry list' approach as we currently see to defining maritime security is "insufficient since it does neither prioritize issues, nor provides clues of how these issues are inter-linked, nor outlines of how these threats can be addressed" [1] (p. 159).

In the meantime, the ambiguity on what constitutes maritime security may potentially lead to two undesirable policy outcomes. First, in the absence of a consensus, it is tempting to "securitize" ocean-related issues in an indiscriminate manner. Once a problem is successfully "securitized", it will garner greater attention and rally more political support critical to the resolution of the problem [7]. In fact, a similar inclination for broad securitization has been identified in a number of policy realms, such as the environmental sector and the economic sector [8]. However, indiscriminate securitization may potentially result in a preference for short-term, extraordinary measures, which may be unsuitable or ineffective and could quickly drain up limited resources [9].

Second, the lack of rigorous differentiation of maritime-security-related issues could render the efforts to tackle them inappropriate or ineffective. For example, traditional security issues often concern state survival and territorial sovereignty. States, therefore, are the main actors who can provide powerful and effective means when confronted with challenges of this nature. However, state actors may not be the best candidates for addressing nontraditional security issues and many of the unconventional challenges that are emerging in the maritime world. Instead, various nonstate actors—shipping industry, private defense companies, and transnational organizations, such as those dedicated to marine safety, environmental protection, and humanitarian rescue—constitute an active, sometimes crucial, part in the potential solutions. By lumping together traditional and nontraditional maritime security issues, one would find it difficult to coordinate different policy actors and allocate appropriate resources for a particular problem and hence hinder the formation of a precise and effective policy response.

One possible way to bridge the gap of different understandings of maritime security and mitigate the policy limitations identified above is to connect the conception of maritime security with the idea of sustainability. As demonstrated in the following discussion, recent development of the security literature has laid a theoretical foundation to possibly examine the concept of security from the perspective of sustainability. On the policy level, serious efforts have been taken by relevant stakeholders to integrate the idea of sustainability into policy practices concerning maritime security. The fact that oceans are vulnerable and becoming incapable of sustaining human development is widely recognized by the international community in recent years. It is this sense of urgency that prompted the United Nations to incorporate oceans and seas into the UN 2030 Agenda, which lists as the 14th Sustainable Development Goal "Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development". Approaching maritime security through the lens of sustainability, therefore, would promote convergence of the understanding of

maritime security and help direct dispersed policy efforts into a shared roadmap to achieve maritime security. This article aims to establish a conceptual framework for analyzing maritime security and, more importantly, explores a possible policy path that can hold up to sustainable values and meet the diversified challenges emerging in global maritime space today. To this end, the article intends to draw on the literature of security studies and the sustainable development discourse over the past few decades and examine concrete state practices in addressing maritime security issues to evaluate different policy considerations and approaches. The main body of the article comprises three sections. Section 2 aims to propose a conception of maritime security integrating the idea of sustainability and compares different frameworks that have been offered to grasp this conception. The third section goes on to establish an analytical framework for approaching maritime security, which is analytically rigorous and empirically useful for guiding and assessing policy practices. The fourth section takes China as an example to examine, and draw lessons from, concrete state practices in the pursuit of maritime security under the framework provided in Section 3. In the conclusion part, the main arguments are summarized, and some policy suggestions are proposed to cope with the unprecedented and complex challenges in the global maritime space.

2. Connecting Maritime Security with Sustainability: Exploring a Possibility

The contestedness or disagreement associated with different usages of maritime security comes from two major sources. One is the ambiguity concerning the term "maritime", the other the ongoing debate in the security studies literature. First, does the maritime domain deserve to be treated as an independent subject of investigation? Put in another way, can maritime security be easily substituted for national security or human security? This question has raised concern in previous discussions, but remains largely underexplored.

The maritime domain has unique characteristics, which make it an illuminating subject of investigation. The world oceans comprise a vast and complex space in which all kinds of human activities are taking place. This space is known for three unique features: (1) a high level of openness and mobility, (2) a major portion of the space lying beyond state jurisdiction, and (3) critical as a whole for maintaining the health of the global ecosystem. These three features have significant policy bearings and cannot be simply reduced to national security or human security in the general sense. Consequently, many of the approaches commonly used in national security policy need to be carefully selected and modified in order to suit the demand of addressing distinctive security challenges in the maritime space.

Second, while it is a popular practice to label threats and challenges in the maritime domain as security issues, the combination of "maritime" and "security" requires further clarification before proceeding to conceptualize the term. As is demonstrated below, the conception of security carries its own analytical and practical strength buttressed by a rich literature of security studies. However, the security discipline has offered different perspectives on the concept with different, sometimes even contradicting, ontological and epistemological preferences, which has partly contributed to the existing disagreements surrounding discussions on maritime security. Therefore, in light of the three unique features of the maritime space, it is worth the effort to compare and carefully select from the pool of different security conceptions and policy approaches so as to formulate an effective and appropriate policy agenda suitable for the challenges identified in the world oceans.

2.1. Traditional Security Studies (TSS)

Security sits at the core of human needs. Broadly speaking, discussions about security issues can be traced back thousands of years in all major cultures. However, security studies as a vibrant research agenda in a modern sense are a relatively new phenomenon. During the Second World War, the international community was appalled by war atrocities committed by states. The invention and deployment of nuclear weapons further sent an alarming message to the world that security should be the top priority of mankind and

must be dealt with seriously. Security studies, therefore, were quickly developed in the aftermath of the Second World War as part of the response to this urgent demand and consensus for preserving security.

The 1950s–1970s constitute the first phase of security studies. In this period, state survival was the most pressing issue to be considered, as the world was overshadowed by the threat of proliferation of nuclear weapons, the risk of which was further exacerbated by the rising geopolitical confrontation between the U.S. and the U.S.S.R. Security, therefore, was treated as an equivalent of state survival and used interchangeably with national security. It is for this reason that the security literature in this period is often called traditional security studies (TSS) or strategic studies. Against this background, TSS developed a quite classical literature of deterrence theory [10–14]. Jargons such as MAD (mutually assured destruction), extended deterrence, and second strike capability featured both academic and policy achievements of the TSS in this period.

2.2. Critical Security Studies (CSS)

The late 1970s and early 1980s started to witness growing criticism against the TSS research paradigm. A number of important works appeared in this period, with the aim of shifting the course and direction of the TSS. The criticism targets the TSS's two theoretical assumptions, which are problematic. First, many scholars questioned traditional security studies for its state-centric ontology. They argued that in TSS works, it was taken for granted that state was the ultimate arbitrator of accessing threat to security, and, consequently, the sole provider/defender of security. However, in reality, states often constitute the biggest threat to the security of people. Second, it was argued that the TSS provided too narrow a definition of security. Security is defined and measured almost exclusively by the calculation of military capabilities, which made the TSS fall short of recognizing security threats from other dimensions, such as economic, environment, and public health risks.

Richard Ullman, for example, criticized that a heavy military emphasis on previous security studies contributed to pervasive militarization of international relations and lost sight of other and perhaps even more harmful dangers [15]. Barry Buzan pointed out that it was surprising that for such a politically powerful concept, security had so far remained underdeveloped. He argued that the lack of coherence must be overcome for security studies to progress [6]. As a result, exploratory efforts, especially those of the Copenhagen school and the Welsh school, were made in the 1980s and the 1990s with the aim of conceptualizing the term security in a more critical and theoretically robust manner. These security studies are often labeled as critical security studies (CSS) for their more dynamic, relativist, and relational perspectives in contrast with those employed by traditional security studies [16]. The Copenhagen school, for example, points out that the definition of security must be associated with a referent object, that is, the security for whom and of what. For the proponents of the Copenhagen school, the referent object of security is not necessarily the state. It can be individuals or other aggregated forms of actors. In the meantime, the Copenhagen school perceives security as a dynamic process of securitization, rather than a fixed status to be maintained. Securitization is a discursive process "in which the socially and politically successful 'speech act' of labelling an issue a 'security issue' removes it from the realm of normal day-to-day politics, casting it as an 'existential threat' calling for and justifying extreme measures" [17] (p. 435). By introducing the concept of securitization, the Copenhagen school unlocks the blackbox of security and enlarges the concept of security to address a broader range of issues beyond military threat. The five major security-related sectors are identified as follows: the economic, environmental, political, military, and societal sectors [16].

The Welsh school, also called by many as the Aberystwyth school, shares with the Copenhagen school in questioning the statist ontology embedded in the TSS. More importantly, it has demonstrated a clear stance on individuals and humanity as the ultimate subject for security inquiries and practices. The Welsh school establishes an integral tie between humanity and security. As Ken Booth argued, emancipation of humanity, not

power or order, produces true security, and "emancipation, theoretically, is security" [18] (p. 319). For the Welsh school, the concept of security should be centered on individuals. This shift of focus from the state to individual human beings enables the Welsh school to examine the "realities of (in)security", such as human rights abuses, the powerlessness of the poor, the oppression of minorities, and violence against women, realities that have long been made invisible by the traditional power-security mindset of those who have dominated or disciplined the study of international relations [19].The effort made by the academic community to reconceptualize security with people and beyond the military sense was simultaneously translated into relevant policies of major international institutions and those of many states. An exemplary case is found in UNDP's Human Development Report in 1994. The report echoed the aforementioned criticism regarding the traditional definition of security that "for too long the concept of security has been shaped by the potential for conflict between states", "for too long security has been equated with the threats to a country's border", and "for too long nations have thought arms to protect their security" [20] (p. 3). The report introduced instead a new concept named "human security", which equated security with people rather than territories, with development rather than arms. Guided by the concept of human security, the report examined along four policy sectors—the political, economic, environmental, and social sectors—national and global concerns of human security and formulated, accordingly, policies and measures to be taken to better protect humanity from insecurities in daily life, such as poverty, famine, pollution, crimes, and ethnic violence [20].

To sum up, the TSS and the CSS have offered two different approaches to investigating the concept of security. The TSS generally presumes a statist ontology, a reductivist perspective, and a preference for military means, while the CSS assumes a more people-centered, constructivist, and relational approach, which in turn results in a relatively broadened security agenda.

2.3. Connecting Maritime Security with Sustainability

In the face of the aforementioned differences between the TSS and the CSS, one would have to ask: which line of conception outweighs the other in their application to the maritime domain? Bueger's seminal work offers a quite solid foundation for exploring this question. In his review of existing discussions on maritime security, Bueger summarized three frameworks to grasp the term: (1) the "semiotics" framework, under which maritime security is examined through its relations to other terms; (2) the securitization framework, which scrutinizes what issues have been securitized as maritime security threats and how such process unfolded in political discourse; and (3) the security practice theory, which focuses on the concrete practices different agencies undertake in the name of maritime security [1]. Depending on different theoretical inclinations, one can choose one of the three frameworks to conduct further investigation on the concept.

These three frameworks, taken together, highlighted an accelerating trend in recent years in the maritime domain; that is, the maritime security agenda is quickly expanding to encompass a wide spectrum of issues far beyond the traditional scope of security as the one defined by the TSS. In other words, maritime security, in contemporary era, cannot be simply reduced to national security, and its policy agenda is closer to the one envisioned by the CSS.

Building upon the CSS literature and Burger's work, it becomes possible to integrate sustainability with maritime security both as a concept and as a policy goal. At the conceptual level, the people-centered ontology assumed by the CSS is widely shared in the sustainable development discourse. With regard to policy practices, the policy agenda of maritime security envisioned by the CSS can be broadened to incorporate economic, environmental, and social dimensions, which, to a large extent, resonate with that of sustainable development. In fact, converging efforts have been observed in recent years to consider maritime challenges under the sustainable development framework, reflecting an increasing awareness that the maritime domain provides an indispensable foundation

for the sustainability of mankind. For example, the UN Millennium Development Goals launched in 2000 listed eight sustainable development goals, none of which was specifically related to oceans, and the maritime domain was vaguely mentioned in the text of the MDGs. The UN MDGs were concluded in 2015 and replaced by the UN 2030 Agenda for sustainable development. The UN 2030 Agenda listed 17 sustainable development goals, and the 14th SDG is directly related to oceans—"Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development". The concern is that the world oceans should no longer be seen as a depository of endless and inexhaustible resources. Rather, the detrimental impact of human activities is putting the oceans at the risk of becoming incapable of sustaining human development for generations to come. In this sense, approaching maritime security through the lens of sustainability would promote convergence of the understanding of maritime security and help direct dispersed policy efforts into a shared roadmap to achieve maritime security.

However, connecting sustainability with maritime security does not equate to a simple mathematical conversion of one plus one. For one thing, the term maritime security needs a reconceptualization in a way that can open room for integrating the principle of sustainability. Moreover, sustainability needs some clarification before such combination can be proceeded. The first clarification to be made is that although the terms of sustainability and sustainable development are frequently used as synonyms, in comparison, the term sustainability, defined as appropriate unity and balance among the economy, society, and environment considering the renewable capacity of the earth's ecosystem, could be seen as the fundamental and abstract principle underpinning the discussion of sustainable development and hence entails a relatively broader scope in terms of policy application [21]. For the purpose of this research, the principle of sustainability, in its integration with maritime security, can be contextualized as consisting of two inter-related sets of elements: sustainable values/goals and sustainable means compatible with those values. Another clarification to be made is related to the controversial trade-off between different sustainable criteria and development goals. Sustainable development refers to maintaining a dynamic balance between economic and social development, on the one hand, and resource and environmental protection and conservation, on the other. Such balance frequently involves weighing carefully the trade-off between sometimes conflicting policy goals. In this sense, the combination of sustainability and maritime security calls for a carefully defined conception serving as the critical foundation based on which we can design a practical roadmap to bridge disagreements, coordinate policy efforts, and assess relevant policy practices in pursuit of sustainable maritime security.

3. Approaching Sustainable Maritime Security: An Analytical Framework for Policy Application

As the brief review above has shown, the term security developed in different security theories is featured by a highly contested nature [22,23]. The divergence between the TSS and CSS highlights the fact that the definition of security could vary greatly in the usage of scholars and policy practitioners, depending on different ontological and epistemological preferences. However, contestedness does not necessarily impede a theoretically robust conceptualization of security. Rather, it proves the power of the concept as an analytical tool [5]. Therefore, it becomes necessary and possible to establish a theoretical framework to conceptualize maritime security in a way that can be analytically rigorous, on the one hand, and, on the other, conducive to incorporating the principle of sustainability in comprehending and addressing the rising challenges to sustainable ocean security.

Recognizing the challenge in the conceptual analysis of the term security, David Baldwin suggested a possible way to improve conceptual clarity. He deciphered the security problematique by breaking down the ambiguity nested in the concept along seven dimensions, while retaining the basic notion in the conception of security. Wolfers's classic characterization of security as "the absence of threats to acquired values" [24] (p. 483), according to Baldwin, "seems to capture the basic intuitive notion underlying most uses

of the term security" [22] (p. 13), and clarification of the seven dimensions allows for add-on specifications, when needed, to suit different research tasks. Concretely speaking, specifications can be determined along one or more of the seven dimensions proposed by Baldwin and the choice of which dimension, and the respective answer depends on the particular research question to be addressed:

1. Security for whom?
2. Security for which values?
3. How much security?
4. From what threats?
5. By what means?
6. At what cost?
7. In what time period?

Baldwin's elaboration provides a useful formula for engaging the conceptual analysis of security, a formula that can be summarized as "core definition + selected specifications". This formula has two benefits when it comes to the conceptualization of maritime security. First, it allows the term maritime security to share the core element regarding the conception of security. In the meantime, the formula makes it possible to specify security in a way that can nicely merge maritime and security. The second benefit concerns construing maritime security as a set of policy objectives. Depending on the preferred policy objectives, selected specifications can be tied to maritime security, which will facilitate the rationalization of policy-making and the attainment of policy goals.

Using the "core definition + selected specifications" formula, we can now move on to conceptualize maritime security, which is aimed to improve the theoretical robustness of previous conceptions, on the one hand, and, on the other, reflect the common interests of world oceans and create room for the possible integration of the sustainability principle. This task involves two steps. The first step is to determine the core elements anchoring the concept of maritime security. In this regard, the concept of maritime security certainly shares the basic notion of security defined by Arnold Wolfers, that is, "the absence of threats to acquired values". This notion contains two core elements that are interconnected: "threats" and "values", as threats are those things that can damage or hinder the realization of values. Therefore, maritime security can be defined as the status of the set of core values being sustained in the maritime domain in the absence of threats. This notion requires further specification in the context of maritime space—that is, what particular values are under what kind of threats and hence need to be guarded? This step helps to bring sustainable values into consideration.

Step 2 is to elaborate on these specifications. This step is critical for establishing a policy framework to guide ensuing policy practices. In an ideal sense, such framework can serve the purpose of bridging different understandings of the issue, coordinating various actors, and enlightening policy practices to tackle maritime security challenges in an effective and sustainable manner. Given that the maritime domain is a complex space featured by a highly open, mobile, and vastly shared nature, it would facilitate the following discussions by breaking down the maritime domain into more specific policy sectors/arenas. In this regard, the four sectors offered by the human security literature discussed earlier can be of a good reference. Applying the four sectors to the world oceans, one finds that the maritime space is a political space where maritime entitlements are delimited and interstate cooperation and conflicts are engaged; it is an economic space enabling blue economy activities, such as transportation, tourism, and exploration and exploitation of marine resources; it is an environmental space that upholds global biodiversity and sustains all life on earth; it is a social space where the basic rights of coastal communities, maritime professionals, and other relevant individuals and groups are under unprecedented threats, the major sources of which are uncommonly seen onshore. These characteristics of the maritime space, combined with Baldwin's seven dimensions for specifications, will help guide further specifications on maritime values and identify real or potential challenges that undermine those values (the following will go through the first six dimensions, as

the last dimension—in what time period—is obvious: from the perspective of sustainable development, maritime security should be pursued as a long-term policy goal).

3.1. Security for Whom?

This question points to the object to which maritime security refers. For traditionalists, the answer is state and only state. In the case of maritime security, however, while states retain their position as a legitimate referent object, other actors also need to be considered in the security equation. In the political space, states generally constitute the main referent object of security. In the economic space, the business sector and those individuals engaged in the blue economy are often viewed as the main referent object of security. In the environmental space, the health of oceans as a whole deserves a central place in the consideration of security; in a similar vein, the social space contains individuals, coastal communities, marine professionals, etc., as the main referent object for whom security should be defended.

3.2. Security for Which Values?

This question points to the composition of values to be upheld for the purpose of achieving sustainable maritime security. To be sure, determining the core values to be safeguarded in the maritime domain concerns the defining element in the formulation of policy agenda regarding ocean security. The discourse on sustainable development is particularly relevant in this regard and offers useful insights as to the specific values to which coordinated efforts should be devoted in safeguarding maritime security.

Sustainable development as a discipline emerged in the last quarter of the 20th century, in the face of the detrimental impact of human activities on the earth environment, which raised concern about the depletion of natural resources and the collapse of the web of life. A number of definitions of sustainable development have been offered over the course of time, yet the most classical one can be found in the famous Brundtland Report published in 1987, in which sustainable development is defined by the Brundtland Commission as a goal "to make development sustainable to ensure that it meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" [25]. In particular, the ocean is identified as one of the earthly environments that have suffered from unsustainable anthropogenic activities, mostly economic ones, resulting in pollution, overexploitation of marine species and nonliving resources, and climate change. Indeed, marine environmental degradation and climate change have been widely viewed as mounting a serious security threat to the ocean and the ecosystem as a whole. The three features of the world oceans further underscore the urgent need to go beyond traditional zero-sum mentality so that ocean security can be advanced in a holistic, comprehensive, and sustainable manner.

It needs be emphasized that the discussion of sustainable development so far has focused more on the economic, ecological, and social sectors of human security and less associated with the traditional political aspect of security. Given that the political sector is relatively more conflict prone, while it is difficult to consent on the extent to which sustainable values should be promoted, it would be easier to agree on the minimum, that is, the value of peace and stability. In other words, the principle of sustainability can be translated in the political sector as the value of peace and stability.

The brief discussion above helps to determine a set of core/abstract values, organized along the four policy sectors, to be safeguarded in pursuit of sustainable maritime security and respective types of actors involved as relevant referent objects (see Table 1).

Table 1. An analytical framework of sustainable maritime security.

Sectors	Core Values of Maritime Security	Threats to Maritime Security *	Policy Approaches **
Political sector	Peace and stability	Interstate disputes, WMD proliferation, terrorism	State-centered approach, cooperation, negotiation
Economic sector	Sustainable development of blue economy	Disruption of navigation/overflight, irresponsible exploitation, pollution, smuggling	Business/IO-led approach, blue/green technology innovation
Environmental sector	Healthy marine environment and biodiversity	Pollution, climate change, degradation of marine biodiversity	Community/IO-led approach, preservation, conservation
Social sector	Marine safety of vessels, installations and professionals, well-being of coastal communities	Piracy, human trafficking, labor abuses, maritime disasters, disruption of food chains	Individual/community/IO-led approach

* The list of threats provided here are not meant to be exhaustive, nor are they mutually exclusive, as many of the threats are closely linked. ** The approaches listed in different sectors are not mutually exclusive; rather, they are often used in combination in actual policy practices.

First of all, peace and stability compose the core value of security, however defined. Undoubtedly, the same applies to the maritime space. Maintaining peace and stability is also essential as it paves the way for safeguarding the sustainable use of world oceans in the other three sectors. In the economic sector, sustainable development has risen to prominence in the past three decades, guiding a new pattern of economic growth [25]. An emerging consensus in recent years on sustainable development in the international community is that security and development are two sides of one coin. Sustainable path is even more desirable for the development of the blue economy, given the latter's intricate relationship with the marine environment. The reciprocal relationship between security and development has been incorporated in a wide number of UN-led and regional development programs, many of which are targeted on the marine economy [26,27]. As regards the environmental sector, maritime space shares many commonalities with other environments, and the sustainable development of the whole humanity depends on a healthy and robust ecological system upheld by the world oceans. The UN Agenda 2030 specifically warns that the worsening of the global marine environment, i.e., pollution, sea level rise, and ocean acidification, is seriously affecting coastal areas and low-lying coastal countries and puts the survival of many societies, and that of the biological support systems of the planet, at risk [28]. Finally, the social sector highlights individuals' rights to safety, security, and development [29]. The human rights of individuals involved in maritime activities, including seafarers, port workers, and coastal communities, and the safety of vessels and facilities they use or board are at the core of human security in the maritime space.

3.3. From What Threats?

A plethora of activities can be identified as posing threats to human beings and the environment in the context of maritime space. Many of these threats are quite different from those experienced on the land space. First of all, threats to peace and stability in the maritime space mainly come from disputes over maritime entitlements, the proliferation of WMD (weapons of massive destruction), and terrorist attacks. Second, the blue economy is prospering in recent years and has become a major pillar of national economic development in many countries. Seaborne transportation forms the most crucial part of the blue economy. Nearly 70% of global commercial goods are transported by sea. Disruptions to smooth navigation and overflight represent a major challenge to maritime security and even jeopardize the stability of the global economy. Empowered by fast technology development, the exploration and exploitation of living and nonliving marine resources also contributes positively to the blue economy. In the meantime, however, the world's marine environment has suffered increasingly from the unsustainable use of exploration and exploitation

methods. Overexploitation of fisheries is one of the worrying trends in this regard, as reflected in the growing number of reported cases of illegal, unreported, and unregulated fishing (IUU fishing). Third, the marine environment has been under increasing pressures in the last several decades. Land-based pollution and seaborne pollution have long been viewed as threatening the marine environment in significant ways. Moreover, in recent years, climate change is ringing an alarm on a global scale as its impact on the global environment can be perilous. Resultantly, we are observing phenomena such as the rise of sea level, ocean acidification, and degradation of marine biodiversity worsening the marine environment worldwide. Finally, it is in the social sector that threats to human security are often neglected. Due to the borderless nature of most of the maritime space, it is much more difficult to enforce laws and regulations safeguarding human rights and shield facilities from sabotaging activities. Piracy, human trafficking, and labor abuses of seafarers, for example, are identified as prominent threats putting marine safety and human lives at risk. Moreover, environmental degradation, such as fishery depletion, habitat losses, pollution, and invasive species, has greatly undermined the resilience of coastal communities. The impact of climate change is making this situation even more difficult to alter.

It needs to be noted that the four sectors listed in the framework should be viewed as relational and interlinked. The complexity of maritime challenges lies in the fact that many of these threats are intertwined. Some of the threats are cross-sectoral and can undermine maritime security in different ways. For example, military confrontation is no doubt an unsustainable means to resolve maritime security issues. Its negative impact is threefold. It definitely threatens human lives, it impedes the free and open use of the oceans, and it also poses serious hazard to the marine environment. Climate change is another example. The impact of climate change not only puts the sustainable development of the blue economy at risk, but would push up incidents of natural disasters, thus further weakening the livelihood of coastal communities. Similarly, pollution and overfishing not only have detrimental effects on the marine environment but also threaten the food security of coastal communities and other people whose nutrition depends on marine-based proteins.

With the specifications of the first three dimensions discussed above, one can use them as a workable framework that not only provides basic guidance for policy formulation but also possibly generates a set of criteria against which disagreements can be organized and policy practices can be evaluated. On the one hand, by dividing the maritime space into four policy sectors, it becomes easier to pinpoint the referent object or agent whose security is being threatened. This, in turn, helps to choose appropriate policy approaches compatible with the particular referent object. For example, in the political sector, states are the main referent object, and most of the security threats in this sector are considered national security issues. Therefore, state-based approaches, such as negotiation and consultation, are commonly used policy approaches to addressing issues in this sector. In the environmental sector, as illustrated in Table 1, given that the sources of threats to the marine environment tend be regional or global in nature and can affect multiple types of actors in varying degrees, regional or international coordination is most demanded in policy formulation, and community-led and IO-led approaches would be more effective. On the other hand, since this framework has adopted a minimum approach in the formation of core values, it can potentially be used to evaluate the effect and outcome of concrete policy practices. More specifically, one can determine in which sector the policy practice in question falls and compare the policy outcome with the values/threats specified in that sector. More importantly, the framework can serve as a basic roadmap upon which consensus may be built and policy actions can be converged.

3.4. How Much Security, by What Means, and at What Cost?

These three questions are not directly related to the conception of maritime security. Rather, they help clarify specifications so as to pursue sustainable maritime security as policy goals. Different specifications of these three questions often imply different modes of policy-making—different policy priorities and preferences of policy approaches. Moreover,

the pursuit of security always involves calculation of costs. How much security can be realized is heavily dependent on the kinds of resources at one's disposal and the types of actors involved.

These questions need to be considered in light of the ongoing debate in the sustainable development and sustainability discourse concerning the balance between different and sometimes even contradicting policy goals. Meanwhile, it is extensively agreed that sustainability can only be achieved as a result of the parallel development of all the four policy sectors in tandem. When translated into concrete policy objectives, they are not necessarily complementary, rather, controversy and contradiction are inevitable, and trade-off has to be made in order to maintain a delicate balance between conflicting policy goals in the face of limited resources and means available. Dasgupta and Mäler pointed out that there exists an inverted "U"-shaped relationship between environmental pollution and economic growth, indicating that with the development of the economy, especially the rapid development of the industry, there will be a certain degree of environmental pollution [30]. Others highlight the importance of economic growth to obtain the resources necessary to achieve sustainability. Another controversy concerns the issue of intergenerational and intragenerational equity. While most scholars subscribe to the view that the definition of sustainability must include intergenerational equity, it is uncertain what exactly are the needs of future generations to be considered and whether the current generation is legitimate to make a decision in their behalf [31]. In light of these discursive debates, the framework provided in Table 1 will provide a useful starting point as it helps to sort out relevant issues and identify policy priorities in each of the policy fields. It also provides a common ground on which different actors can weigh on the trade-off between different policy objectives and make a comparison of their respective priorities with each other. As mentioned earlier, the principle of sustainability can be contextualized as two sets of elements to be incorporated into the analytical framework of maritime security: sustainable values/goals and sustainable means. The realization of sustainable values requires an effective toolkit of sustainable means and an appropriate designation of policy goals compatible with sustainable values. Traditional security studies hold a state-centric view of security, which implies a strong preference for state-based approaches and a zero-sum mentality in consequent policy-making and implementation. In comparison, conceptualizing maritime security in terms of sustainable development implies that the safety of individuals and the health of oceans need to be prioritized in the pursuit of maritime security. Such conceptualization results in a fundamental shift of focus in the formation of policy goals and policy preferences. It also demands a quite different composition of policy toolkit filled with more people-centered and cooperative approaches and a positive-sum mentality in tackling challenges in the maritime space.

There is no doubt that states are the most crucial actors in the pursuit of maritime security. However, the open, mobile, and vastly shared nature of oceans renders purely state-based approaches inappropriate in addressing many of the unconventional challenges. Besides a state-based approach, an IO-based, business-based, community-based, and individual-based approach can also play effective roles in this regard. These nonstate actor-based approaches are good candidates of sustainable means, which facilitate the pooling in of diversified political, financial, and labor resources and make sure that all the legitimate concerns for sustainable developments are dealt with in the policy circle. It is the main rationale behind the codification of the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea. The convention encourages strongly that cooperative efforts involving multi-parties need to be fashioned to promote the orderly and sustainable use of the oceans. Under the convention, a variety of international regulatory/consultant bodies (i.e., International Seabed Authority, RFMOs, regional coordination centers, etc.) have been established at the regional and international levels, serving as multilateral platforms to facilitate the negotiation and resolution of disputes and foster cooperation between states and among state and nonstate actors.

The constraint of resources is another factor that matters a lot in the policy-making process. Many of the studies on maritime security have remained silent on the issue of policy costs. In fact, policy-making always involves a consideration of resource utilization and cost sharing. It is for this reason that indiscriminate securitization of maritime security issues is unsustainable in the long term as it can quickly drain up limited resources. Given that the attainment of maritime security is realized through the fulfillment of a variety of different policy objectives, some of which are competing for the same resources, critical decisions need to be made, such as which policy objectives should be prioritized, how to allocate resources, which approach is cost-effective, and how to evaluate policy outcomes. Different state and nonstate actors have different emphases and preferences when it comes to making a balance between different policy goals of sustainable development, which are then reflected in their respective policy practices and lead to different policy-delivery results.

4. The China Case: Policy Practices and Lessons Drawn

This section picks the case of China as an example to test the analytical value of the framework proposed in Section 3. Examining China's practices in terms of pursuing maritime security can be illuminating in three aspects. First, in the East and South China Seas, China is involved in complicated interstate disputes with neighboring countries, which are generally seen as typical traditional security issues. There have been diverging views as to the effect of China's policy practices in this regard. One way to approach this issue is to evaluate the policy effect of China's approach against the core value of peace and stability listed in the political sector of the framework, which could shed light on how and to what extent the value of peace and stability in the maritime space could be safeguarded. Second, China has traditionally preferred state-dominated approaches to maritime security. However, China's active participation in global marine governance has enlightened a much broader vision of maritime security involving a diversified set of nonactors. How and to what extent China balances and coordinates state and nonstate actors in efforts to formulate effective policies would draw interesting lessons not only in a practical sense but also in a theoretical sense. Third, China's aspiration to become an influential maritime nation and its growing capabilities have made it an increasingly important contributor to international marine governance. In this sense, using the proposed framework to investigate China's perception of sustainable maritime security and some of the debates surrounding its practices would promote further research on finding better ways to bridge disagreements and forge consensus-based actions for the sake of a shared future of mankind.

As mentioned earlier, while it is not difficult to consent, in principle, to sustainable maritime security as a desired long-term policy goal, the understanding of different actors may vary considerably when it comes to policy applications. Maritime security challenges, even the ones with a global scale, can generate a different impact, varying along different regions and human groups. Correspondingly, different actors may have different policy priorities and demonstrate preferences for certain approaches, which in turn result in diversified policy practices. In the case of China, maritime security is understood in relation to sustainable development and the vision of a common and shared community of mankind [32]. Generally speaking, this view of maritime security suits well with the analytical framework of maritime security provided in Table 1, which requires a sophisticated employment of different policy approaches and leads to the pursuit of policy goals in a comprehensive and relational manner. In the meantime, however, the China case is also featured by a strong preference for state-based approaches and a flexible employment of militarized means (but not necessarily military confrontation). All these make China an interesting case to be examined.

4.1. China's Perception of Maritime Security

China's view of maritime security and its practices of addressing maritime security challenges have been heavily influenced by the so-called new security concept and its more recent derivatives. China's new security concept was a concept originally brewed in the 1990s, first, in the academic circle of Chinese IR scholars closely following the debate between the TSS and the CSS [33]. Later, the concept was embraced as China's official position in its foreign policy and security strategy. In 1996, the new security concept was publicly put forward by Chinese Foreign Minister Qian Qichen at the Southeast Asian Nations Regional Forum (ARF). In subsequent years, Chinese leaders reiterated the concept in various bilateral and multilateral occasions. China's new security concept embraces cooperative, common, and comprehensive security, which to a large extent shares the conception of security proposed by the CSS [34]. It also echoes UN-led security and development agendas in the 1990s in which China took an active part, such as Agenda 21 and Millennium Development Goals. The thrust of the new security concept is enhancing trust through dialogue and promoting security through cooperation. It was articulated as a Chinese version of security in response to the post–Cold War realities. From the Chinese perspective, the traditionalist/realist view of security, characterized by absolute security, military alliances, containment, and deterrence, had long dogmatized the security policies of many countries. In the post–Cold War era, a Chinese leader elaborated, in the face of globalization and the common need for sustainable development, that countries must move beyond Cold War mentality and antagonism, rise above one-sided security, and seek common security through mutually beneficial cooperation [35].

The concept has been updated recently into a new version, the Global Security Initiative (GSI). The GSI was proposed by Chinese President Xi Jinping during the 2022 Boao Forum for Asia [36]. The idea advocates a vision of common, comprehensive, cooperative, and sustainable security; it underscores indivisible security as the important principle and building a security community as the long-term goal [37]. In comparison, while the GSI inherits the basic conception of security of the new security concept, it also places more emphasis on the importance of sustainability in the pursuit of security and highlights the sharing nature of security interests for the whole international community in the face of complex and intertwined security challenges rising on a global scale. The latest update on the new security concept reflects China's comprehension of the profoundly changing international landscape and its devotion to fashioning innovative approaches for improving global security governance.

The goal of common, comprehensive, cooperative, and sustainable security is specifically embedded in the vision of "An Ocean Community with a Shared Future" when it comes to the pursuit of maritime security. "An Ocean Community with a Shared Future" is proposed by Chinese leaders as providing the guiding values and principles for the construction of a global ocean governance system. As Xi Jinping elaborated, "the blue planet we live on is not divided into islands by the sea. Rather, it is linked by the sea into a community of shared destiny, and people of all countries share with the same interests of safety and security" [38]. He went on to explain that in terms of disputes, countries should consult with each other and should not resort to force or threat of force; in terms of economic development, China was devoted efforts to promoting the blue economy, maritime connectivity, and cooperation in various areas and performing international responsibilities and obligations to ensure the safety of international shipping lanes; in terms of marine environment, countries should cherish the ocean as we treat life; and in terms of social development, countries should encourage exchanges of different marine cultures and jointly promote marine welfare for mankind [39].

The new security concept and its recent updates, including the GSI and the vision of an ocean community, have generated significant policy bearings on China's approach to maritime security. First, the concept moves beyond traditional security to embrace nontraditional security concerns. From China's perspective, security in terms of policy goals is not limited to state survival but should include a comprehensive set of policy

objectives conducive to long-term social development, such as economic security, safety of energy, environmental protection, prevention of the spread of diseases, and migration control, many of which are essential to maritime security. Second, the concept reshapes the role of military means in tackling security issues in two ways. On the one hand, to China, military solutions have obvious limits in terms of fostering cooperation and pursuing comprehensive security objectives. On the other hand, the concept prompts China to envision a broader scope within which military forces can play an important role, which may contain issues such as terrorism, search and rescue, humanitarian aid, and drug trafficking [40]. Finally, in terms of concrete policy approaches, the conception of cooperative, common, and comprehensive security demands on China a more holistic approach to maritime security, emphasizing a more relational view of different issues and combining consultative and cooperative approaches in an innovative manner, as shown in the following discussion. In the meantime, however, we will also find in China's policy practices that China has its own understanding and preferences when it comes to the trade-off between different policy objectives concerning sustainable development.

4.2. The Political Sector: Prioritizing Peaceful Approaches to Maritime Dispute Management

In the political sector, the value to be upheld in safeguarding the sustainable use of maritime space is peace and stability. To this end, peaceful approaches to conflict management and dispute resolution are viewed as effective means compatible with the policy goal of maintaining peace and stability in the face of maritime disputes.

Maritime disputes between China and neighboring countries constitute the most prominent security concern on the part of China and threaten peace and stability. While a state-based approach is commonly used by countries to tackle traditional security threats, China is no exception in this regard. Despite sporadic frictions, the record has shown that China's employment of peaceful means to manage maritime disputes has been more or less effective in maintaining peace and stability in its surrounding seas. In the South China Sea, China is involved in territorial disputes and disputes of maritime delimitation with Vietnam, the Philippines, Malaysia, and Brunei. In the East China Sea, China and Japan have disputes over the Diaoyu Islands (Senkaku Islands in Japanese). China is also engaging with South Korea to resolve issues of maritime delimitation in the Yellow Sea. These disputes are often considered as traditional security issues, and states are tempted to employ military means to tackle them. However, the record of China's practices, at least since the 1990s, has demonstrated a strong preference for consultation, cooperation, and negation in managing and resolving maritime disputes.

In the South China Sea, for example, China reiterated in many regional and international occasions the position that the SCS dispute should be peacefully resolved through friendly consultations and negotiations between countries directly concerned. To this end, China has preferred bilateral negotiation and multilateral engagement with disputant countries and other bordering countries. With regard to the bilateral approach, China and Vietnam initiated bilateral engagement in 1992 on the dispute over the Gulf of Tonkin (Beibu Gulf in Chinese and Bac Bo Gulf in Vietnamese) [41]. The dispute was permanently settled after several years of negotiation, which resulted in China and Vietnam reaching a delimitation agreement on the Gulf of Tonkin in December 2000 [42]. In the meantime, China and the Vietnam also engaged in a parallel negotiation regarding the management of fishery resources in the gulf area, which resulted in an agreement of fishery cooperation in the gulf area. This agreement entered into force in June 2004. Under the agreement, the two countries set up the Fisheries Cooperation Committee in the Gulf of Tonkin, which coordinates and manages fishery production and resource conservation in the gulf. To ensure the smooth implementation of the delimitation agreement and the fishery agreement, China and Vietnam established another mechanism, the Coast Guard Joint Inspection in the Gulf of Tonkin. As of last year, coast guard personnel of the two countries had carried out joint inspection 24 times, ensuring the orderly production of fishery and strengthening the cooperation of the maritime law enforcement departments of the two countries [43].

The third cooperative mechanism is the navy's joint patrol in the gulf area. By November last year, the two navies had jointly conducted a total of 33 joint patrols for the purpose of maintaining order and tranquility in the gulf area and promoting military interaction between the two countries [44].

Multilateral approaches are also employed by China in its management of maritime disputes. The adoption of multilateral approaches reflects China's understanding of the complexity of and interconnectedness between different maritime issues and its effort to approach them in a pragmatic and holistic manner. A multilateral approach to manage maritime disputes in the SCS was originally employed in the Asian Regional Forum (ARF). In 1994, ASEAN and its dialogue partners, plus Vietnam and Laos (then not yet ASEAN members), China, Russia, and Papua New Guinea, initiated the ARF for consultation on regional political and security issues. The ARF was Asia's first formal multilateral security dialogue. Through this multilateral diplomatic mechanism, China engaged with regional countries on a multilateral level, covering a considerable range of maritime security issues, including maritime disputes, regional maritime security, maritime cooperation, etc. [45]. Based on the progress accumulated in the ARF, ASEAN and China signed a Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the SCS (the DOC) in 2002, in which all parties to the DOC pledged to exercise self-restraint in the conduct of activities that would complicate or escalate disputes and affect peace and stability of the SCS. In the years following the DOC, China and other disputant parties in the SCS continued to engage and consult on relevant disputes and refrained from the employment of military means to resolve disputes. In the years following the DOC, China and ASEAN countries have held, on a regular basis, Senior Officials' Meeting 19 times and joint working group meeting 37 times on the implementation of the DOC. During the last joint working group meeting in October last year, China and ASEAN deputies exchanged views on practical marine cooperation and the second reading of the "Code of Conduct" text, and all parties reiterated that maintaining the peace and stability in the South China Sea is of great practical significance [46].

Another approach that China has taken for the main purpose of defending its maritime claims is law enforcement. Generally speaking, law enforcement activities are multipurpose. They not only are carried out for the purpose of safeguarding maritime rights and interests and ensuring the observation of national legislation, but also can be used to enforce environmental protection measures and provide protection and support for basic human rights. In the case of China, its law enforcement activities share such comprehensive nature by engaging in various activities, such as combatting illegal fishing, search and rescue missions, and operations against piracy, human trafficking, and transnational crimes. However, some controversies also arise as to the intention and effect of the increasingly expanding law enforcement operations.

China's professional law enforcement force emerged in the 1990s. In around 2000, there were around 50 law enforcement vessels with an average size of only 500 tonnage. The capability started to grow on a noticeable pace in the 2000s. In 2011, over 50 law enforcement ships were commissioned ranging from 1000 to 3000 tonnage, some of which were equipped with helicopters and small-size weaponry [47]. To date, the Chinese coast guard is equipped with over 200 vessels, half of which are above 1000 tonnage with the largest ones over 12,000 tonnage designed to conduct long-distance comprehensive patrols [48]. The scope of China's law enforcement operations includes enforcing national maritime legislations and ensuring observations of the Law on Territorial Sea and Contiguous Zone, the Law on Exclusive Economic Zone and the Continental Shelf, the Law of the People's Republic of China on the Administration of the Use of Sea Areas, the Law on the Protection of the Marine Environment, the Law of the People's Republic of China on the Protection of Sea Islands, the Regulations of the People's Republic of China on the Administration of Foreign-Related Marine Scientific Research, and other laws and regulations [47].

In January 2021, China adopted a new Coast Guard Law (CCG Law) to conduct "activities of maritime rights protection and law enforcement in the waters under the jurisdiction of the People's Republic of China". From China's perspective, the CCG Law is viewed

as an indispensable step to alter previous institutional fragmentation of law enforcement authorities. The term "Nine Dragons Stirring Up the Sea" was a vivid depiction of the previously highly fragmented and overlapping authorities concerning China's law enforcement operations [49]. In this sense, the introduction of the CCG Law can streamline the institutional arrangement and provide a codified guidance for the CCG's future activities by: (1) establishing a standardized and unified CCG legislation system including provisions on administration, crime inspection, codes for weapon use, etc.; (2) defining the scope, responsibilities, and principles of the CCG; (3) refining the provisions on domestic coordination and international cooperation; (4) highlighting the responsibility of safeguarding sovereignty, security, and maritime rights and interests.

This law received quite some criticism from a number of regional countries as well as extra-regional countries regarding, in particular, the nature of the coast guard force as a quasi-militarized force, its newly expanded role in unilaterally enforcing maritime claims with firearms, and the potential incompatibility with the Law of the Sea [50–53]. Part of the criticism has to do with the lack of clarification on some of the provisions. For example, it remains underdefined regarding the scope of the sea area under the CCG's jurisdiction, which can be problematic in the process of implementation, say, in the disputed sea area. The provisions on compulsory law enforcement of foreign warships and government ships also demand further clarification to the regional and international audience, which has given rise to the concern of whether such provisions, e.g., Article 21, are incompatible with relevant provisions in the UNCLOS [54].

Evaluated against the framework proposed in Section 3, the 2021 CCG Law in its current form is not necessarily conducive to upholding the value of peace and stability. The controversial ambiguity, in the absence of further clarification, can become a source of friction in the implementation of the law in disputed sea waters. However, this does not negate the potentially positive role that China's coast guard may play in contributing to advancing maritime security. There are at least two directions that China can take to realize the CCG's potential to the fullest in safeguarding maritime security as envisioned by the proposed "ocean community". On the one hand, China needs to seriously address and respond to the concerns that other countries have regarding the 2021 CCG Law by providing further elaborations on some of the ambiguous and controversial provisions and through its actual implementation of the law. On the other hand, given that the Chinese Coast Guard is positioned in the top rank internationally in terms of its law enforcement equipment, it would be in China's interest and capability to consider innovative ways to contribute to the pursuit of values in the economic, environmental, and societal sectors, as illustrated in Table 1. For example, it would be welcome by the international community if the CCG participates in international cooperation on safeguarding navigational safety and combatting piracy, smuggling, and irresponsible exploitation, as listed in the economic sector of Table 1. The CCG can also provide assistance to local communities along the Maritime Silk Road in an effort to detect and combat IUU fishing and other practices that are environmentally unfriendly. Moreover, it can be of great use to be deployed to provide humanitarian relief to natural disasters and conduct search and rescue missions in cooperation with its counterparts in other countries.

To sum up, China's approach to maritime disputes, enlightened by the new security concept, reflects its mindful efforts to move away from the zero-sum mentality and purely military solutions, which tend to dominate traditional approaches to dealing with territorial disputes and even China's own practices in the 1970s and the 1980s. Such approach also demonstrates a certain level of sustainability in that multiple cooperative and consultative mechanisms have been established and function on a regular basis to date. Of course, it is debatable whether these efforts are sufficient to address the disputes in a way that can lead to the final resolution. The protraction of the South China Sea disputes, for example, has been viewed by many observers as brewing a hotbed for power competition and increasing the risk of military confrontation [55,56]. The controversies surrounding China's land reclamation activities and its law enforcement activities have been criticized as disrupting

regional stability. However, if evaluated against the criterion of peace and stability, the core value in the political sector outlined in the framework, China's policy practices have not been completely ineffective, considering rising nationalist sentiments throughout the region surrounding such a protracted and complicated dispute. More importantly, to achieve sustainable maritime security in the political sector in the future, for China and other disputant parties, a solid political consensus on the value of peace and stability needs to be forged and strictly observed in their policy practices, independently and cooperatively, in a sustained manner.

4.3. The Economic Sector: Promoting Development and Cooperation of the Blue Economy

Sustainable development of the blue economy is another area highly valued by China as contributing an indispensable part in the process of attaining common, comprehensive, cooperative, and sustainable maritime security. It was based on economic motivations that the Chinese government endorsed the idea of joint development as a preferable approach to manage maritime disputes. China's proposal of the 21st-Century Maritime Silk Road Initiative is designed to boost the blue economy with countries along the route, which is viewed by the Chinese leadership as a critical pillar to achieve sustainable economic development domestically and at the international level. However, as we will see in the discussion below, China's policy practices revealed its unique understanding and position when it comes to the trade-off between economic growth and environmental protection and have yielded mixed policy results in terms of contributing to the sustainable development of the world oceans.

On the one hand, China's policy practices have prioritized the economic dimension in its implementation of sustainable development goals. This is partly due to China's own experience of achieving fast economic development at the expense of the environment. As many have observed in the implementation of the Maritime Silk Road Initiative, China seems to project its own experience in situations where difficult choices need to be made by developing countries to balance between different, sometimes conflicting, goals of human development in the face of limited capabilities and resources. Such experience entails prioritizing large infrastructure projects and a top-level design of economic plans, many of which are crucial and long desired in developing countries as the basis for robust and sustained economic development but not necessarily standing up to strict environmental protection criteria.

On the other hand, in terms of concrete policy practices, the priority of economic motivations yielded mixed results in terms of the balance between economic development and environmental protection. For example, although the joint development of hydrocarbon resources in the South China Sea, if put into practice, would potentially generate a negative impact on the ecological environment of the sea, the failure to solicit support from other littoral countries in the SCS for its joint development proposal has prompted China to take actions to prevent any unilateral exploration activities, resulting in a "freeze" of real oil and gas development in the disputed waters in the SCS. Moreover, despite many successful cases of blue economic cooperation between China and other countries along the maritime silk road, the state-based approach that China prefers has generated obvious constraints on its ability to involve all the relevant stakeholders and the local community in the policy design and implementation. This has given rise to the criticism and concern that China's blue economy cooperation initiatives may be unsustainable.

4.3.1. Joint Development

Joint development is often seen as an alternative approach to solving maritime disputes or an interim form of arrangement pending final resolution of overlapping claims. It is for this reason that China has embraced the idea as part of its approach to dealing with maritime disputes. In the meantime, joint development is certainly driven by economic motivations, especially in the disputed area estimated to be rich in hydrocarbon resources. The idea of joint development is encouraged by the 1982 UNCLOS. For example, Article 74 (3) of

UNCLOS stipulates that, pending final agreement on maritime delimitation, "the States concerned, in a spirit of understanding and cooperation, shall make every effort to enter into provisional arrangements of a practical nature and, during this transitional period, not to jeopardize or hamper the reaching of the final agreement" [57]. Joint development has been proved effective in multiple cases in mitigating confrontation and advancing the blue economy in disputed maritime areas. For example, the Malaysian and Thai governments agreed to a joint development area of 7250 km^2 in the Gulf of Thailand as an interim measure to solve their overlapping claims over continental shelf areas. Indonesia and Vietnam discussed similar arrangements for the Natuna Sea area. A more complicated joint development scheme, called a "zone of cooperation", was established between Australia and Indonesia in the East Timor continental shelf area in 1989, and entered into force in 1991.

China took note of the value of joint development in promoting maritime welfare in the face of protracted disputes and started to advocate the idea to neighboring countries in the 1990s. In May 1994, Chinese Premier Li Peng met with Prime Minister Mahathir of Malaysia and discussed the idea of joint development in the SCS. During the second ARF in 1995, Chinese Foreign Minister Qian Qichen reiterated that the sovereignty question be shelved and efforts be made to begin the joint development of resources. In November 1996, China's President Jiang Zemin talked with his Filipino counterpart, Fidel Ramos, and both agreed that China and the Philippines should shelve differences over the Spratly Islands and work together to build confidence and develop the disputed area jointly. Through China's effort, the idea of joint development as a principle garnered support from neighboring countries, although no concrete projects were proposed at that time. This momentum bore fruit in 2005, following the spirit of the DOC, when China, Vietnam, and Philippines reached an agreement to cooperate on a tripartite seismic survey in the disputed waters of the SCS.

The main task of the project was to identify areas for oil and gas exploration. The agreement provided for a 3-year study to be undertaken by three state-owned oil companies, the Chinese National Offshore Oil Corporation (CNOOC), the Philippines National Oil Company (PNOC), and the Vietnam Oil and Gas Corporation (PetroVietnam). The project was a "pre-exploration" study that can be classified as "marine scientific research" and therefore was covered by paragraph 5 of the DOC [45]. The survey area covered over 143,000 km^2, which included part of the disputed waters [58]. The three national oil firms shared the costs involved in conducting the research equally, which eventually totaled approximately USD 7.14 million. The joint exploration project expired in 2008 as scheduled and was unable to be renewed due to increasing domestic pressure from the Philippines' side [59].

Joint development was also deployed to manage the maritime dispute between China and Japan in the East China Sea. In 2004, China offered to Japan that the two countries start engagement on the possible arrangement for a joint development of oil and gas in the disputed area in the East China Sea [60]. After several rounds of negotiation, in 2007, China and Japan agreed on the basic principles for a joint development in the East China Sea. Pending final delimitation, the two sides would cooperate to develop natural resources in the East China Sea, without prejudice to their respective legal positions. As the first step of the joint development, the two sides decided to conduct joint exploration in a block of 2700 km^2 in size in the northern section of what the Japanese side called the "median line". Although the area of this joint development zone is far smaller than the adjacent Japan–South Korea joint development zone, it is an important practice for China and Japan to effectively manage the East China Sea dispute through dialogue and cooperation in the hope of working towards a permanent resolution of the dispute [61].

Although joint development was originally motivated by the goodwill of promoting ocean economic development, the implementation of the idea has faced significant constraints which inevitably limit its potential as a sustainable approach to managing disputes. In the East China Sea, China and Japan have not engaged in any JD scheme for over a decade. In the South China Sea, China and the Philippines have been discussing new

scheme of joint exploration in the past few years. The two countries agreed on a memorandum in 2018, but no concrete proposal was introduced during the Duterte administration. In January 2023, during Philippines' president Ferdinand Romualdez Marcos Jr's state visit to China, it was agreed that the two countries would resume talks on joint development based on the 2018 memorandum [62]. A major constraint, on the part of China, is China's state-dominated approach to joint development, which allows very little room for private enterprises to participate constructively. While this is understandable given the sensitivity of the dispute, in practice it has certainly limited the potential that the approach of joint development can offer in advancing marine economic cooperation.

4.3.2. Blue Partnership

Sustainable development of the blue economy is another area highly valued by China as contributing an indispensable part in the process of attaining common, comprehensive, cooperative, and sustainable maritime security. Based on this consideration, China proposed the 21st-Century Maritime Silk Road Initiative in 2013 through Xi Jinping during his state visit to Indonesia. In China's view, strengthening maritime cooperation with countries along the Maritime Silk Road conforms with the prevailing trend of development, openness, and cooperation, and contributes to mutually beneficial cooperation and broadens space for development. Enhancing maritime cooperation also enables various countries to jointly tackle challenges and crises, thus promoting peace and stability of the world oceans [63].

Under the framework of the Maritime Silk Road Initiative, China proposed the Vision for Maritime Cooperation under the Belt and Road Initiative in 2017, the main task of which was establishing a constructive and pragmatic blue partnership to forge a "blue engine" for sustainable development [63]. The blue partnership, as China elaborates, aims to contribute to the realization of the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, in particular Goal 14 and Goal 17, and to establish a new model of maritime cooperation that is inclusive and flexible to enhance mutual trust among coastal states. The Chinese delegation to the 2022 UN Ocean Conference proposed 16 principles of the blue partnership, which provide the concept, common collaborative areas, and vision of the blue partnership. These mainly include: protect marine environment, foster blue economy development, encourage innovation in technology and ocean governance, and promote human security in terms of individuals' rights in development and benefit sharing [64]. In particular, in these principles, China highlights the importance of the innovation and application of green technology in fueling the blue economy and tackling nontraditional security issues and the promising role that nonstate actors can play in ocean governance.

The official documents and elaborations cited above show that, at least in principle, China's major maritime economic initiatives have been infused with the values and policy goals germane to sustainable development. They also highlight that China is conscious of the need to actively involve nonstate actors in the formulation and implementation of sustainable development policies regarding the blue economy. Guided by these principles, China has established a blue partnership with a dozen countries along the Maritime Silk Road since 2017, and the list is gradually expanding. China has signed 23 maritime cooperation agreements with countries in Europe, the South Pacific, and Africa; constructed 8 intergovernmental cooperation platforms, and supported the establishment of branches of 13 maritime organizations in China [32] (p. 58). China and the EU signed Blue Partnership for the Oceans: Towards Better Ocean Governance in 2018 [65]. The agreement is meant to join efforts of the two sides to facilitate policy coordination, exchange experience and technology of ocean governance, and cooperate to improve international governance of the world's oceans, including through tackling IUU fishing and promoting a sustainable exploration of marine resources. China and the EU also agreed to cooperate on implementing the 2030 Agenda and the Paris Agreement on climate change.

In comparison, the blue partnership between China and Pacific Island countries contains different priorities from those between China and the EU. The partnership was established on the basis of bilateral cooperation cultivated for more than a decade. In 2006,

China and Pacific Island countries held the first ministerial meeting in Fiji, and the two sides pledged to deepen cooperation on multiple levels. Maritime cooperation was quickly developed in the years following the meeting. Priority areas of maritime cooperation between China and Pacific Island countries mainly include infrastructure construction, exploration and transportation of mineral resources, distant fishing and transfer of fishery technology, financial assistance, and educational and cultural exchanges. The momentum pushed the two sides to cooperate on the Maritime Silk Road Initiative in 2017, when Ministers of Oceans of China and Pacific Island countries held a roundtable meeting and adopted the Pingtan Declaration, pledging to jointly develop a blue partnership [66]. In 2018, during Xi Jinping's state visit to Papua New Guinea, a collective meeting between Xi and leaders of Pacific Island countries was held with both sides agreeing to develop the South Route of the Maritime Silk Road together. The blue partnership between China and Pacific Island countries prioritizes four areas of maritime cooperation. The first priority area is joint partnership in maritime environment protection and tackling climate change, given that Pacific Island countries rank high on the "Exposure to Natural Disasters Risk Index", reflecting their extreme vulnerability to climate change. The second priority area is fisheries. Pacific Island countries enjoy rich fishery resources in their expansive jurisdictional seawaters. The cooperation aims to promote exploitation, processing, and conservation of fishery resources. The third area is disaster relief, that is, cooperation to improve marine disaster prevention and mitigation capabilities. Natural disasters, intensified in recent years because of climate change, represent a major threat to Pacific Island countries. In January 2022, Tonga suffered from volcano eruption and tsunami. China was the first country in the world to provide assistance to Tonga using navy and air force to deliver humanitarian aids, showing the deepening of China–Tonga maritime cooperation in the pursuit of maritime security [67]. Last but not least, technology innovation and transfer is also prioritized in the maritime cooperation between the two sides. China has assisted in constructing marine scientific research and education centers in Samoa and other small island countries. The cooperation is reciprocal. It helps to train specialized personnel on the part of Pacific Island countries in marine science, maritime management, and other marine technologies and, in the meantime, facilitate Chinese scientists to conduct marine scientific research and technological innovation [66].

The brief review of China's policy practices in terms of implementing sustainable marine economic development is not exhaustive. Nevertheless, these practices are illuminating in at least two aspects. On the one hand, the differences between the China–EU blue partnership and China–Pacific Island countries blue partnership in terms of policy priorities and concrete cooperative projects demonstrate a certain degree of sophistication and flexibility on the part of China in its efforts to pursue sustainable development in ocean economy. With the EU, China prioritized cooperation on blue and green technology and coordinating actions on strengthening major global governance initiatives tackling unsustainable practices and environmental security challenges, in particular, climate change and decay of marine biodiversity. With Pacific Island countries, considering the developing status of Pacific Island countries and their vulnerability to rising natural disasters, China prioritized capacity building for local economic development and disaster relief.

On the other hand, as illustrated in the policy framework, while business-based and international-organizations-based approaches tend to be more effective in promoting values of sustainable development, China seems to be in favor of state-based approaches. Such preference has its advantages and disadvantages. For its advantages, states can provide powerful support in the form of labor, resources, finance, credibility, and political coordination, all of which are critical for guaranteeing the successful execution of economic development programs. However, the disadvantage associated with state-centrism is also obvious. State-driven initiatives often prescribe a limited scope in terms of integrating the participation of different actors. It also constrains the ability to promptly translate the input of local communities into project design and implementation processes. This disadvantage has raised serious concerns in a number of China-backed economic projects along the

Maritime Silk Road. The controversy revolving around the Hambantota international port concerning environmental, financial, and political sustainability is exemplary in this regard [68].

Another example is Chinese distant-water fishing fleet operating in the EEZ waters of Pacific Island countries. While China's policy consideration is to achieve a win–win outcome for the two sides, with China's large fishery industry benefitting from Pacific Island countries' fishery resources in the vast EEZ waters and Pacific Island countries receiving financial compensation, investment, and employment opportunities, the lack of an effective law enforcement or supervision measures, which are usually provided by IOs and local communities, has been viewed as a major cause of reported IUU fishing activities conducted by Chinese distant-water fishing fleet. Moreover, this situation has become increasingly problematic in the background of escalating competition between China and the United States. In December 2020, the U.S. Coast Guard boarded a small Chinese distant-water fishing group in the waters adjacent to Palau and confiscated all the fishing harvest. In the summer of 2022, China's fishing vessels and the U.S. Coast Guard forces engaged in a near collision in the South Pacific waters. The U.S. side accused China of engaging in IUU fishing and attempted to conduct on-board inspection [69]. China's fishing vessel refused the request of the U.S. Coast Guard and claimed that the U.S. accusation was baseless and politically motivated [70]. Such incidents, fueled by big power competition, are not only unsustainable in economic and environmental senses but can be dangerous and conflict prone. To avoid future incidents of this nature, it is urgent, as informed by the proposed framework, to shift from a state-based approach to an IO- and business-based approach and open up room for the constructive participation of different actors and stakeholders.

4.4. The Environmental Sector: Exploring Sustainable Marine Environment Management with Progress and Limitations

It is an emerging consensus that the maritime domain is facing unprecedented environmental challenges, which can only be effectively dealt with through coordinated actions and by taking into account all relevant stakeholders. The consensus is echoed in what China proposed as the vision of "An Ocean Community of Shared Future". In this area, China's policy practices have been underlined by more flexibility in terms of formulating and participating in collective actions involving a diversified set of actors. The efforts taken by China have resulted in certain progress, domestically and internationally. However, limitations remain for two reasons. As is demonstrated in the case of Arctic environment protection of the Arctic region, the lack of sufficient experience in coordinating multiparty positions in preserving a sustainable marine environment poses certain limitations on China's efforts to make a greater contribution to environment protection in the Arctic. It is also related to China's parallel endeavors to promote economic cooperation with Artic countries in the development of the northwest sea route and the exploration of energy resources in the Arctic. Given that China's participation in Arctic governance only started recently, it is worth observing how China will coordinate different policy objectives in the Arctic to mitigate the tensions between economic sustainability and environmental sustainability and contribute positively to the sustainable development of the Arctic region in a balanced manner.

4.4.1. Domestic Institutional Reform

At the domestic level, the Chinese government has undertaken a series of institutional rearrangements in an effort to streamline interagency coordination on safeguarding a sustainable marine environment. Interagency coordination is a common challenge confronted by most countries. In the case of China, however, the highly fragmented organizational structure of China's domestic ocean governance system further exacerbated the situation [71]. The State Oceanic Bureau, which was supposed to shoulder the institutional responsibility of marine environment protection, had not been able to fulfill its obligations due to its weak institutional ranking and the highly decentralized authority in the marine

governance system. In the meantime, the issue of marine environment protection in recent years has been securitized through domestic discourse on environmental security [72]. Against this background, the central government launched a new round of institutional reform in 2018 to restructure the marine governance system. On the one hand, the Ministry of Natural Resources was established, absorbing the authority of the State Oceanic Bureau. Its main responsibilities are to supervise the development, utilization, and protection of natural resources; establish a spatial planning system; and supervise its implementation. In addition, the state oceanic information center was also established under the Ministry of Natural Resources to manage information concerning resource management and the marine environment. On the other hand, the environmental protection bureau was lifted up to become the Ministry of Environmental Protection, assigned with the authority of environmental protection. The reform resulted in one ministry supervising the utilization of marine resources and the other ministry overseeing the protection of the marine environment; by doing so, a check and balance was established at the institutional level for the purpose of achieving a sustainable marine environment surrounding China.

4.4.2. International Cooperation

With regard to international cooperation on marine environmental protection, China in recent years, has reportedly been demonstrating increasing interest and willingness to participate in and contribute to IO-led marine governance programs. From China's perspective, participation in IO-led marine environment protection not only promotes China's image as a responsible power and an influential contributor to the welfare of mankind, but also serves China's own interest in pursuing environmental security and sustainable development. China's policy regarding the Arctic governance is an illustrative example.

In the Arctic governance, China positions itself as a "near-Arctic state" and an important stakeholder in Arctic affairs [73]. The main goals of China's Arctic policy are: to understand, protect, develop, and participate in the governance of the Arctic, so as to safeguard the common interests of all countries and the international community in the Arctic, and promote sustainable development of the Arctic. Based on these goals, China's participation in the Arctic governance prioritizes supporting cooperative efforts in three inter-linked areas: (1) marine and polar scientific research; (2) environmental protection including combatting climate change; and (3) marine economic development, in particular, navigation, fisheries, and energy resources [74].

As elaborated in the White Paper on China's Arctic Policy, in the area of marine scientific research, China, on the one hand, respects the Arctic states' exclusive jurisdiction over research activities under their national jurisdiction, maintains that scientific research in areas under the jurisdiction of Arctic states should be carried out through cooperation in accordance with the law, and stresses that all states have the freedom of scientific research on the high seas of the Arctic Ocean. On the other hand, China has also actively sought to join cooperative mechanisms monitoring and assessing local climatic and environmental changes and carries out multilevel and multidomain continuous observation of atmosphere, sea, sea ice, glacier, soil, bioecological character, and environmental quality through the establishment of a multielement Arctic observation system, construction of cooperative research (observation) stations, and development of and participation in the Arctic observation network.

With regard to environmental protection in the Arctic, the Arctic policy paper claims that China has been actively engaged in improving the Arctic environment by enhancing the environmental background investigation of Arctic activities and the assessment of their environmental impact, supporting the Arctic coastal states in their efforts to reduce pollutants in the Arctic waters from land-based sources in accordance with the relevant treaties, and working with other states to enhance control of the sources of marine pollution, such as ship discharge, offshore dumping, and air pollution.

In the area of economic development, China advocates a lawful and rational use of the region and encourages its enterprises to engage in international cooperation in the

exploration and utilization of Arctic resources by making the best use of their advantages in the capital, technology, and domestic market. China urges that economic activities in the Arctic need to be proceeded in a sustainable way on the condition of properly protecting the ecoenvironment of the Arctic and respecting the interests and concerns of the indigenous peoples in the region.

Based on these elaborations, China has sought to enlarge its role in the Arctic governance through global and regional mechanisms. At the global level, China has utilized the UN Framework on Climate Change, International Maritime Organization, UN Environment Programme, Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission, etc., to participate in their respective cooperative programs concerning the Arctic. China has also been involved in negotiations over high seas fisheries regulation in the Arctic, and calls for a legally binding international agreement for managing fishery resources in the high seas portion of the Arctic. At the regional level, China sought to acquire membership in various regional IO mechanisms, such as the Arctic Council, the Barents Euro-Arctic Council, the Arctic Coast Guard Forum, and the Arctic Offshore Regulators Forum. In 2013, China was accredited as an official observer to the Arctic Council. Since then, China dispatches experts to participate in the work of the council, including its working groups and task forces; observes the Agreement on Cooperation on Aeronautical and Maritime Search and Rescue in the Arctic, the Agreement on Cooperation on Marine Oil Pollution Preparedness and Response in the Arctic, and the Agreement on Enhancing International Arctic Scientific Cooperation; and supports international cooperation through such platforms as the Arctic Science Ministerial Meeting.

Nevertheless, the impact of China's participation in the environmental protection of the Arctic has been observed as quite limited. It has been argued that China's role in the Arctic is of a supportive and complementary nature [75]. There are multiple reasons for this situation. First, China's participation has been significantly constrained by its geographical location. After all, China is not bordering the Arctic and has no territory in the region. Second, limitations on financial and technological capabilities and a lack of experience in engaging local indigenous communities in the Arctic region sometimes make it difficult, on the side of China, to propose meaningful initiatives that can attract active involvement of different regional stakeholders. Third, China's proposal of the Ice Silk Road, featured by the development of the Arctic shipping routes in cooperation with Russia and resource exploitation, raised concerns and even suspicion over its strategic intentions and the potentially negative impact on the environment. In this sense, more work awaits to be undertaken by China to explain in what way and to what extent the intricate balance between economic development and marine environment in the Arctic can be maintained in a sustainable fashion.

4.5. The Social Sector: Providing Humanitarian Relief and Enhancing Resilience

In the social field, China's policy preferences have been designated to providing humanitarian relief and enhancing resilience of vulnerable communities. China has been contributing positively to the international cooperation on anti-piracy missions and during this course it accumulated innovative experience in fulfilling multi-purpose humanitarian missions. With regard to enhancing resilience of coastal communities, much of China's efforts have been directed to the implementation of the 14th SDG of the UN 2030 Agenda.

4.5.1. Anti-Piracy and Humanitarian Aid

As discussed earlier, nontraditional issues, such as piracy, terrorism, and humanitarian crises, constitute a major threat to maritime security. These threats impede smooth navigation, threaten human lives, and harm the marine environment. The pursuit of common, comprehensive, cooperative, and sustainable security requires that China places great emphasis on nontraditional security issues. For example, China has actively participated in international cooperation on combatting piracy in the Gulf of Aden. In December 2008, China started to send the first fleet of PLAN vessels, consisting of Wuha, Haikou, and

Weishanhu, from Sanya to carry out escort missions in the Somali waters and the Gulf of Aden. This mission also marked China's effort to use military means in a flexible way to tackle nontraditional security issues and provide maritime public goods. To date, China has sent out a total of 43 squadrons and conducted over 1500 missions [76]. These missions are conducted for multipurposes. On the one hand, China has been sending escort fleets on a regular basis to protect the navigational safety of its nationals and commercial vessels; on the other hand, China also participated in humanitarian missions and UN-organized missions to fulfill its international humanitarian obligations and protect the safety of international shipping routes. In 2009, a Chinese convoy helped rescue Greek merchant ships ambushed by Somali pirates. In 2011, a Chinese convoy undertook escorting mission for UN World Food Program ships to Bosaso Port. In 2013, China's convoy cooperated with convoys of Russia, Denmark, and Norway to escort ships carrying Syrian chemical weapons. In 2014, China's convoy participated in the search and rescue mission for Flight MH370 of Malaysian Airlines. The most well-known mission was carried out in the spring of 2015 when a civil war broke out in Yemen. China's 19th convoy suspended its scheduled convoy and proceeded to an emergency evacuation mission from the war-stricken Yemen. This mission successfully withdrew 613 Chinese compatriots and 279 foreign citizens from 15 countries [77].

China also assumes an active role in providing maritime humanitarian aids. For example, China's *Peace Ark* hospital ship has conducted 10 annual missions to provide advanced medical services to local people of over 43 countries, and held joint maritime rescue exercises with medical ships of other countries [78]. China's rescue service and humanitarian relief to an oil tanker accident in the Indian Ocean in 2020 depicts the complexity of maritime security challenges and the sophistication of China's policy practices to safeguard maritime security. An accident happened to New Diamond, an Indian-leased oil tanker carrying more than 2 million barrels of crude oil. On its way bound for the port of Palladib in eastern India, the tanker suddenly caught fire in an engine room boiler. Sri Lanka's Marine Environmental Protection Agency appealed for help from regional countries. China's response was two steps. First, experts from the Sino-Sri Lanka Joint Science and Education Center of the Chinese Academy of Sciences immediately sent data to Sri Lanka containing marine meteorology and environmental forecast information of the sea area adjacent to the tanker to help predict the surface water flow direction of the possible oil spill. Second, the Hambantota International Port Service Company, a joint venture between China and Sri Lanka, immediately prepared and sent firefighting materials, two tugboats, and emergency personnel to the accident area to participate in the rescue work, in cooperation with Indian and Russian counterparts [79,80].

4.5.2. Enhancing Resilience of Local Communities

Resilience of local communities is viewed by many as a core element in the discussion of sustainable development and human security [21]. The threats posed by pollution, climate change, and shift in local economic institutions compose serious challenges to the resilience of coastal communities. China's efforts to contribute to enhancing the resilience of coastal and vulnerable communities in recent years have been taken under the framework of the UN 2030 Agenda. In 2016, the Chinese government published China's National Plan on Implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, in which it outlined the working plan to implement the 17 SDGs in the timeframe of the UN 203 Agenda. The document provided a general principle in the promotion of social development—the principle of integration and coordination. It is elaborated that "it is essential to make development serve the people and put people first" and that China is committed to "giving priority to poverty eradication and people's livelihood, safeguard social equity and justice and firmly implement the concept of sustainable development, so as to achieve economic, social and environmental development in a balanced way, as well as harmony between individuals and the society and between man and nature" [81] (p. 10). Correspondingly, the nation plan sketches out a number of policy measures to be taken to gradually to realize

relevant goals prescribed in Goal 14, "Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development". For example, in its policy response to Goal 14.6 of the SDG, which focuses on fishermen's protection and subsidies to avert overfishing, China's national plan sets out policies to provide targeted support to reduce the number of fishing boats, fishermen quitting, artificial fish reef, maintenance, and reconstruction of fishing ports, on the one hand, and improve social protection for fishermen and eradicate poverty among fishermen, on the other hand. To achieve Goal 14.b, the nation plan suggests that concrete polices are designed to strengthen skills training for fishermen, expand the coverage of fishery mutual insurance and aquacultural insurance, and provide more and fairer market access for self-employed fishermen by developing new business models, such as e-commerce.

These policies have yielded positive results in enhancing the resilience of coastal and vulnerable communities. As documented in China's Progress Reports on Implementation of the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (2017, 2019, and 2021), at the domestic level, sustainable fishery policies have been taken to implement the newly revised "Fishing Permits" and quota management system of marine fishery resources. A total of more than 17000 ships have been reduced, and the fishing capacity has been reduced by over 1 million kilowatts. In the meantime, compensatory measures are also implemented to mitigate the negative impact on the local fishing industry. Efforts including promoting mudflat planning for aquaculture waters and expanding the application of large-scale innovative aquaculture fishery technologies to coastal areas proved effective in enhancing the resilience of affected traditional fishermen. At the international level, cooperative efforts have been concentrated on green aquaculture technology transfers and skills training and providing equipment and data for marine disaster prevention and reduction. Bilateral cooperative programs of this nature have been established with small-island developing states and least developed countries within the framework of South–South cooperation in the planning of marine economic zones, marine disaster prevention and reduction, fisheries, aquaculture, tourism, seawater desalination, and other fields. These cooperative efforts help to strengthen the resilience of affected groups in less development countries and support the welfare of vulnerable communities [82].

4.6. Lessons Drawn

The analysis of China's policy practices provides a vivid depiction of the complexity of maritime security challenges and the flexible, pragmatic, and comprehensive approaches that state and nonstate actors have adopted to tackle these challenges and advance maritime welfare of the world as an indivisible community.

The main finding of the China case is that, while in principle or in theory China embraces a broadened maritime security agenda and is clearly aware of the need to diversify policy approaches and the value of engaging different actors and stakeholders, its practice does not neatly follow the policy approaches suggested to be effective in the proposed framework. The analysis shows that China has favored state-based approaches and militarized means (but not necessarily military confrontation) and is constrained by its capability and experience in attracting or coordinating constructive participation of diversified actors in collective policy actions.

This finding has important policy implications. First, it identifies the main obstacle to be overcome for China's policy to achieve a more effective and desirable outcome. That is, the state-based approach, sometimes in combination of militarized means, has obvious limitations in pursuing sustainable values in the maritime domain, especially in economic and environment sectors. This is a lesson for not only China but also other states as well as IOs. A consensus should be forged throughout the international community that IOs, in particular, need to play a more central role in leading efforts to tackle transnational maritime threats.

Second, there is room for substantial improvement when it comes to China's contribution to sustainable development in the marine economy. China's policy practices regarding

sustainable development reveal its unique understanding and position regarding the trade-off between economic growth and environment protection. China's own experience of achieving fast economic growth at the expense of the environment has informed its calculation of the trade-off between economic development and environmental sustainability. This experience has partially accounted for China's preference, in its proposed maritime economic development initiatives, for large infrastructure projects and top-level design of economic plans, many of which are crucial and long desired as the basis for robust and sustained economic development but do not necessarily stand up to strict environmental protection criteria. In this regard, the policy framework provided in this paper suggested practical ways to improve China's policy practices. For example, engagement with local communities and greater support for the involvement of nonstate actors can be helpful in bridging the gap between China's vision of a sustainable blue economy and its actual implementation.

Finally, the findings also provide a solid test to the analytical value of the proposed policy framework. As shown in the empirical analysis, this framework can be useful for policy assessment. It also helps to map more precisely where the disagreements lie by breaking down the complex of maritime security into four sets of policy goals. In this sense, this framework can serve as the foundation upon which disagreements can be engaged and consensus can be built, to make sure that one does not talk past the other. For example, China has implemented the controversial policy of moratorium in the SCS, which evoked strong protests from neighboring countries. Applying the policy framework, it becomes clear that the moratorium *per se* is an effective approach to achieving sustainable fishing, and it is possible for relevant states to build consensus that the policy is best positioned in the environmental sector of the framework. Based on this consensus, it is clear that the disagreement or controversy is actually rooted in the implementation stage, which is carried out by a single state in disputed waters. Therefore, a feasible way can be devised to mediate the disagreement, that is, negotiating a coordinated action or mechanism in which all relevant states could participate in sustainable fishing in the SCS.

5. Conclusions: Building Up a Sustainable Path towards Maritime Security

Maritime security is a contested concept in both scholarly discussions and the policy-making circle. The conception provided in this paper helps to clarify the basic elements of maritime security and pave the way for building up a sustainable path to advancing maritime security as a comprehensive set of policy objectives.

The discourse on human security and sustainable development in the past three decades has highlighted clearly the complex nature of security challenges. The situation is even more acute in the global maritime space. It becomes clear that states are the most influential agents in tackling many of the issues, but this is far from sufficient in the face of contemporary challenges. Security cannot be sustainably attained through traditional approaches dominated by state-centrism, muscle-flexing, and zero-sum mentality. In the face of a profoundly changing landscape of the world politically, economically, technologically, and environmentally, the pursuit of maritime security demands an innovative policy toolkit filled with more people-centered, cooperative, and diversified approaches underlined by a positive-sum mentality. As illustrated in Table 1, threats to maritime security are multidimensional and, at the same time, deeply interconnected with each other. Depending on the nature of different threats, careful selection needs to be made in order to come up with the best policy approaches to address them. It also becomes clear that states are the most influential agents in tackling many of the security issues, but this is far from sufficient in the face of contemporary challenges.

The emerging consensus on sustainable development and cooperative and comprehensive security has influenced the theoretical understanding and policy practices of many actors, including China. China's adoption of the new security concept and, reflected in the issue of maritime security, the vision of "An Ocean Community of Shared Future" has made it embrace the broadened maritime security agenda. However, applying the policy frame-

work proposed in this paper, one can find that while, in general, China's policy practices have been conducive to maritime security, its preference for state-centered approach and active employment of militarized means has significantly limited its potential contribution, which can be improved by shifting towards a more flexible approach and greater support for the constructive involvement of distinct actors and relevant stakeholders. Future studies can be taken to apply the policy framework in other cases.

The ocean is the cradle for life, yet it is confronting unprecedented challenges today, which threatens not just coastal communities but the survival of the whole mankind. Maritime security, as analyzed in this paper, concerns human security in all dimensions, peace and stability, economic prosperity, environmental health, social equality, and safety, all together forming the basic human rights. In this sense, the pursuit of maritime security calls on the global community, states, communities, groups, and individuals to work together to contribute wisdom and solidarity in providing a sustainable path to maritime security, which applies a comprehensive and relational understanding and employs diversified approaches.

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