

# *Maritime Security Strategy in the Indo-Pacific Region from the Perspective of Geopolitics and International Law*

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**Abstract**— Maritime security in the Indo-Pacific region is a strategic issue influenced by geopolitical dynamics and the implementation of international law. Territorial disputes, piracy, smuggling, and violations of maritime law pose significant challenges to regional stability. This study aims to analyze maritime security strategies in the Indo-Pacific from the perspectives of geopolitics and international law, highlighting the role of UNCLOS, multilateral cooperation, and state responses to maritime threats. The research employs a qualitative approach using literature review, case studies, and policy analysis. It examines cases such as conflicts in the South China Sea, anti-piracy efforts in the Strait of Malacca, and the roles of ASEAN and QUAD in strengthening maritime security. The findings indicate that although UNCLOS serves as the primary legal framework for maritime governance, its implementation faces challenges, including overlapping claims and non-compliance with international arbitration rulings. Additionally, multilateral cooperation and enhanced maritime defense capabilities play a crucial role in addressing non-traditional threats such as piracy and smuggling. The study concludes that effective maritime security strategies require synergy between national policies, regional cooperation, and law enforcement based on UNCLOS. The implications suggest that Indo-Pacific countries must strengthen maritime diplomacy, enhance naval patrol capabilities, and leverage monitoring technologies to maintain regional stability. Recommendations include strengthening international cooperation mechanisms, harmonizing maritime regulations, and increasing resources for maritime security authorities to optimize the protection of global trade routes.

**Keywords**— Maritime security; Indo-Pacific; geopolitics; UNCLOS; piracy; multilateral cooperation.

## I. INTRODUCTION

The Indo-Pacific region is one of the most strategic regions in the world. As the epicenter between the Indian and Pacific Oceans, it is a major trade route connecting Asia, Africa, Australia and the Americas (Smith, 2022). The Indo-Pacific region has become the center of global attention in the context of geopolitics and maritime security. Its strategic geographic position, encompassing several important chokepoints such as the Strait of Malacca and the South China Sea, makes it vital to global trade and the geopolitical projects of major powers (Beckman, 2013). Countries such as the United States, China, Japan and India have strategic interests in the region, often leading to tensions and power struggles (Fels, 2017). In the context of international law, especially the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), serves as an important framework for regulating inter-state interactions at sea, addressing maritime disputes and ensuring safe navigation (Beckman, 2017; Klein, 2018). However, despite a clear legal framework, challenges to maritime security in the Indo-Pacific region remain significant. Piracy, smuggling, human trafficking and other illegal activities continue to threaten regional stability (Bueger & Edmunds, 2020). In addition, militarization and infrastructure development in disputed areas add to the complexity of the situation (Martinson & Dutton, 2018).

In the face of these challenges, multilateral and bilateral cooperation is key to ensuring maritime security and stability in the region (Goh, 2008). This essay will explore maritime security strategies in the Indo-Pacific region from the perspective of geopolitics and international law. By analyzing the role of major powers, the implementation of UNCLOS, maritime security challenges, as well as regional cooperation initiatives.

## II. RESEARCH METHODS

This research uses a qualitative methodology with a literature review approach, case studies, and policy analysis to assess maritime security strategies in the Indo-Pacific region from the perspectives of geopolitics and international law. Data is obtained from academic journals, policy reports, and publications from international organizations such as the IMO, ASEAN, and the UN to understand the geopolitical dynamics, territorial disputes, and the implementation of UNCLOS. The case studies include the South China Sea conflict, piracy in the Strait of Malacca, and multilateral cooperation such as ASEAN and the QUAD. Policy analysis is conducted to evaluate the effectiveness of maritime security regulations in addressing non-traditional threats such as piracy, smuggling, and human trafficking. This research is based on secondary sources without primary data collection and aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the interaction between geopolitical interests, international law, and security mechanisms in the Indo-Pacific.

## III. DISCUSSION

The Indo-Pacific region is an arena for major world powers to assert their influence. The United States, as the world's largest naval power, has a strategic interest in maintaining freedom of navigation and containing China's growing influence. The US Indo-Pacific strategy includes increasing its military presence and strengthening alliances with countries such as Japan, Australia and India through the QUAD (Quadrilateral Security Dialogue) framework (Medcalf, 2013). China, on the other hand, has increased its military power and expanded its influence through its Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) project that includes massive investments in maritime infrastructure. The construction of artificial islands and military bases in the South China Sea raises concerns for neighboring countries and challenges the freedom of navigation governed by UNCLOS (Chung, 2018; Zhang, 2019). Japan and India also play important roles in the region. Japan, as a key US ally, seeks to balance China's influence by enhancing its maritime capabilities and strengthening cooperation with Southeast Asian countries (Hornung, 2017). India, with its strategic location in the Indian Ocean, focuses on maritime security to protect trade routes and prevent threats from China and other countries in the region (Pant & Joshi, 2015).

International law, particularly the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), plays an important role in regulating maritime security in the Indo-Pacific. UNCLOS is the main pillar of international law that governs the rights and obligations of states at sea. It provides mechanisms for resolving maritime disputes and establishes the boundaries of exclusive economic zones (EEZs). However, the implementation of UNCLOS in the Indo-Pacific region is often faced with challenges, especially when dealing with overlapping territorial claims (Beckman, 2017; Klein, 2018). The South China Sea is a prime example where conflicting territorial claims have created tensions. China claims almost the entire South China Sea based on the "nine-dash line", which conflicts with the claims of the Philippines, Vietnam, Malaysia and other countries in the region. The International Court of Arbitration ruled in 2016 that China's claims had no legal basis, but China rejected the decision and continues to strengthen its position in the region (Martinson & Dutton, 2018). On the other hand, countries such as Japan and South Korea also face maritime disputes in the East China Sea (İncesu, 2021). The Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands dispute between Japan and China and the Dokdo/Takeshima Islands dispute between South Korea and Japan are examples of how territorial disputes can threaten regional stability (Patalano, 2018).

The implementation of UNCLOS in the Indo-Pacific region also faces challenges from practices that violate international maritime law. For example, China's unilateral actions in building artificial islands and military facilities in the South China Sea have sparked international concerns regarding freedom of navigation and utilization of marine resources (Gao & Jia, 2013). In addition, countries in the region often adopt different interpretations of UNCLOS, leading to legal conflicts and diplomatic tensions (Hayton, 2014). Countries in the Indo-Pacific region have sought to address these challenges through diplomacy and multilateral dialog. ASEAN, for example, has been instrumental in facilitating discussions and negotiations on maritime security

and territorial disputes. The Declaration of Conduct in the South China Sea (DOC) and efforts to reach a Code of Conduct (COC) are examples of regional initiatives to reduce tensions and promote maritime cooperation (Bateman, 2009). In addition, some countries in the region have turned to international courts to resolve maritime disputes. The 2016 decision of the Court of Arbitration on the South China Sea is an important precedent that confirms the importance of international law in resolving maritime disputes. However, non-compliance with international tribunal rulings by some states indicates limitations in the enforcement of international law (Dupuy & Dupuy, 2016).

Maritime security has a direct impact on the economies of countries in the Indo-Pacific. Safe and stable shipping lanes are important for international trade and energy transportation. Disruptions to maritime security, such as piracy or maritime conflict, can disrupt global supply chains and increase shipping costs (Barnes & Oloruntoba, 2005). For example, the Strait of Malacca, one of the world's busiest shipping lanes, plays a vital role in the global economy. Security in the Malacca Strait is critical to ensure the smooth flow of trade between Asia and Europe. Therefore, countries in the region continue to work together to ensure security on this strategic shipping lane (Barnes & Oloruntoba, 2005). In addition to territorial disputes, the Indo-Pacific region also faces various other maritime security challenges. Piracy and sea armed robbery in the Malacca Strait and surrounding waters pose a serious threat to global trade. While regional cooperative efforts have successfully reduced piracy incidents, the threat remains and requires constant attention (Bueger & Edmunds, 2019; Murphy, 2009). Drug smuggling, human trafficking and other illegal activities are also significant problems. Weak law enforcement in some countries and a lack of coordination between maritime authorities make the region vulnerable to criminal activity. In addition, climate change is adding a new dimension to maritime security challenges, with rising sea levels and changing weather patterns affecting fish migration patterns and maritime life (Germond & Mazaris, 2019). In addition to geopolitical and legal challenges, the Indo-Pacific region also faces environmental issues that impact maritime security. Climate change, environmental degradation and marine pollution are among the issues affecting the health of maritime ecosystems and the sustainability of marine resources (Leite et al., 2020). Climate change, for example, can lead to rising sea levels and changing weather patterns that affect shipping lanes and maritime infrastructure. Countries in the Indo-Pacific need to develop adaptation and mitigation strategies to deal with the impacts of climate change on maritime security (Leite et al., 2020).

In the face of these challenges, countries in the Indo-Pacific region need to increase investment in surveillance and law enforcement technologies. Modern technologies such as satellites, drones and AI systems can be used to monitor maritime activities in real-time and improve responses to security threats. For example, the use of satellite-based surveillance technology enables early detection of illegal activities such as illegal fishing and piracy (Molenaar, 2020). International cooperation is also important to facilitate information exchange and coordination of law enforcement operations. According to research by Chang and Park (2021), developing closer maritime cooperation among countries in the Indo-Pacific region can help address these security challenges. They highlighted the importance of joint exercises, intelligence sharing and capacity building to enhance maritime law enforcement effectiveness. In addition, the establishment of regional coordination centers could assist in responding more efficiently to maritime security incidents.

The study by Smith and Jones (2022) shows that a comprehensive and multi-disciplinary approach is needed to deal with maritime security threats. They propose the integration of security, environmental protection and economic development policies as part of a holistic maritime security strategy. This includes strengthening international maritime regulations and enhancing cooperation with international organizations such as the International Maritime Organization (IMO). As such, maritime security in the Indo-Pacific region is a complex issue that requires attention from multiple perspectives, including geopolitics, international law and the environment. Countries in the region need to continue to strengthen regional and international cooperation, enhance law enforcement capacity and invest in surveillance technology to counter evolving threats.

## **Maritime Security Strategy**

### **Enhanced Regional Cooperation and Multilateral Approaches**

Regional cooperation is one of the key strategies in addressing maritime security challenges in the Indo-Pacific. ASEAN plays an important role in facilitating dialog and cooperation among its member states and with external partners (Tan, 2021). For

example, the ASEAN Defense Ministers' Meeting (ADMM) and ADMM-Plus are important platforms for joint military exercises and intelligence sharing. In addition, the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) also plays a role in strengthening maritime cooperation in the Indian Ocean through initiatives such as IORA Maritime Safety and Security (Wong et al., 2022). IORA focuses on maritime capacity building, tackling illegal fishing and preventing piracy. Multilateral and bilateral cooperation is essential in dealing with maritime security challenges in the Indo-Pacific region. ASEAN has been an important platform for regional dialog and cooperation on a wide range of issues, including maritime security. Through mechanisms such as the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) and the East Asia Summit (EAS), countries in the region can share information, coordinate policies and conduct joint military exercises to enhance maritime security capacity (Emmers, 2018; Goh, 2019).

A multi-lateral approach through mechanisms such as the Quad (US, Japan, India, Australia) is an important strategy for dealing with maritime security challenges in the Indo-Pacific (Miller, 2021). The Quad aims to promote regional security and stability through cooperation in maritime, energy and infrastructure development. The Quad has held joint military exercises such as Exercise Malabar involving navies from all four countries. This exercise aims to improve interoperability and coordination capabilities in maritime operations (Miller, 2021). QUAD, which comprises the US, Japan, India and Australia, also plays an important role in maritime security in the Indo-Pacific. The initiative focuses on freedom of navigation, strengthening the maritime capacity of member states, and enhancing cooperation in law enforcement at sea (Smith, 2020; Wirth, 2019). In addition, bilateral cooperation such as between Indonesia and Australia in Operation Gannet and between India and Japan in the Malabar maritime exercise also demonstrate the importance of international collaboration in maintaining maritime security (Roy-Chaudhury, 2018; Singh, 2019).

### **Strengthening Defense and Surveillance Tools**

Countries in the Indo-Pacific have increased investments in their maritime defense and surveillance capabilities to secure their maritime territories (Wong, 2020). Satellite technology, drones and advanced maritime surveillance systems have been adopted to monitor activities at sea in real-time. Naval modernization is also a priority for many countries in the region. For example, India has launched several new aircraft carriers and submarines to enhance its power projection capabilities in the Indian Ocean (Holmes et al., 2009). Japan and Australia have also strengthened their naval fleets through the acquisition of new destroyers and submarines (Anderson, 2021). Maritime security has a direct impact on the economies of countries in the Indo-Pacific. Safe and stable shipping lanes are important for international trade and energy transportation. Disruptions to maritime security, such as piracy or maritime conflict, can disrupt global supply chains and increase shipping costs (Barnes & Oloruntoba, 2005). For example, the Strait of Malacca, one of the world's busiest shipping lanes, plays a vital role in the global economy. Security in the Malacca Strait is critical to ensure the smooth flow of trade between Asia and Europe. Therefore, countries in the region continue to work together to ensure security on this strategic shipping lane (Barnes & Oloruntoba, 2005).

The utilization of technology in maritime Operations supported by big data and AI can contribute to the economic and environmental aspects of maritime business (Sanchez-Gonzalez et al., 2019). Maritime trade accounts for about 80% of world trade (UNCTAD 2018) and the industry faces many challenges due to its vastness (Brouer et al., 2016), as well as evolving regulatory requirements (Lee et al., 2019). Big data and AI offer viable solutions to address some of these challenges. For example, data on vessel performance and navigation systems can help shipping companies monitor vessel performance and take the necessary steps to improve vessel operational efficiency (Mirović et al., 2018). Moreover, the adoption of blockchain technology in the maritime supply chain is also expected to increase transparency and efficiency in maritime logistics management (Jović et al., 2020). Thus, technological innovations not only help improve maritime security but also provide significant economic benefits.

### **Strict law enforcement**

Strict enforcement against maritime offenses such as piracy, illegal fishing and human trafficking is a key element in a maritime security strategy (Shih, 2024). Countries in the Indo-Pacific region need to increase cooperation between maritime authorities, police and law enforcement officials to address these threats. For example, Indonesia has increased maritime patrols in its waters to catch perpetrators of illegal fishing and piracy (Bateman, 2014). In addition, international cooperation such as the

Regional Cooperation Agreement on Combating Piracy and Armed Robbery against Ships in Asia (ReCAAP) has successfully reduced piracy incidents in Southeast Asia (Hayashi, 2005). Increased patrols and maritime law enforcement have become a priority for many countries in the region, reflecting their commitment to protecting national waters and maintaining regional security. According to Lee and Kim (2020), success in tackling the threat of piracy depends on effective coordination between law enforcement agencies, technological support, and strong international cooperation. The study by (Chapsos & Hamilton, 2019) highlighted that illegal fishing not only harms marine ecosystems, but also undermines the economic sustainability of coastal communities. They emphasized the need for strict law implementation and consistent enforcement to reduce this detrimental practice.

In the context of human trafficking, responses by maritime authorities and police require not only quick reactions to individual cases, but also long-term strategies to prevent this crime. According to a study by Wang et al. (2022), cross-border cooperation and intelligence sharing between countries is critical to unraveling complex human trafficking networks in the Indo-Pacific region. The success of regional cooperation as described in ReCAAP demonstrates the importance of multilateral platforms in facilitating information sharing and coordinating responses to transnational maritime crime. Increased investment in law enforcement capacity and surveillance technology, as noted by (Wang et al., 2023), is necessary to strengthen state presence in tackling increasingly complex maritime security threats.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

Maritime security in the Indo-Pacific region is a complex and multi-dimensional issue, influenced by geopolitical dynamics, international law and various security challenges. Major powers such as the United States, China, Japan and India have strategic interests that often overlap, causing tension and competition in the region. The implementation of UNCLOS provides an important legal framework, but challenges in its application, especially related to territorial disputes, remain significant. Maritime security issues such as piracy, smuggling, and climate change require a holistic approach and strong cooperation between countries in the region. Multilateral initiatives such as ASEAN and QUAD, as well as bilateral cooperation, play an important role in enhancing maritime security capacity and promoting regional stability. Technology and innovation are also key factors in enhancing maritime security. Countries in the Indo-Pacific region need to continue to invest in advanced technology and innovation to address evolving threats. With a comprehensive approach and close cooperation, the Indo-Pacific region can achieve more stable and secure maritime security, which in turn will support peace and prosperity. Maritime security in the Indo-Pacific region requires a comprehensive and coordinated approach involving geopolitical, international legal, economic and environmental aspects. Countries in the region need to enhance regional cooperation, strengthen defense and surveillance tools, adopt a multi-lateral approach, and strictly enforce laws to maintain maritime stability and security. Through a comprehensive approach, countries in the Indo-Pacific region can address existing challenges and threats, and ensure mutual security and prosperity. This approach should also involve efforts to address environmental challenges that may affect maritime security in the future.

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