

# Study on the Strategy of Sea and Land Complex National Sea Rights - the Case of France

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**Abstract:** A land-sea composite state is a state based on land, close to the continental margin, with a long coastline and a certain degree of influence. In the development of sea-land complex countries, there are respective situations and strategic dilemmas in sea rights. Sea rights are closely linked to national destiny, and after years of development, experience and lessons are both present. France is a representative land and sea composite state. Its thought on sea rights has profound historical value and has made unique contributions to the development of global sea rights theory. Therefore, this paper takes the development of France's sea power as a blueprint and studies the development of France's sea power on land and sea composite countries, discusses the rise and fall of France's sea power, and provides reference for China's sea power strategy research.

**Key words:** Land and sea composite countries; Sea power strategy; France

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## 1 Introduction

The analysis of the geopolitical characteristics of the sea-land complex states and the sea-land strategy is of great importance for the improvement of geopolitical research in a situation where the traditional sea-land states occupy a geopolitical advantage. Modern France, through integration and transformation, has carried out the strategy of joint development of land and sea, and the traditional threat to the Eurasian continent has

changed or even disappeared. China, however, is a typical land and sea composite country, which has not promoted maritime hegemony in its history, and has no experience of the rise and failure of sea power, and no direct way to learn from it. Therefore, the study of the sea power strategy of France as a typical land and sea composite country is of great significance to the development of China's geopolitical and sea power strategy.

## 2 Basic characteristics of a land-sea complex country

### 2.1 Geographical features

Geographic factors are one of the most important factors that directly affect the strategic development of the country. The influence of geographical factors was particularly important in the modern past, when science and technology were not yet well developed. Land and sea complex countries are generally backed by less natural barriers to land, but also close to the open ocean space, both vast land and long coastline areas. In Europe, France, Spain, Portugal, the Netherlands and other countries are the typical land and sea composite countries, among them, France is surrounded by the sea on three sides. These countries combine both maritime and terrestrial characteristics, combining the geographical characteristics of both sea and land. These countries are all influential, and are once had absolute control of the sea sea power of the maritime power states. The maritime and land complex states are on the continental margins and have a road base that can be reliably relied upon, while the size of the land territory also influences their strategic development.

### 2.2 The fate of the once-rising

The sea and land complex of European States has a dramatic aspect in the historical arena. One by one, these States have emerged, becoming powerful at one stage or another, and then successively losing their sea power and withdrawing from the hegemonic arena. In the eighteenth century, France competed with Britain for maritime hegemony and overseas colonies, and after its failure, the development of French sea power has been mediocre. After World War II, France and Germany jointly adopted an integration strategy and re-emerged with some success in sea power. At present, France through the extension of sea power strategy, and other European powers to start the European revival journey. In order to move towards the rise of the land and sea composite state, its strategy is closely related to the success or failure of the rise of sea power.

### **2.3 Marginal zone theory**

According to American geo-strategist Nicholas Spiekman, the coastal regions of Europe, the Far East and the Atlantic coast of North America are characterized by world power: large populations, abundant resources, and a line of communication around the sea where sea-rights states congregate and connect, so that peripheral states have a great advantage in developing sea power. The doctrine of the periphery has had a profound impact on U.S. national strategy. The United States thus strategically designed its foreign policy to pursue sea power, control the core of Eurasia's periphery, and maintain the balance of power in Eurasia. Thus, Spiekman argues that the United States is threatened by the composite land and sea countries on the "periphery", not by the heart of the land. The doctrinal knowledge of the "periphery" is wary of the development of the sea-land complex and does not recommend the development of the sea power of such states. He pointed out the great potential of sea-land complex states in developing sea rights, which is valuable as a reference for studying the sea rights strategy of such states.

### **2.4 The theory of sea rights**

According to the theory of sea rights, the use and control of the sea is the most important game in world history, and the rise and fall of a country is closely related to sea rights. If a country wants to become a powerful country, it should vigorously develop sea trade, gain benefits from sea trade and build a strong navy. The main factors that influence the development of sea power are geographical location, territorial extent,

population size, natural structure, and the nature of government. Achieving strong sea power also helps to consolidate land power, and sea power and land power are co-dependent and mutually restrictive. Sea power is not only a matter of military strategy, but also a matter of national security and development. Geographically, a country with a complex sea-land complex is subject to the impact of both sea and land, which makes it difficult to focus on developing sea power, but having both sea and land as different strategic conditions presents both opportunities and challenges for development<sup>[1]</sup>.

## **3 French maritime power strategy in practice**

### **3.1 French geopolitics**

As the representative of a composite land and sea State in Europe, France's success or failure in developing sea power not only affects its own national interests but also has a bearing on the direction of the European situation. Among the modern European countries, France was the first to implement the strategic practice of sea power, and it has produced many research theories and development experiences. France has become a European power because of its control of sea power, and it has also lost its influence because of the loss of sea power.

Geographically, France is located in the western part of Europe, with the English Channel to the northwest, some French-speaking countries and Germany to the northeast, Switzerland to the east, Italy to the southeast, Spain to the south, the Mediterranean Sea to the south, and the Atlantic Ocean to the west. France's land depth is relatively extensive, with a long coastline. It is surrounded by land and sea on three sides, and its overall geography is complex. The French sea is as important as the continent. From the French strategic tradition, the French rulers were more than happy to develop land power. It was not until the reign of Louis XIV that France began to support the development of sea power, and by virtue of being surrounded by the sea on three sides, began to fight for sea power. Unlike Germany, France still pursued land power while developing sea power, adopting a strategy of "sea and land advancing together". However, due to the changes in the domestic form and environment, in the late Louis XIV, France still reverted to the strategy of "land over sea", which had a fatal impact on the development of French sea power.

Even though France had the power and talent to develop sea power, it could not pursue sea power or land power alone. If you want to become a strong country, you have to start from the sea and land, each with its own merits, but resource pressure will limit the “sea and land” strategy <sup>[2]</sup>.

### 3.2 France’s historical sea power strategy

Beginning with the great geographical acts of the fifteenth century, the European continent has witnessed a succession of maritime hegemonies established by European States. France’s geography is peculiar in that it oscillates between developing sea power or asserting land power. France’s geographic features are similar to ours, but smaller in size. The pursuit of land rights is a French tradition, but due to the many wars and turmoil, France did not have too many resources to develop sea rights. It was not until the reign of Louis XIV that French society entered a state of relative stability and economic development brought more resources for strategic adjustment. France was surrounded by the sea on three sides, which made it suitable for port trade. The ports on the Mediterranean coast brought great benefits to the French bourgeoisie, which led to calls for maritime trade, which required France to defend its maritime interests with a strong navy. France vigorously developed its overseas trade, and its gold and silver reserves became richer. Arsenal and naval schools were also established to promote naval construction. In the seventeenth century, France gained European maritime hegemony. Unfortunately, it was short-lived. Under the complicated international situation, Louis XIV decided to fight for European land power and reduced his investment in sea power. It was not until after the Second World War that France began to redevelop its sea power and promote the process of European integration.

France, as a European power, once influenced the direction of the European situation and became a country with both sea and land rights because of its special geographical conditions. For French decision-makers, this is a difficult choice, and any choice will be subject to a variety of factors that will have a different impact on France’s destiny. The “land and sea” strategy put pressure on France to fight on two fronts, with the rise and rapid decline of sea power. But the impact of sea power strategy is not the role of one factor, the complex impact of each factor should be analyzed <sup>[3]</sup>.

### 3.3 French and German maritime security

### strategies

As important European land and sea composite states, France and Germany had similar experiences in the development of sea power strategy, having risen on the strength of sea power strategy and also failed due to blind expansion of sea power. Post-World War II France and Germany advocated European integration, co-led EU affairs, implemented multilateral diplomacy, and worked to turn geopolitical dilemmas into favorable conditions. Today, France and Germany are active on the seas and are no longer a source of conflict, but rather stalwarts of maritime security. France and Germany share common strategic security concerns and are therefore constantly joining forces on the platform of the military alliance. In recent years, France has pursued a strategy of “international cooperation” and “European association”. The Europe of today, under the influence of countries such as France and Germany, is moving towards integration, re-establishing a continental balance of power and jointly developing maritime defence. France has a particular geopolitical elite path that has evolved from economic integration to defense integration, to security integration, and finally to transatlantic cooperation. It can be argued that the integration process facilitated the strategic union of France and Germany in terms of sea power.

The French sea power strategic practice is representative of the development of sea power in a complex land and sea state. After World War II, France learned the lessons of its past development and did not seek the rise of sea power to avoid attracting the vigilance of maritime hegemonic states or neighboring countries. France and Germany jointly dominate European affairs, using Europe as a platform, avoiding the shortcomings of geographical factors, constantly adjusting sea power strategy, making the development of the sea to achieve certain results <sup>[4]</sup>.

## 4 Difficulties in the Rise of French Sea Power

### 4.1 Alerting ocean powers

The historical rotation of hegemonic states on the sea teaches us that how a maritime power manages its relationship with the sea and how it manages its relationship with other states are both key factors in the maintenance of sea power. For a land and sea complex nation like France, the failure of its rise was due to the stranglehold of Britain. Britain is a classic example of a nation that has pooled its efforts to develop sea

power and establish maritime hegemony, with its naval strength demonstrating its national power. The rest of Europe, including France, would have seen it as a potential threat if it had developed maritime power, and Britain would have acted to secure its own maritime hegemony.

Both in the past and in post-World War II France, the practice of maritime rise has been unsuccessful, not least because of being wary of, besieged by and suppressed by maritime powers. But this does not mean that the rise of sea and land composite countries of sea power must challenge the sea power, the current France and Germany to develop a sea power strategy, did not cause the blockade of marine hegemonic countries, but with the United States to carry out cooperation.

#### 4.2 Uneven development of land and sea areas

The land-sea complex dictates that the strategic vision of the State should be oriented on the land base and that it is not possible to completely abandon the land base and develop sea rights. A balanced development of both land and sea requires the allocation of limited resources. France's history of sea power has been one of devoting more resources to the construction of the sea in order to obtain greater benefits, while traditional land power has allocated strategic resources. The confrontation between France and the maritime hegemonic states is not simply a strategic confrontation of sea power, but also a confrontation of land power, which has to face the dual threat from both land power and sea power. From the point of view of the resource allocation of the rise of France's sea power, there is almost no perfect way to allocate resources, no matter in what proportion, it should be subordinated to actual needs and constantly adjusted due to changes in the environment. At present, France has formed an alliance with Germany and other European countries to jointly develop maritime defense, relieving the pressure on the strategic resource allocation of its own sea power, while also finding a new development path<sup>[5]</sup>.

#### 4.3 Strategic short-sightedness

The geography of land- and sea-complex States is more specific. For countries with a single sea power or a single land power, geopolitical strategies are easier to formulate, and it is easier to come up with stable long-term strategies that are in line with the direction of development. For land- and sea-complex states, national leaders face more complex strategy formulation requirements. Sea power is a give-and-take, and the benefits of the

maritime trade boom have created modern European powers, and France has reaped tangible benefits from it. But the rapid short-term benefits of maritime development can easily disorient policy makers from the complexities of the form and make the right choices. Some countries have adopted a maritime strategy based on their national realities, with maritime expansion shrinking their maritime strategy if it affects the implementation of national strategies. Some countries, on the other hand, formulate their national policies based on their maritime strategic development needs and focus on short-term benefits, which do not allow decision makers to respond flexibly to sea power strategies and ultimately fail. Strategic short-sightedness is also one of the difficulties in the development of land-sea complex States.

### 5 Conclusion

The sea power strategies of land- and sea-complex states are influenced by many factors. The practice of France's sea rights strategy proves the difficulties faced by the sea-land complex state. The study of France's sea rights strategy provides a reference for China's ocean construction with theoretical and practical experience. In order to achieve the synergistic progress of sea and land, we should take into account the key points, develop in a balanced way, follow the pace of the times, base ourselves on the complex situation of international relations, fully verify from theory and practice, and carefully choose the national development strategy.

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