

Shipping As an Instrument of Maritime Diplomacy: A Literature Review of its Influence in Inter-State Relations

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ABSTRACT

Shipping plays an important role in international relations, not only as a means of transportation, but also as an instrument of maritime diplomacy for cultural exchange, trade, and geopolitical strengthening. As the largest archipelagic country in the world, Indonesia has great potential to utilize shipping to improve regional stability, maritime security, and diplomatic relations. However, challenges such as water security, limited infrastructure, and lack of diplomatic capacity still hinder the optimization of this potential. This study uses a literature review to analyze the role of shipping in maritime diplomacy, both historically and modernly, by taking lessons from countries such as Japan and the UK. The results show that shipping can strengthen bilateral and multilateral relations through trade, maritime security, and cultural promotion. International collaboration through multilateral platforms, such as ASEAN, is important to address issues such as piracy, climate change, and sustainable management of marine resources. Promotion of maritime culture can increase Indonesia's soft power, while the implementation of modern technology in navigation and surveillance can face global challenges. With a comprehensive strategy, Indonesia can optimize its maritime potential to support sustainable regional stability and growth.

Keywords: *Shipping, Maritime Diplomacy, Maritime Security, Cultural Promotion*

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1. INTRODUCTION

Shipping has been one of the fundamental elements in the history of human civilization, especially in building relations between countries. As the largest archipelagic country in the world, Indonesia has a long history of utilizing shipping as a tool to establish maritime diplomatic relations. In this context, shipping not only functions as a means of transportation, but also as an instrument of diplomacy that enables cultural, trade, and political exchanges between countries. With more than 17,000 islands and a long coastline, Indonesia has enormous maritime potential, which if managed properly, can make a significant contribution to regional and global stability and security (Prasetyo, K. A, et al: 2023).

In the modern era, shipping has become one of the main pillars in the geopolitical and geoeconomic strategies of many countries. Maritime countries such as Indonesia, Japan, and England utilize their maritime power to strengthen their diplomatic positions in the international arena (Anwar: 2020). Shipping also functions as a medium to expand influence and build strategic partnerships, whether in the form of trade agreements, military alliances, or cultural cooperation. For example, Japan through its "Free and Open Indo-Pacific" policy seeks to strengthen maritime cooperation with countries in the Indo-Pacific region, which shows how shipping can be an important instrument in diplomacy (Heiduk, F., & Wacker, G: 2020).

Maritime diplomacy has played a significant role in shaping the dynamics of international relations. In this context, shipping is not only an economic activity, but also a reflection of a country's political and cultural power (Varona, L., & Gonzales, J. R: 2021). Countries with strong maritime power often have greater influence in global decision-making. Therefore, a deep understanding of shipping and maritime diplomacy is very important, especially for countries that want to improve their position in the international arena. In Indonesian history, shipping has been a vital tool in maritime diplomacy since the time of maritime kingdoms such as Sriwijaya and Majapahit (Susanti, L., et al: 2024). Both kingdoms used their naval fleets to expand their influence to the Southeast Asian region. For example, Sriwijaya was known as a center of trade and shipping connecting various countries in Asia, including China and India (Sholeh, K., et al: 2019). This shows that since ancient times, shipping has functioned as a means to establish mutually beneficial relationships between countries.

The colonial era, shipping lanes also functioned as a tool for colonial powers to control resources and regulate global trade. Colonialism created injustice in international relations, where colonial countries used shipping to exploit the resources of colonized countries (Sutch, P., & Roberts, P: 2019). However, after independence, Indonesia continued to strive to optimize its maritime potential through policies such as the World Maritime Axis concept launched during the administration of President Joko Widodo. This concept aims to make Indonesia the world's maritime center, which focuses not only on economic aspects, but also on diplomacy and security.

However, the use of shipping as an instrument of maritime diplomacy is not without challenges. Issues such as maritime security, maritime border conflicts, and exploitation of marine resources often become obstacles in building harmonious relations between countries. For example, tensions in the South China Sea show how overlapping territorial claims can trigger conflicts between countries with interests in the region. In addition, technological developments and global geopolitical dynamics also demand adaptation of maritime diplomacy strategies to remain relevant (Prantl, J., & Goh, E: 2022).

The urgency of this research lies in the need to better understand the role of shipping in maritime diplomacy, especially in the Indonesian context. With the increasing tensions in the Southeast Asian region and the challenges faced by maritime countries, it is important to explore how shipping can be utilized to strengthen diplomatic relations and enhance regional cooperation. This research also seeks to identify gaps in previous research, where many existing studies focus more on the economic aspects of shipping, while the maritime diplomacy aspect is often neglected.

The novelty of this research lies in its comprehensive approach that integrates literature review with case studies from various countries. By comparing Indonesia's experience with countries that have successfully utilized shipping as an instrument of maritime diplomacy, it is expected to identify effective strategies to overcome challenges and maximize shipping potential. The purpose of this study is to analyze the role of shipping as a tool of maritime diplomacy through a comprehensive literature review. By studying various relevant literature, this study is expected to provide a deeper understanding of the influence of shipping in interstate relations, especially in the context of Indonesia. The main focus of this study is how shipping can be utilized to strengthen diplomatic relations, enhance regional cooperation, and promote maritime stability and security.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

This study adopts a qualitative approach with a literature review method as the basis for analysis. The literature review was conducted to collect, analyze, and synthesize various relevant sources related to shipping as an instrument of maritime diplomacy. The sources used include academic journals, books, policy reports, and articles from trusted media. The first step in this methodology is the identification of relevant literature by utilizing keywords such as "maritime diplomacy," "shipping," "international relations," and "maritime security." Next, the selected literature is evaluated based on its quality, credibility, and relevance to the research topic. The analysis is conducted to understand how shipping has been utilized as a diplomatic tool by various countries, including Indonesia.

This study also applies a comparative approach to compare Indonesia's experience with other countries. Case studies from countries such as Japan, the UK, and China are analyzed to identify best practices that can be adopted in the Indonesian context. In addition, this study considers global geopolitical and geoeconomic dynamics that influence maritime diplomacy. The collected data were analyzed descriptively to

provide a comprehensive picture of the role of shipping in international relations. The results of this analysis were then used to formulate strategic recommendations for Indonesia in utilizing shipping as an instrument of maritime diplomacy.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This study provides important findings regarding the role of shipping as an instrument of maritime diplomacy, particularly in the context of Indonesia and comparison with other countries.

A. The Significance of Shipping in Maritime Diplomacy

Shipping has a crucial role in establishing relations between countries, not only as a means of transporting goods and people, but also as a medium for spreading cultural and political influences. In this context, shipping functions as a bridge connecting various civilizations, enabling the exchange of ideas, values, and traditions that enrich communities along the route. In the Southeast Asian region, shipping has been an integral part of the history of maritime trade that has influenced international relations (Rochwulaningsih, et al: 2019). As an archipelagic country, Indonesia has great potential to utilize shipping in maritime diplomacy, both bilaterally and multilaterally.

Since ancient times, shipping has been a fundamental element in building relations between countries. In the context of Indonesia's maritime history, kingdoms such as Srivijaya and Majapahit utilized shipping routes to establish diplomatic relations, trade, and cultural exchange with countries in Southeast Asia (Ali, I., et al: 2024). These shipping routes not only strengthened regional influence but also contributed to economic and cultural progress. For example, ports in Sumatra and Java have functioned as trading centers connecting East Asia, South Asia, and even the Middle East. Through these routes, goods such as spices, textiles, and precious metals were traded, which in turn enriched local cultures and economies.

In the modern era, shipping has transformed into a strategic instrument in geopolitics and geoeconomics. Indonesia, as a country with a strategic geographical position and crossed by international shipping lanes such as the Strait of Malacca, has a great opportunity to play a central role in global maritime diplomacy (Damayanti: 2019). The Strait of Malacca, which is one of the busiest shipping lanes in the world, connects the Indian Ocean and the Pacific Ocean, making it a vital route for international trade. In this context, Indonesia can strengthen its role as a center for maritime trade and diplomacy by collaborating with neighboring countries and other major powers (Sanjaya, A: 2024).

Shipping is used to strengthen bilateral and multilateral relations through trade agreements and maritime security cooperation (Zulkifli, et al: 2020). For example, the free trade agreement between Indonesia and ASEAN countries has created opportunities for economic growth and increased diplomatic relations. Cooperation in the field of maritime security is also very important to ensure the security of shipping lanes, which is a prerequisite for the success of diplomatic relations (Chang, YC, & Khan, MI: 2019). The study found that countries with the ability to maintain maritime security, such as Japan and the UK, tend to be more successful in using shipping for diplomacy. This shows that maritime security is not only a military responsibility, but also involves international cooperation in creating an environment conducive to trade and investment (Galani, S., & Evans, M. D: 2020).

Indonesian needs to improve maritime surveillance to reduce threats such as piracy and maritime border conflicts (Marliani, M: 2024). These threats not only impact shipping security but can also damage the confidence of investors and trading partners. Therefore, proactive steps in improving maritime security, such as increasing sea patrols, intelligence cooperation, and training for the navy, are very important (Pandey, S. K: 2023). Thus, Indonesia can create a safe and stable climate for shipping, which in turn will strengthen its position in maritime diplomacy.

Furthermore, shipping not only serves as a means of transportation, but also as a medium for cultural exchange. This study found that shipping has contributed to strengthening the soft power of maritime countries through the promotion of culture, education, and tourism. Soft power, defined as the ability to influence others through the appeal of culture and values, is increasingly becoming a crucial aspect in the context of globalization (Gumenyuk, et al: 2021). Indonesia can utilize shipping to promote its rich maritime culture

internationally. For example, maritime cultural festivals involving art, culinary, and handicraft performances can attract tourists and introduce Indonesian culture to the world.

In this context, collaboration between government, the private sector, and civil society is essential to create effective promotional strategies. Education and training programs that educate the public about the importance of shipping and maritime culture can also increase awareness and appreciation of cultural heritage (Labadi, et al: 2021). In addition, sustainable tourism initiatives can help preserve local cultures while providing economic benefits to local communities.

In an in-depth analysis of the role of shipping in maritime diplomacy, it is important to consider the factors that influence the dynamics of international relations. One of the main factors is the development of technology that has changed the way shipping is carried out. With innovations in navigation and communication, shipping has become more efficient and safer (Wiśnicki, B., et al: 2024). However, on the other hand, technological advances also bring new challenges, such as cyber threats that can affect navigation systems and shipping security. Therefore, maritime countries, including Indonesia, need to adapt to these changes and develop policies that are responsive to new challenges.

Furthermore, climate change is also becoming an increasingly important issue in the context of shipping and maritime diplomacy. Rising sea levels and extreme weather can affect shipping lanes and port infrastructure. Indonesia, as an archipelagic country vulnerable to the impacts of climate change, needs to develop effective mitigation strategies to protect its shipping lanes. International cooperation in research and development of environmentally friendly technologies can also be part of the effort to address this challenge.

Shipping has a very important role in building relations between countries and strengthening maritime diplomacy (Busiega: 2016). By maximizing the potential of shipping, Indonesia can improve its position on the international stage. Through improving maritime security, promoting culture, and international cooperation, Indonesia can create a conducive environment for economic growth and strong diplomatic relations (Fitriani, E: 2021). Therefore, it is important for all stakeholders to work together in developing sustainable and innovative strategies to utilize shipping as an effective maritime diplomacy tool.

B. Challenges and Opportunities in Indonesian Maritime Diplomacy

This study reveals that Indonesia's maritime diplomacy faces various challenges while offering significant opportunities. Here is an in-depth description of the research results: In an increasingly complex global context, the challenges of Indonesia's maritime diplomacy are a very relevant issue and require in-depth attention. With its vast maritime territory, Indonesia not only plays a role as an archipelagic country, but also as an important actor in regional geopolitics (Haq, B. P: 2022). However, the various challenges faced in Indonesia's maritime diplomacy require in-depth analysis to understand their implications for security, economy, and international relations.

Maritime Security: Threats such as piracy, smuggling, and illegal activities in Indonesian waters are major obstacles in maritime diplomacy. Areas such as the Strait of Malacca and the North Natuna Sea are often prone to conflict (Fauzan: 2019). The Strait of Malacca, which is the busiest shipping lane in the world, faces a serious threat from piracy that not only harms the country's economy but also creates uncertainty for international shipping. According to a report from the International Maritime Bureau (IMB), Indonesia recorded one of the highest piracy rates in the world in 2020, indicating the need for concrete steps to improve maritime security.

In addition, maritime border conflicts with neighboring countries such as Malaysia and China are also issues that affect the stability of international relations. The North Natuna Sea, which is rich in natural resources, has become a hot spot between Indonesia and China, which claims part of the area as part of the "Nine-Dash Line". This tension not only threatens Indonesia's sovereignty but also has the potential to trigger larger-scale conflicts in the region (Sesa: 2021). In this context, Indonesia's maritime diplomacy must be able to manage conflicts wisely while maintaining territorial integrity.

Infrastructure Limitations: Despite its great maritime potential, Indonesia's port infrastructure and sea fleet are still inadequate. Many ports are not yet capable of handling large ships or have adequate logistics facilities, thus limiting Indonesia's ability to compete globally (Iman, N: 2022). For example, the Tanjung Priok port in Jakarta, although the largest port in Indonesia, still faces problems of congestion and capacity limitations. According to data from the Central Statistics Agency (BPS), around 60% of the total flow of goods

in Indonesia still depends on sea transportation, so improving port infrastructure is very important to support economic growth (Hidayat, A., et al: 2024).

Infrastructure limitations not only affect the economic sector, but also the security aspect. Ports that are not well integrated can facilitate smuggling and illegal trade activities (Finklea: 2020). This shows that investment in maritime infrastructure development must be a national priority. In addition, international cooperation in infrastructure development can also strengthen Indonesia's position as a competitive maritime country.

Lack of Diplomatic Capacity: In international forums, Indonesia often faces challenges in maximizing its diplomatic influence. This is due to the lack of human resources trained in maritime diplomacy and minimal coordination between related institutions. According to data from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, only around 5% of Indonesian diplomats specialize in maritime issues. This limitation makes Indonesia less able to play an active role in negotiations related to maritime interests, such as international conventions on the law of the sea (Mery, L., et al: 2024).

Lack of coordination between institutions is a significant obstacle in maritime diplomacy (Birahayu, D: 2019). Various institutions, such as the Ministry of Maritime Affairs and Fisheries, the Ministry of Transportation, and the Indonesian Navy, often operate separately without any clear synergy. This has the potential to result in policies that are not integrated and less effective in facing maritime challenges. Therefore, efforts are needed to increase diplomatic capacity through training, education, and cooperation between institutions so that Indonesia can be more influential in maritime diplomacy.

Geopolitical Dynamics: Indonesia's strategic position makes it vulnerable to pressure from major powers such as the United States and China, which have significant interests in the Indo-Pacific region (Hutomo et al.: 2023). In this context, Indonesia must be able to remain neutral while maintaining its national interests. Tensions between these two major powers often impact regional stability, and Indonesia is in the midst of this situation. For example, in recent years, Indonesia has hosted various international forums discussing maritime security issues, such as the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) and the East Asia Summit (EAS).

However, Indonesia's neutral stance is not always easy to maintain, especially when national interests are threatened. In the face of pressure from China regarding territorial claims in the Natuna Sea, Indonesia must demonstrate firmness in maintaining sovereignty while still opening up space for dialogue. This shows that Indonesia's maritime diplomacy must be able to bridge national interests with existing geopolitical dynamics.

In order to face these challenges, there are several strategic steps that can be taken by Indonesia (Firdaus, et al: 2023; Santoso, et al: 2023). First, increasing maritime security capacity through strengthening the navy and international cooperation in law enforcement at sea. Second, investment in the development of port infrastructure and logistics to support maritime economic growth. Third, increasing diplomatic capacity through training and education for diplomats who focus on maritime issues. Fourth, strengthening Indonesia's position in international forums to fight for national interests amidst complex geopolitical dynamics.

The challenges of Indonesia's maritime diplomacy are complex and multidimensional. From maritime security aspects to limited infrastructure and diplomatic capacity, all of these factors are interrelated and affect Indonesia's ability to play a leading role in the region. With the right strategic steps, Indonesia has the potential to overcome these challenges and strengthen its position in global maritime diplomacy.

Indonesia as the largest archipelagic country in the world, has a very important strategic position in the context of global maritime diplomacy. With more than 17,000 islands and a coastline stretching 99,000 kilometers, Indonesia not only has abundant natural resources, but is also a vital shipping lane, especially in the Southeast Asia region (Rochwulaningsih, et al: 2019). In this context, there are several important aspects that can be explored further regarding the opportunities that Indonesia has in maritime diplomacy.

First of all, Indonesia's economic potential in the maritime sector is very significant. The Strait of Malacca, which is one of the busiest shipping lanes in the world (Zulkifli, et al: 2020), is clear evidence of the high flow of international trade. According to data from the International Maritime Organization (IMO), around 40% of total world trade passes through this strait. This provides an opportunity for Indonesia to increase state revenue through port management, maritime infrastructure development, and improved logistics services. For example, the development of Tanjung Priok Port in Jakarta as the largest port in Indonesia has increased capacity and efficiency in handling the flow of goods, thus attracting more ships to dock and make transactions.

Furthermore, Indonesia's fisheries potential, which is one of the largest in the world, can also be utilized to strengthen the maritime economy. With more than 2.5 million square kilometers of sea area, Indonesia has abundant fisheries resources (Firdaus: 2018). However, the challenges in managing these resources require a sustainable approach. Therefore, investment in environmentally friendly fisheries technology and practices can be a strategic step to ensure the sustainability of these resources while improving the local economy.

C. International Comparison

Case studies from countries such as Japan and the UK show that the success of maritime diplomacy depends heavily on policy consistency, modernization of the naval fleet, and significant investment in port infrastructure. Maritime diplomacy, which involves interactions between countries through sea lanes, has become one of the important pillars of international relations in this era of globalization (Diriöz, et al: 2024). In this context, Japan and the UK offer significant examples of how different approaches can produce varying results in maritime diplomacy.

Japan, as an island nation with a strategic geographical position, has utilized shipping to strengthen its economic diplomacy. One prominent initiative is its participation in the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) launched by China. The BRI aims to build connectivity and cooperation across countries through infrastructure development, including ports (Dunford & Liu: 2019). By investing in port projects in Southeast Asian countries, Japan is not only enhancing its strategic position in the region but also strengthening its economic ties with the countries involved. For example, the construction of ports in Myanmar and Indonesia has opened up new opportunities for Japanese companies to operate in emerging markets.

On the other hand, the UK, which has a long history as a global maritime power, is leveraging this legacy to forge new strategic relationships post-Brexit. After leaving the European Union, the UK faces the challenge of rebuilding its position on the international stage. In this context, the UK has focused on strengthening its naval fleet and expanding its port network (Yu, H: 2020). Through its "Global Britain" policy, the UK seeks to strengthen ties with countries outside Europe, including those in the Indo-Pacific region. A concrete example of this is the free trade agreements it has forged with countries such as Japan and Australia, which have not only increased trade but also strengthened the UK's position as a relevant maritime power in the modern era.

Both countries show that modernizing the navy is a key factor in the success of maritime diplomacy. Japan, with significant investment in maritime technology, has developed a fleet that is not only strong but also environmentally friendly. Innovations in ship technology, such as the use of alternative fuels and efficient ship designs, have made the Japanese fleet one of the world's leading ones (Wang, Y., & Wright, L. A: 2021). On the other hand, the UK is also committed to updating its navy with a focus on security and efficiency. Investment in new warships and maritime defense technology is a strategic move to ensure that the UK remains relevant in an increasingly complex geopolitical context.

Investment in port infrastructure also cannot be ignored in this analysis. Modern and efficient ports are key to supporting maritime trade and diplomacy activities (Akbulaev, N., & Bayramli, G: 2020). Japan, for example, has developed ports that are not only capable of handling large trade volumes but are also equipped with advanced technology to speed up the loading and unloading process. The ports of Tokyo and Osaka are examples of ports that have transformed into well-integrated logistics hubs, supporting Japan's international trade network. Meanwhile, the UK is also investing in the modernization of its ports, such as the Port of Felixstowe, which is the largest port in the UK and one of the most efficient in Europe (Sadiq, et al: 2021). These efforts not only increase port capacity but also strengthen the UK's competitiveness in the global market.

In the context of foreign policy, consistency in the approach to maritime diplomacy is essential. Japan, with a foreign policy focused on peace and cooperation, has succeeded in building strong relations with neighboring countries (Sato, Y: 2019). Through dialogue and cooperation, Japan has reduced tensions in the region and increased regional stability. For example, the trilateral meeting between Japan, the United States, and South Korea demonstrated Japan's commitment to working together on maritime security issues. On the other hand, the UK, despite the challenges of post-Brexit, continues to strive to maintain good relations with European countries while exploring new opportunities outside the continent. This approach reflects the UK's flexibility in adapting to changing geopolitical dynamics.

A comparison of maritime diplomacy between Japan and the UK reveals that success in this sector is largely influenced by several key factors, including policy consistency, fleet modernization, and investment in port infrastructure. Although the two countries adopt different approaches, both show that a planned and sustained strategy can produce stronger and more sustainable international relations. By continuing to adapt to global challenges, Japan and the UK can maintain their positions as relevant maritime powers in the modern era.

D. Recommended Strategy

Based on the literature analysis, there are a number of strategies that can be implemented by Indonesia to strengthen its maritime position in the international arena. These strategies do not only focus on economic aspects, but also include social, cultural, and security dimensions that are very significant in the current geopolitical context (Paravantis & Kontoulis, 2020). In this discussion, we will outline four main recommended strategies: improving maritime infrastructure, improving maritime security, multilateral diplomacy, and promoting maritime culture. Each strategy will be analyzed in depth, with an emphasis on its relevance and implementation.

Improvement of Maritime Infrastructure. Improving maritime infrastructure is a crucial step to support international shipping activities (Balcombe et al., 2019). Modern and efficient ports will not only increase the capacity to transport goods, but also accelerate the distribution process and reduce logistics costs. According to data from the Central Statistics Agency (BPS), the transportation and warehousing sector contributes around 10% of Indonesia's Gross Domestic Product (GDP). This shows that the development of maritime infrastructure has the potential to have a significant impact on national economic growth (Park et al., 2019).

For example, Tanjung Priok Port in Jakarta, which is the largest port in Indonesia, has undergone various development projects to increase its capacity and efficiency. By utilizing modern technology such as a digital-based port management system, the loading and unloading process can be carried out faster and more efficiently (Agatić & Kolanović, 2020). In addition, the development of ports in other areas, such as Makassar and Surabaya Ports, also needs to be considered to distribute goods evenly throughout Indonesia.

However, improving maritime infrastructure is not limited to ports. The development of an integrated transportation network between ports, highways, and railways is also very important (Baccelli & Morino, 2020). This will facilitate accessibility and connectivity between regions, thereby accelerating the flow of goods and increasing competitiveness. In this case, the government needs to allocate an adequate budget for this infrastructure project and involve the private sector in investment.

4. CONCLUSION

In closing, the author has formulated at least several conclusions from this journal study, as follows:

1. Shipping has a strategic role in establishing international relations, whether through trade, culture, or security. Indonesia, with its great maritime potential, can utilize shipping to strengthen maritime diplomacy, as the Srivijaya and Majapahit kingdoms did in the past.
 2. Indonesia faces challenges in the form of maritime security (such as piracy and border conflicts), limited infrastructure, and lack of diplomatic capacity. This requires strategic steps to improve surveillance capabilities, port management, and inter-agency coordination.
 3. Countries like Japan and the UK have shown that policy consistency, fleet modernization, and port infrastructure investment are key to successful maritime diplomacy. Indonesia can learn from these approaches to improve its maritime competitiveness.
 4. Multilateral diplomacy through regional organizations, such as ASEAN, can be utilized to address common challenges, such as maritime security and sustainable resource management. This cooperation also supports Indonesia's strategic position in the Indo-Pacific region.
 5. Indonesia's maritime culture, including its traditions and history, can be an effective diplomatic tool through maritime festivals, digital promotion, and education. This step not only strengthens Indonesia's soft power but also raises public awareness of the importance of protecting the marine environment.
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