



THE ASYMMETRIC-COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF STRAITS HORMUZ STRAITS AND MALACCA STRAITS OF MALACCA

(Analisis Perbandingan Asimetrik Pada Selat Hormuz dan Selat Malaka)

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Abstract

Since thousands of years ago, seas and straits have become world trade routes. The sea carries out the exchange of goods and trade. The purpose of this article is to explain the mastery of the potential of the strait; It has implications for the glory of the country that controls it. Through an asymmetrical analysis, colonials' domination of the straits is relatively safer than areas controlled by regional countries. Sea lanes between islands and between continents are strategic resources that can be exploited by anyone who occupies them. The Hormuz Strait and the Malacca Strait are clear examples of how vital the strait is for the movement of goods and trade routes involving many national interests. On that basis, many conflicts occurred in these two straits. The traditional approach and realism in viewing the conflict in the two straits prove that, in the end, every country or country with interest will have an ego to dominate. The conflicts that occur in the two straits are border and resource conflicts.

Keywords: Asymmetric Analysis, Straits of Hormuz, Straits of Malacca

Abstrak.

Sejak ribuan tahun lalu, laut dan selat telah menjadi jalur perdagangan dunia. Pertukaran barang dan perdagangan dilakukan melalui laut. Tujuan artikel ini menjelaskan penguasaan potensi selat berimplikasi pada kejayaan negara yang menguasainya. Melalui analisis asimetris, dominasi penguasaan selat oleh kolonial relatif lebih aman dari pada kawasan dikuasai oleh negara kawasan. Jalur laut antar pulau dan antar benua menjadi sumber daya strategis yang dapat dimanfaatkan oleh siapapun yang menempatinnya. Selat Hormuz dan Selat Malaka merupakan contoh nyata betapa pentingnya selat sebagai jalur pergerakan barang dan jalur perdagangan yang melibatkan banyak kepentingan negara. Atas dasar itulah, banyak konflik yang terjadi di kedua selat



ini. Pendekatan tradisional dan realisme dalam memandang konflik di dua selat tersebut membuktikan bahwa pada akhirnya setiap negara atau negara yang berkepentingan akan memiliki ego untuk mendominasi. Konflik yang terjadi di kedua selat tersebut adalah konflik perbatasan dan sumber daya.

1. Introduction

There are some interesting classical geopolitical theories to review related to maritime security, geopolitical control, and geoeconomics. Two of these theories are the Sea Power Theory or Mahan Theory and the Latent Power Theory. Sea Power Theory or Mahan Theory says that a country must control sea power to gain a geopolitical advantage. (Cohen, 2014)

Meanwhile, neorealism's concept of latent power describes interactions between countries that tend to conflict and aims to build national hard power, such as politics and the military. This concept is also used to see the correlation between geopolitical interests and the development of state power capabilities. Latent power explains the socio-economic correlation of a country that can be used for the military power of a country. This power can be built if the state has money and natural resources. The use of the economic aspect to increase military capability cannot be separated from the role of the state, which can take advantage of the geopolitical and geoeconomic advantages of a strategic area. (Dunne, 2013)

This theory can be used to look at the problems in the Strait of Hormuz and the Strait of Malacca with a traditional and economical approach. Since thousands of years ago, seas and straits have become world trade routes, and the exchange of goods and trade is carried out by the sea. Since then, inter-island and inter-continental sea lanes have become a strategic resource that can be utilized by anyone who occupies them. The Straits of Hormuz and the Straits of Malacca are concrete examples of how important the strait is for the movement of goods and trade routes involving many state interests.



2. Literature Review

2.1. Traditional Approaches of International Relations

Based on Volker Boege's research, five major strengths of traditional approaches to conflict or war transformation can be identified. (Boege, 2006)

- Traditional approaches fit situations of state fragility and failure.
Traditional approaches fit situations of state fragility or collapse. As many of today's large-scale violent conflicts in the world are carried out in regions where the state is absent or merely a – relatively weak – actor among a host of other actors, non-state-centric forms of control of violence and regulation of conflict have to be drawn upon.
- Traditional approaches are not state-centric and hence credited with legitimacy.
Legitimacy rests with the leaders of that group, not with the state authorities, and people do not obey the rules of the state, but the rules of their group. Reference to those traditional authorities and institutions will enhance the legitimacy of any measures taken for conflict transformation and peacebuilding.
- Traditional approaches take the time factor into due account and are process-oriented.
Traditional approaches are characterized by their slowness. Furthermore, slowness breaks, and "time outs" are deliberately built into conflict transformation to give conflict parties time to calm down, assess the state of the process so far, and reformulate their position.
- Traditional approaches provide for comprehensive inclusion and participation.
Traditional approaches provide for inclusion and participation. In the same way, as all sides (and every member of each party or side) are responsible for the conflict, everybody also has to take responsibility for



its solution. A solution can only be achieved by consensus. Every side has to perceive the resolution as a win-win outcome, compatible with its own interests – which are not confined to the material sphere but also comprise issues such as honor, prestige, and saving one's face. To pursue an inclusive, participatory approach at all levels of conflict is highly complex.

- Traditional approaches focus on the psycho-social and spiritual dimensions of conflict transformation.

Conflict transformation and peacebuilding are about negotiations, political solutions, and material reconstruction, reconciliation, and mental and spiritual healing. They take into account that conflict transformation and peacebuilding is not only an issue of reason, rationality, and talk but also of effects, emotions, imagination, and spirit.

2.2. Realism Concept

According to Mahfudzah (1999: 107), realism in principle, is a rather conservative thought, empirical in nature, cautious, full of suspicion of idealistic principles, and so respects the teachings received rather than history. This view is seen as trying to describe outwardly what is contained in the approach. Referring to Kegley & Whitkopf (2006:33), the realism approach is defined as: "A paradigm based on the premise that world politics is essentially and unchangeably a struggle among self-interested states for power and position under anarchy, with each competing state pursuing its national interests".

The unit of analysis of realism refers to actors or actors who act in realizing relations between nations. In the realism approach, the ranking of the analysis that is prioritized is the country or states such as Malaysia, America, and the like. Realists make the state the leading actor in studying world politics and relations between nations. The state first refers to everything that happens in world politics as the most important actor. Kegley & Whitkopf (2006: 33)



explain that: "Realism as applied to contemporary world politics, views the state, which should answer to no higher political authority, as the most important actor on the world stage."

3. Research Methodology

The research methodology used in this study is a qualitative descriptive research method. Qualitative research, according to Sugiono, is research where the researcher is the main instrument. The data collection methodology is combined, and the data analysis is inductive (Sugiono. 2010: 9). Descriptive research, on the other hand, is research that uses data to try to solve a problem. In descriptive research, the analysis process includes data presentation, evaluation, and interpretation (Narbuko & Ahmadi, 2015). This study uses asymmetric comparative analysis. According to Bove, G., Okada, A., and Vicari, D. (2021), the asymmetric analysis uses hierarchical and non-hierarchical methods. These two classifications are essential when presenting cluster analysis models and techniques for asymmetric data analysis. Where possible, a data representation of the results is used to demonstrate the various features and capabilities. They are presented and applied to the same small illustrative data set—model selection and evaluation, which is very important to consider. The author uses a narrative style and literature review to find the asymmetric-comparative analysis of traditional approaches in the Straits of Hormuz and Malacca Straits.

4. Result and Discussion

4.1. Straits of Hormuz

a. Geographical Location

Figure 1 Strait of Hormuz Map



Source: <https://www.worldatlas.com/straits/strait-of-hormuz.html>

Between Iran and the Arabian Peninsula, more specifically the United Arab Emirates and Oman is the narrow waterway known as the Strait of Hormuz. The UAE is on the south coast, and Iran is on the north coast. The Persian Gulf is on the west side of the strait, and the Gulf of Oman is on the east side. The length of the strait is 180 kilometers, and at its narrowest point, it is only 45 kilometers wide. The strait is traversed by two shipping lanes, each lane having a width of 3.2 kilometers, with a buffer zone of 3.2 kilometers between them. (Caitlyn, 2008) The geographical position of the Strait of Hormuz is also very strategic, which is between Iran and Oman and is connected by the Persian Gulf and the Gulf of Oman. (Katzman, 2012)

One of the most crucial choke points for global trade is the Strait of Hormuz. The world's largest oil and gas reserves are located on the Arabian Peninsula. With



16% of the world's oil reserves, Saudi Arabia is one of the major oil producers. The Strait of Hormuz is a passageway for 25% of the world's oil and 30% of its liquefied gas. Averaging 17 million barrels per day, or 20% of all oil traded globally, left the Persian Gulf through the strait in 2011. In 2018, the strait saw daily oil traffic worth about \$1.2 billion. (World Atlas, 2022)

b. Problem and Conflict

1. Border Conflict Issue

Geographically, countries with a direct interest in the Strait of Hormuz are Iraq, Iran, Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates. The border base has actual meaning and is supported by the power to obtain it in the interests of each country. The basis of religious ideology, where militant groups feel marginalized by each other, either by the state or by other groups, is a very supportive condition for conflict in the Hormuz river. Some of the conflicts between countries that have occurred are as follows.

- **Iran-Iraq**

The two neighboring countries have been enemies for a long time for various reasons. First, between the Arabs and the Persians, there was always competition. One cannot accept the superiority or dominance of the other. The second factor is the issue of ethnic minorities. During the Shah's time, Iran supported the Kurdish autonomy struggle in Iraq, while Iraq supported the Arab minority in Iran who fought for greater freedom or even secession.

The Iraqi-Iranian tensions eased thanks to the 1975 Algerian Agreement. Under that agreement, Iran would stop the support it had so far given to the Kurdish insurgency, and the Iraq-Iran border in Shatt Al-Arab was shifted from the edge to the middle of the waters. Iraq did not agree with the determination of the border but could not reject it because, at that time, Iran was the dominant power in the region, and Iraq was facing Kurdish insurgencies supported by Tehran. (Dilip Hiro, 1991)



- Iraq-Kuwait

As a result of the Iran-Iraq war, Baghdad suffered enormous losses of around 450 billion U.S. dollars and incurred foreign debts of about 80 billion U.S. dollars. Baghdad's highest income is estimated at only 12 billion U.S. dollars per year. That is, rebuilding the country of Iraq takes at least 40 years. For Iraq, the invasion of Kuwait was indeed a shortcut to overcoming the country's economic problems.

Besides the oil crisis, Iraq also launched attacks due to historical-political factors. Kuwait is a territory of Iraq (formerly Mesopotamia) so until 1990 Iraq did not constitutionally recognize the State of Kuwait. When Kuwait proclaimed itself in 1961, Iraq did not follow suit. Thus, Kuwait's position remains as an Iraqi territory, or there is an unclear border between the state of Kuwait and Iraq, so that Iraq often claims that it is its territory. As a result of this conflict, there was a gulf war.

2. Resources Issue

The Strait of Hormuz is a strategic part for countries to import oil from the middle east to western countries, especially the U.S. The Oil supplies are from countries in the middle east, such as Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, Iraq, and Iran, the world's largest oil supplier. As much as 40% of the world's oil comes from these gulf countries, and almost every 10 minutes once a tanker passes through the strait and about 90% of oil exports from gulf Arab countries, Iraq, and Iran through the strait of Hormuz. The Strait of Hormuz is of interest to countries adjacent to the strait and other countries with trade interests and natural resources, in this case, oil.

Oil and energy have played an essential role since the industrial revolution, so oil and energy will become a driving factor in creating global prosperity and security, so oil and energy politics will be a determinant in the survival of a country.(Carlos Pascual, 2008) The oil crisis will cause a protest. Existing transportation systems in great countries such as the U.S., Europe, and



China depend on oil, which will undoubtedly make countries supply and seek access to this energy. In addition, it lift the country out of poverty and keep pace with the growing population. So that oil and energy are not only for survival but turned into energy oil politics by raising prices, competing to become suppliers, and other things for the sake of the state.

Oil becomes an essential thing that makes the oil an energy politics; by having oil supplies, then during times of crisis, Oil sales will be profitable for the oil producer and provider. By raising the price and adding to his wealth with it. This is the role of energy politics played by oil-supplying countries. Like the closure of the Strait of Hormuz, the U.S. of course will find it difficult to get oil demand in the Middle East because the route that connects oil export and import countries is in the Strait of Hormuz, so the U.S. will certainly do anything not to close the strait.

Some of the events and conflicts in the Strait of Hormuz in the last 40 years can be seen in the table below.

Table 1 The List of Conflicts in the Strait of Hormuz in The Last 40 Years

Year	Conflict	Issue
1980s	Iraq vs. All Countries in the Strait of Hormuz	Iraq has tried to dominate the gulf region. Iraq sabotages Iran's main exports
1984	Iraq vs. Iran	Iraq's desire to control the Strait of Hormuz. The U.S. was involved because of the interests of protecting U.S. tankers and their allies and supporting Iraq
1988	Iraq vs. Iran Conflict Ends, but conflict continues	U.S. direct supervision of tankers affiliated with the U.S. and allied countries. U.S. ship hit by an Iranian mine. U.S.



		retaliates against Iran's actions
2011	Iran vs. U.S. Involves more countries, especially U.S. and U.N. alliances	U.S. sanctions against Iran nuclear project
2012	Iran vs. U.S. Involves more countries, especially U.S. and U.N. alliances	Iran threatens to block Strait of Hormuz due to U.S. sanctions
2015	Iran vs U.S. Involves more countries, especially U.S. and U.N. alliances	Iran signs peace deal on nuclear
2018	Iran vs US	Trump as U.S. President, leaves the nuclear deal, the U.S. continue sanctions against Iran, and tensions flare up again.
2021	Iran vs. US	Biden, as U.S. President, re-signs nuclear deal

Source: Writer-processed (2022)

From the table above, the state's interest in natural resources, especially oil, is an important factor in many conflicts that occur.

4.2. Straits of Malacca

a. Geographical Location

The Straits of Malacca is located between two large landmasses: the island of Sumatra and Peninsular Malaysia. Currently, three sovereign countries are directly bordering the Straits of Malacca, namely Indonesia, Malaysia, and Singapore.

Figure 2 Strait of Malacca Map



Source: <https://www.worldhistory.org/image/14358/map-of-the-strait-of-malacca/>

The island of Sumatra (Indonesia), whose area is directly opposite the Melaka Strait, is the province of Nangroe Aceh Darussalam, North Sumatra, Riau, Jambi, and Riau Islands. At the same time, the states in Malaysia that directly border the Melaka Strait are Kedah, Perlis, Melaka, Johor, Selangor, Negeri Sembilan, and Perak, all of which is part of this state is located in Peninsular Malaysia. The length of the Strait of Malacca is about 805km or 500 miles, with a width of 65 km or 40 miles on the south side, and further north, it widens for about 250 km or 155 miles. (Chuan, 2005)

History records that the Strait of Malacca has been an essential passage since ancient times. For hundreds of years before Western colonialism, Indians, Chinese, and Arabs had used this strait for trade traffic and spread religion, thus giving an acculturated cultural form to the identity of the people around the Malacca Strait. Strong interactions in politics, economy, culture, and religion are established between users of the Malacca Strait route and residents in the areas around the Malacca Strait. The opening of the Suez Canal in 1869 and the rise of



Singapore in the 1930s which made it one of the busiest ports in the world further strengthened the strategic value of the Straits of Malacca.

A crucial global maritime route is the Strait of Malacca. In addition to serving as a vital shipping route between the Pacific and Indian oceans, the strait also serves as a vital connection between South Korea, China, Taiwan, Japan, and India, five of the largest Asian nations. Their shipping businesses have been significantly impacted by the connections between these nations. The Strait of Malacca also plays a significant role in the world's shipping routes. Chinese manufactured goods, oil, and coffee from Indonesia make up a large portion of the cargo moved via the strait. In the past, Kedah traders would go from one beach to the next using the monsoon winds of November and June and would return using the winds of December and May.

b. Problem and Conflict

1. Border Conflict Issue

There are three countries directly bordering the Malacca Strait, namely Indonesia, Singapore, and Malaysia, and to describe the demographic situation around the Malacca Strait area is to look at the characteristics of the population in Malaysia (particularly the demographics of West Malaysia), then the Indonesian population (especially the population in Malaysia). Provinces of North Sumatra, Riau and Riau Islands).(Saeri, 2013)

The conflict in the determination of national boundaries in the Malacca Strait is another serious problem, the most frequently highlighted are two neighboring countries and one family, Indonesia and Malaysia. Often claims and the determination of territorial boundaries overlap because they are made unilaterally by one of the countries, this is the method that most often causes conflicts between Indonesia and Malaysia. There are several areas in the Malacca Strait that Indonesia and Malaysia have not yet agreed upon, and



sometimes it takes years to come up with an agreement. So it is right the problem of Indonesia and Malaysia in the Malacca Strait is one of the complicated things.

The policies of the countries holding the sovereignty of the Malacca Strait, especially Indonesia and Malaysia, which place this strait as part of their sovereign territory and take full responsibility for controlling its security, are contrary to the political interests of other powers who wish to take part in the regulation of the security of the strait. Important events related to the sovereignty of Indonesia and Malaysia in the Malacca Strait region can be seen in the following table.

Table 2 The List of Important Events Related to The Sovereignty of Indonesia and Malaysia in the Malacca Strait

Year	Conflict	Issue
1969	Indonesia vs. Malaysia	Indonesia and Malaysia agreed to determine the boundaries of the continental shelf between the two countries. Malaysia makes claims under the agreement with Indonesia
1982	Indonesia vs. Malaysia (Include the U.N. in UNCLOS)	The United Nations (U.N.) implements the Law of the Sea Convention in Geneva. At that time, countries individually and collectively began to introduce new maritime law institutions, such as exclusive economic zones, fishing zones, and various other claims. Indonesia and Malaysia ratified



		the law of the sea according to UNCLOS ((United Nations Convention on The Law of The Sea)
2011	Indonesia vs. Malaysia	Malaysian-flagged vessels are fishing in the Indonesian Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) in the Malacca Strait area.

Source: Author-processed (2022)

2. Resources Issue

Indonesia, Malaysia, and Singapore are very interested in the Malacca Strait, and several other countries pay great attention to the Malacca Strait, especially China, Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, and Thailand, which are some very dependent on the Malacca Strait. China has many merchant ships which carry merchandise and tankers carrying crude oil from the Persian Gulf to mainland China. Japan relies heavily on its oil energy supply from the Persian Gulf region through the Malacca Strait. Imagine if this strait were closed for some reason, there would undoubtedly be turmoil in many areas, disrupted international trade, and other harmful consequences. For this reason, the growing trade traffic, the higher the level of vulnerability.

The Strait of Malacca, the world's second-largest oil trade chokepoint after the Strait of Hormuz, saw nearly one-third of the 61% of all petroleum and other liquid production transported via maritime routes in 2015. In 2016, the amount of oil and other liquids passing through the Strait of Malacca rose for the fourth time in the previous five years, reaching 16 million barrels per day. (U.S. Energy Information Administration, 2017)

China and Indonesia, two of the most rapidly expanding economies in the world, are supplied with oil via the Strait of Malacca. The main petroleum flow chokepoint in Asia is the Strait of Malacca, through which, in previous years, between 85% and 90% of all petroleum flows annually were crude oil.



Additionally, the Strait of Malacca plays a significant role in the passage of liquefied natural gas (LNG) from Qatar and other Persian Gulf and African suppliers to East Asian nations with rising LNG demand. Japan and South Korea are the two countries in the area that import the most LNG.

The Strait of Malacca is only about 1.7 miles wide at its narrowest point in the Phillips Channel of the Singapore Strait, creating a natural bottleneck with the possibility for collisions, groundings, or oil leaks. Tankers in the Strait of Malacca are at risk from piracy, including attempted theft and hijackings, according to the International Maritime Bureau's Piracy Reporting Centre.

Nearly half of the world's shipping fleet would have to detour around the Indonesian archipelago if the Strait of Malacca were closed, for example through the Sunda Strait between the Indonesian islands of Java and Sumatra or the Lombok Strait between Bali and Lombok. Rerouting would reduce available shipping capacity globally, increase shipping costs, and perhaps have an impact on energy prices.

4.3. Asymmetrical Comparative Analysis

Napoleon Bonaparte once said "Let us be master of the strait for six hours and we will be masters of the world".(Lyons, 1994) The explanation of what Napoleon said is that the relationship between the importance of the strait and controlling the control of strait will make the country or anything that can control it become the ruler of the world because the strategic value of the strait has excellent potential in controlling the world. This statement strongly supports the Sea Power Theory or Mahan Theory and the Latent Power Theory that is the background of the discussion.

The traditional approach relies heavily on the understanding that the state is the most critical factor. The problems that occur cannot be separated from the desire of the state to obtain its national interests because national interests are the goals to be achieved in connection with the needs of a country or connection with other matters.



National interests are often used as benchmarks or main criteria for decision-makers (decision-making) before formulating and determining attitudes or actions. Even every foreign policy needs to be based on national interests and directed to achieve and protect what is categorized or determined as the national interest.(Byrnes, 2018)

As long as the states in the world still depend on the energy of natural resources, the interests of the state will not be spared. This is the factual condition that occurs in the Straits of Hormuz and the Straits of Malacca. The issue of territorial sovereignty and natural resources is the main problem in these two straits. The Straits of Hormuz and the Straits of Malacca are the two major maritime trade routes in the world. Concrete example based on Air Power Journal entitled Closure of The Strait of Hormuz concluded that for the sake of cost-effectiveness and coverage in terms of freight costs, 80% of world trade, and 60% of world oil is transported by sea, via maritime highways called sea Lanes of Communication (SLOCs) which help to save time, be safe for ships and cargo and save costs.

The Straits of Hormuz and the Straits of Malacca are the two most significant trade routes that become the world's trade chokepoints. The basic difference between the Strait of Hormuz and the Strait of Malacca in the traditional approach is that the conflict in the Strait of Malacca does not result in high-intensity inter-state conflict. The conflict in the Malacca Strait did not involve the use of military force like what happened in the Strait of Hormuz between Iraq and Iran and the direct involvement of the U.S. In addition, the regionalism approach can answer why the conflict in the Strait of Malacca is very different from the conflict that occurred in the Strait of Hormuz. Regionalism carried out by ASEAN states has made important stability. Although states with great powers, such as the U.S. and China, often try to intervene in many policies, ASEAN member countries have a solid agreement for regional stability. The instability of the state in the Strait of Hormuz may be influenced by the absence of a regional community that binds and has a common vision of regional stability.

Historically, the countries in the Malacca Strait did not have any significant conflicts. Indonesia and Malaysia have historically come from the same ethnic group,



but the desire to dominate each other is not the case with Iran and Iraq. The factor that can be an important variable is natural resources. The Hormuz trade route greatly influences Iran and Iraq in terms of state revenues, so there is no other alternative source of income. Meanwhile, the countries in the Malacca Strait have the potential for other natural resources besides utilizing the Malacca route. Colonial diplomacy in the Malacca Straits area was relatively successful when the domination of the Malacca Straits was separated from the Malay kings, between the British Colonial (Malaysia) and the Dutch East Indies Colonial (Indonesia) (Mhd Halkis, 2018).

5. Conclusion

In the traditional approach, the most important factor is the state with the important issue of territorial sovereignty and economic hegemony. With an asymmetrical analysis, it can be understood that the Strait of Hormuz can be used by countries in the region, while the Malacca Strait has been controlled since the colonial division of the world. State egocentrism about other countries can lead to regional instability, which can have global implications. In common, the Straits of Hormuz and the Malacca Straits are clear examples of state sovereignty and economic interests. These greatly influence how a state and a state make policies and relate to a state or a state. Other. In the end, the strait, an essential route for world trade, will automatically benefit the country where the strait is located. At the same time, it is also detrimental if the risk of conflict of interest cannot be properly resolved and handled.



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