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The Geopolitical Significance of Maritime Chokepoints

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Abstract

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ABSTRACT

This thesis focuses mainly on the Strait of Hormuz, the Strait of Malacca, the Suez Canal, and the Panama Canal, while talking about the geopolitical significance of maritime chokepoints and their influence on global trade and energy security.

The analysis used is a literature-based and theory-driven approach to analyse how these chokepoints can create both opportunity and risk.

Findings of the chokepoints show that they concentrate economic value while increasing vulnerability to disruption caused by conflict, governance issues, and climate change. The study also concludes that resilience depends on cooperation, diversification, and technological adaptation.

Contents

Glossary

BRI (Belt and Road Initiative)
China's global development and infrastructure strategy that links Asia, Africa, Europe, and Latin America.

BRICS

A governmental organisation made up of Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa, expanded in 2024 to include new members such as Egypt and Saudi Arabia.

ICC (International Chamber of Commerce)
A global business organisation that promotes international trade and responsible business conduct through rules and policy advocacy.

IMB (International Maritime Bureau)
A division of the International Chamber of Commerce that monitors maritime crime and piracy incidents worldwide.

IMO (International Maritime Organization)
A specialised agency of the United Nations responsible for regulating international shipping and promoting maritime safety and environmental protection.

Maritime Silk Road (MSR)
The sea-based part of China's Belt and Road Initiative that develops ports and infrastructure to improve global trade connectivity.

Neutrality Treaty
An international agreement between Panama and the United States that guarantees the permanent neutrality of the Panama Canal, ensuring free passage for ships of all nations.

ReCAAP (Regional Cooperation Agreement on Combating Piracy and Armed Robbery against Ships in Asia)
A regional framework that promotes cooperation among Asian countries to prevent and respond to piracy and armed robbery at sea.

UNCLOS (United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea)
An international agreement that sets out legal rules for the use of the world's seas and oceans, defining rights and duties of states.

1 Introduction

For a long time, the Suez and Panama Canals, the Hormuz and Malacca Straits, and other maritime chokepoints have been important for linking regional markets. Even now, these narrow chokepoints are still very important because they are used for trade and energy lines. Any problem with these chokepoints can cause all the regions of the world a lot of trouble.

Verschuur and Hall (2024) say that most of the world's trade depends on maritime chokepoints, which are very vulnerable, and even small problems in these chokepoints can have a chain effect around the world. Verschuur and Hall believe that about 23 billion US dollars are lost every year because of problems like accidents or instability in politics, which force ships to change their routes and slow down trade. World trade is thrown off when things like piracy, war, or natural disasters occur. This can put pressure on supply chains that can reach across all over the world.

Still, every chokepoint is different. The Strait of Hormuz and the Strait of Malacca, are natural channels that make it hard for ships to pass through. The Suez and Panama Canals were built by people to make business between countries easier and shorten the travels. According to (Weitz, 2018), chokepoints are important because of the trade volume they handle, they connect global markets and create strong links between nations by trade.

The selection of this topic is closely linked to an academic background in International Business and Logistics, a field that emphasises global trade networks and transport systems. Knowing about maritime chokepoints is helpful for understanding how trading channels run and how some countries gain power by controlling these important passes. Coming from a region with a long coastline of over 3,300 kilometres has also encouraged a strong awareness of the sea's importance for trade and national development. Trying to find out how different countries import and export goods and energy and why soil rich nations still rely on importing basic commodities such as

grain. These occurrences have encouraged a deeper examination of how maritime chokepoints influence global trade and geopolitical stability.

2 Literature Review

2.1 Maritime chokepoints

Maritime chokepoints are narrow sea passages that link together major shipping routes. They are important to world trade but also very vulnerable. In the (Atlantic Council, 2024a) it has been said that over 80 percent of global trade by weight moves by sea and much of it passes through just a handful of strategic chokepoints. The Suez Canal, the Strait of Malacca, and the Panama Canal are just a few of the narrow routes that are very important to global supply lines. Chokepoints make it easy for goods, energy, and raw materials to move between countries. (Bailey, R. and Wellesley, L. 2017) says that some of these key points are under more and more pressure because of the growing amount of international trade. Even small disruptions can have big effects in these places. (Fong, 2025) adds to this view by saying that control over "nodes" that control the flow of goods is a big part of modern economic power. Chokepoints are physical as well as practical places where people can have an effect on supply lines. In the setting of shipping, chokepoints are places where controlling transit means having power over world trade.

Chokepoints are important for more than just their economic role. (Kennedy M, 2024) points out that these places are very important for geopolitical competition because they allow entry for naval ships, the projection of power, and control over energy security. (Bailey, R. and Wellesley, L. 2017) divides the dangers related to these routes into three main groups: hazards tied to climate change, threats to security or war, and political or institutional uncertainty. All of these things have the power to mess up global supply lines. The (CSIS, 2022) says that chokepoints like the Strait of Malacca, Suez, and Panama are still very open to accidents, traffic jams, and planned attacks. Controlling passage is often used as a way to force people to do what the government wants during

times of stress. (The Conversation, 2024) also claims the fact that they are easy to stop makes the states that control them more powerful economically and strategically.

Essentially, maritime chokepoints are places where trade, geography, and power all meet. Their continued security helps the world economy, but their weakness makes them permanent battlegrounds in geopolitics.

2.2 Strait of Hormuz

One of the most important strategic maritime chokepoints in the world is the Strait of Hormuz. It is the only way for the Arabian Gulf to get oil to foreign markets, exporting about 40% of the world's oil products (Esmaela, Abbas, and Hamzah, 2020, p. 336). It is also one of the busiest shipping routes, with about 200 to 300 oil carriers going through every day, or one every six minutes during rush hours (Esmaela, Abbas, and Hamzah, 2020, p. 338). Esmaela, Abbas, and Hamzah (2020, p. 338) both say that Hormuz is an "energy artery," "safety valve," and "international oil corridor" because of how much energy it exports. Because of this, everyone in the world cares about the safety and openness of this narrow passage, which is sometimes only 37 kilometers wide.

The strait is important because of how much trade it handles and how sensitive it is to geopolitics. Iran controls the northern coast of the strait and has said many times that it will close the passage in a moment of crisis. A blockade like this would be used to hurt the USA and their allies, but it would also hurt Iran because it needs the strait for shipping oil to other countries (Bozzacchi, 2025). A lot of risk falls on China, because more than 40% of its oil supplies go through Hormuz. This means that any problems in Hormuz could lead to inflation and economic downturns in other countries (Bozzacchi, 2025). By closing off the Strait of Hormuz, Russia could gain in the short term by shifting its energy exports to important markets and making money from a rise in oil costs around the world (Bozzacchi, 2025).

The United States and its partners have known for a long time how important the strait

is and have kept a strong naval force in the Gulf for protection. USA and British troops are ready to keep the route from closing or reopen it again if something goes wrong (Esmaela, Abbas, and Hamzah, 2020). Gulf States like Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Qatar, the UAE, Bahrain, and Oman rely on Hormuz for most of their oil exports. This makes them the most vulnerable to any crisis that happens in the Hormuz strait (Esmaela, Abbas, and Hamzah, 2020).

Different experts have different ideas on how long could Iran really keep the Strait of Hormuz closed off. Most people think that a full and long-term closure is not possible from Iran because USA and allied forces are so strong militarily. However, some say that Iran's naval forces and geographical edge allow it to harass ships and temporarily stop flow (Esmaela, Abbas, and Hamzah, 2020). Still, even a small disruption would have big effects on the prices of energy around the world, the costs of marine insurance, and the security measures of both exporting and importing countries. So, the Strait of Hormuz is still a very important part of discussions about maritime geopolitics and the security of the world's energy supplies.

2.3 Strait of Malacca

The Strait of Malacca is one of the world's important maritime chokepoints because it connects the Indian and Pacific Oceans. 60% of world trade goes through the Strait of Malacca and it also connects nine out of the ten biggest ports (Pitakdumrongkit, 2023). Because of this the Strait is not only a regional trade importans but also it is a very important for the global economic networks as well. Also, about 90,000 ships pass through the Strait yearly and having so much traffic in such a small waterway raises the risk of accidents and delays that could have effects all over the world (Pitakdumrongkit, 2023).

Article 101 of the UNCLOS defines piracy as any violent act done illegally in international waters for personal gain. The only difference between armed robbery and piracy is where the illegal action happens. According to IMO Resolution A.1025 (26) (ICC IMB, 2023), armed robbery only happens in areas that are controlled by a state,

like internal waters. When it comes to the Strait of Malacca, most of the crimes are armed robberies because they happen in the areas between Indonesia, Malaysia, and Singapore. Understanding the difference is important, because it determines how such incidents are addressed practically.

Crimes committed in international waters fall under international jurisdiction, but that occur within territorial waters require national enforcement. Knowing whether an incident is classified as armed robbery or piracy is important, because it determines the legal framework and the authority responsible for taking action. In the Strait of Malacca, this difference influences how Indonesia, Malaysia, and Singapore coordinate their responses between states.

Although the Strait of Malacca is a very important waterway, the security situation there changes very quickly. In 2024, the ReCAAP ISC said that there had been no proven cases of piracy in Asia. Even though no piracy occurred in that time, there were also 107 armed robberies, with 62 of them happening in the Straits of Malacca and Singapore (Lagniton, 2025). Attacks generally happened at night and were opportunistic. The crews were mostly safe during these attacks because the attackers were interested in goods like ship stores and spare parts.

Maritime crime went up sharply in the first half of 2025 on the other hand, showing that peace and security were only temporary. Eighty cases of piracy or armed robbery were reported in the Malacca–Singapore waters, which meant that there has been 21 cases increase from the past year (Guardian, 2025). Fear at the Strait of Malacca has sharply increased because of the cases. 90% of illegal crimes on the waters did not hurt anyone and no crew members were killed and that meant that most of the events were somewhat peaceful (Guardian, 2025). Researchers also note that disruptions in the Red Sea led some vessels travelling between Europe and East Asia to avoid the Suez Canal and instead sail around the Cape of Good Hope, returning to Asian waters through the Strait of Malacca. This rerouting increased traffic density and created more opportunities for armed robbery and petty theft in Malacca waters (Guardian, 2025).

Along the Straits, this shows how quickly things can change. Events in other parts of the world can change the flow of traffic, and when new chances come up, piracy and armed

robbery can happen quickly in different places of the Strait. The same pattern appeared when ships were rerouted around the Cape of Good Hope, as new piracy and robbery incidents emerged in response to the shift in maritime routes.

2.4 Suez Canal

The Suez Canal is the fastest sea route between Asia and Europe, linking the Mediterranean and the Red Sea and carrying a large share of containerised flows between the two regions (Helwa and Al-Riffai, 2025). 12 to 15 percent of world trade and 30 percent of global container shipments go through the Suez Canal (Helwa and Al-Riffai, 2025). About 50-60 ships go past the canal making it a very important canal to the world Maritime waters (Helwa and Al-Riffai, 2025). (Helwa and Al-Riffai, 2025) say that the canal is still an important route and a marine choke point for energy and trade security around the entire globe.

After getting increased authority, President Gamal Abdel Nasser made a deal with Britain and France in 1954 for them to leave the Suez Canal. He ended up taking over the Canal on July 26, 1956, which led to the Suez Crisis and the 1956 Sinai War. These events showed how important the Canal was to world politics and how easily it could become a source of conflict. Throughout its history, the Canal has faced multiple disruptions, it was closed six times, the longest lasting was eight years following the 1967 war (Shaul Chorev, 2023). During this shutdown, Egypt lost a lot of revenue that it was getting from the Suez Canal. Ships were redirected to go around the Cape of Good Hope, below Southern Africa. It was then that the world realised its heavy economic dependence on this canal (Mann, 2023).

The Arab Spring of 2010–2011 yet again showed its fragility, as political instability in Egypt raised worries of another closing (Mann, 2023). Recent events include the Ever Given incident in March 2021, which closed the Canal for six days and halted 12% of the world's maritime activity (Shaul Chorev, 2023) and cost global trade between $6 and $10 billion. (Shaul Chorev, 2023) says that the Suez Canal is still an important part of

global trade, but it can also be a source of tension during crises or conflicts because it depends on Egypt's security and the peace in the country to keep going.

China’s Belt and Road Initiative thinks that the Suez Canal is the key maritime link between the Asia and Europe passage. It leads trade up the Red Sea and through Suez into the Mediterranean (Gonen, 2023). Egypt’s plan, which is in line with BRI goals, has focused on adding a parallel lane, deepening and widening key sections, reducing wait times, and expanding the canal’s envelope so larger ships can reliably move in both directions (Shaul Chorev, 2023) in order to keep this chokepoint open as traffic levels rise. BRI trade flows through the Suez Canal, the canal has already hit all-time highs, and that number is only going to go up. This shows how important the chokepoint is to the economy and how important it is to keep up capacity and security measures there (Shaul Chorev, 2023).

2.5 Panama Canal

The Panama Canal is one of the most vital chokepoints in world trade. The canal links the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans, and it has been the main maritime shortcut between the two seas since 1914 when the canal opened. It cuts travel time for ships by almost half compared to the route that goes around South America, similar to how the Suez Canal shortens the route around the Cape of Good Hope (Wang, 2017). The Panama Canal is a very important chokepoint in the world, it handles about 5% of global maritime trade. The United States takes about two-thirds of the cargo that passes through the Panama Canal, and both the United States and the Western Hemisphere consider its operations highly important (Wang, 2017). Before 2007, the capacity of the chokepoint was about 330 million tonnes. After the Panama Canal was renovated, capacity number almost doubled, which meant it could handle a much larger amount of trade coming from around the world (Wang, 2017).

The Panama Canal Expansion Program officially began in September 2007. The goal was to double the waterway’s capacity by building a third lane of locks so that the canal could take in Post-Panamax vessels, which are very large ships (Panama Canal

Authority (ACP), 2024a). The project was one of the biggest in the western part of the world, and it was meant to keep the canal competitive in the maritime industry, which is always renewing itself. The expanded canal took almost a decade of planning and building and was opened on June 26, 2016. This upgrade was the biggest improvement since the canal first opened. The Panama Canal Authority (ACP, 2024a) states that since then, it has exceeded traffic projections, made operations more efficient, and strengthened its environmental leadership by lowering CO_2 emissions and significantly increasing total load capacity.

In December 2008, a loan package exceeding 2.3 billion US dollars was formalised. The Panama Canal Authority and five international multilateral and bilateral banks were involved in gathering this funding. The loan package ensured that the program could be financed economically while still maintaining full Panamanian ownership and control (CAF, 2008).

There have also been many difficulties at the Panama Canal. El Niño-related droughts have caused ships to be unable to sail as deeply and led to transportation delays because water levels in the canal's lakes dropped (Bailey and Wellesley, 2017). These conditions show how climate change can affect how the canal operates and how vulnerable it is as a major trade route around the world. All of these changes have made the canal a modern, long-lasting trade channel and have shown how important it is to manage both physical growth and environmental challenges in order to keep global supply lines running.

2.6 Chokepoint Disruptions

Maritime chokepoints are facing more and more threats that could stop the movement of energy and trade around the world. (Bailey, R. and Wellesley, L. 2017) says that climate-related hazards, war or security threats, and political or governmental instability are the three major things that make Maritime chokepoints weak. All of these things can slow down the supply line and cost companies their money. (Key et al, 2024) demonstrate how extreme weather can damage port facilities and lower the amount of ships that can go through, especially at canals and straits where physical barriers make it

hard to move. (Lim, and Chiu, 2024) also show that chokepoints like Suez, Panama, and Malacca are structurally weak to traffic jams when natural or man-made events happen.

(The International Maritime Bureau, 2023) talks about how piracy and armed robbery are still major threats. Most of these crimes happen in areas where most of the trade takes place, like Southeast Asia, the Gulf of Guinea, and the Indian Ocean. These violent acts put crew safety at risk, raising the cost of insurance and goods. It shows how safety problems in one area can affect trade networks around the world. (Bailey, R. and Wellesley, L. 2017) also the whole maritime system is interconnected. If a problem arises at one point, it can affect other parts of the system, like a chain reaction.

Chokepoints are not separate risks, they are parts of the same global network that depend on each other. To deal with these weaknesses, we need to work together, put investment into infrastructure, and protect the trade lines that keep the world economy constantly going.

2.7 Comparison of Key Global Maritime Chokepoints

Maritime chokepoints are different in many ways in their structure, location, and purpose, but together they form the foundation of the global trading network. (Bailey, R. and Wellesley, L. 2017) says that a chokepoint's value is not only based on how much trade goes through it, but also on how it links markets from different regions. This means that natural straits like Hormuz and Malacca are more crucial than the Suez and Panama canal because of their location and the concentration of important goods like oil and made goods. Canals like Suez and Panama, were built to connect whole seas for trade. All chokepoints do something different but they are all necessary and they keep the flow of world trade going.

(Bailey, R. and Wellesley, L. 2017) divides maritime chokepoints into different categories based on the availability of alternative routes. By comparison, the Suez and

Panama Canals have few alternative routes, which means that when they close, major changes occur in shipping paths and higher costs appear. Natural ports like Malacca and Hormuz, are set in space and don't have many other good options. Malacca and Hormuz are more sensitive to geopolitics. The balance of importance shows how people have designed the world maritime system and how it is limited by natural forces.

Suez, Panama, and Malacca are called "primary chokepoints" by (Lim, and Chiu, 2024) because they are the main ways that big trade areas can connect with each other. What Lim and Chiu found was that when these lines are interrupted, the Panama Canal loses the most money, followed by Suez and Malacca. even the most important chokepoints routes become vulnerable. This shows that economic and geographical factors make a huge difference. These chokepoints were also named by (Alderson et al, (2020) mentioned in (Lim, and Chiu, 2024) as key chokepoints in the worldwide maritime transport network. Even though maritime chokepoints are in different parts of the world, they have the same strategic importance.

(Bailey, R. and Wellesley, L. 2017) report that problems at a single chokepoint are usually easy to fix, but problems on several lines at the same time could have a big impact on the whole world. This shows how connected these routes are, since a blockage or closing in one often moves the pressure to another and it has an effect on the whole shipping system. Because of this, keeping all chokepoints resilient is important for ensuring global trade security. (Lim, and Chiu, 2024) say that resilience and united leadership are important for maritime chokepoints and it should keep things working well even when there are problems with the environment, politics, or safety.

3 Research Methodology

3.1 Introduction

This part of the thesis explains how and what methods are used in the study of the geopolitical significance of maritime chokepoints. The thesis covers topics such as research design, approach, data collection, and analysis techniques applied in this study. The methodology is completely theory based and qualitative, focusing only on secondary data sources. The goal of this chapter is to show how the picked research methods provide a clear structure for dealing with the research objectives that guide the thesis.

3.2 Research design

Since this thesis focuses on geopolitical significance, the research takes a theory driven and literature based approach. It will be relying on conceptual and theoretical perspectives from international relations, trade, security, and geopolitical studies. By taking theoretical models such as classical geopolitics and critical geopolitical thought, this research explains the role of chokepoints in shaping world power structures.

Practical observations from different sources are brought together to form a logical understanding of the topic, put together by a conceptual synthesis that helps to build the research approach. The literature review and the case studies both apply this synthesis by comparing and connecting ideas from different authors on subjects such as energy transport, naval power, trade dependency, and regional cooperation. This synthesis makes up the analytical foundation of the study by ensuring that the text is theoretically based and logically structured.

The approach of this thesis is very necessary because it allows the researcher to take insights from many different academics without being limited to a single point of view. The combination of geopolitical theory and maritime analysis provides a multidimensional understanding of chokepoints as strategic instruments of power and control within the international system.

3.3 Data collection

Secondary data collection involves gathering and going through information that has already been produced and published by credible sources. This study includes academic publications, institutional reports, and reputable online sources, such as:

- Journals and books written by academics who study geopolitics, maritime security, and international trade
- Statistics and trade information from trusted global organisations such as the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), and the International Energy Agency (IEA)
- Research papers and reports from recognised policy institutions such as Chatham House

Information about strategic maritime operations is often limited because of security concerns. As a result, secondary sources provide complete and reliable information about how chokepoints have been used in the past and why they remain important today. All of the sources have been checked for legitimacy by evaluating how credible, relevant, and up to date the information is.

3.4 Data Interpretation and Synthesis

The main focus is on identifying key ideas, arguments, patterns, and links between trade and geopolitics that explain how maritime chokepoints shape global power relations. While relying on a small amount of statistical data, this process uses critical reading of different authors to bring together the main insights. The thesis connects trade and geopolitics through conceptual synthesis, which helps build a clear understanding of the strategic, economic, and security issues linked to chokepoints. The aim of this analysis is to show how different points of view come together and highlight their importance on current geopolitics in maritime.

3.5 Limitations and Ethical Considerations

This research has certain limitations, mainly because all of the information comes from secondary data. Information about maritime security and strategy is somewhat restricted, which means that some details cannot be directly examined. In addition, most maritime chokepoints are not located in Western waters, while many of the available sources come from Western based journals. This may influence how some issues are represented or discussed in the literature. This study follows good academic practice by properly citing all writers and organisations in Harvard style.

Every effort has been made to show sources in a fair and clear way. There are no ethical worries about privacy or consent because there is no primary data or human participants.

Artificial intelligence tools were used during the writing process to assist with grammar checks, structure improvements and clarity. These tools did not create original ideas or analyse data. They only supported the presentation of the text. All academic decisions and interpretations in this thesis are my own.

4 Global Power and Geopolitics of Maritime Chokepoints

4.1 Geopolitics of Energy Dependence and Control

Oil has long been a key part of geopolitical power. States depend on each other for the supply, transit, and use of vital energy resources. As Mike Naughton's report mentions, "In the global energy landscape, geopolitics pull the strings of the energy market" (Integrity Energy, 2024). This dependence connects the success of importing countries to the stability of exporting regions, creating both partnership and risk. The International Energy Agency (2024) highlights that roughly 20 percent of the world's oil and liquefied natural gas (LNG) trade passes through the Strait of Hormuz, a narrow maritime chokepoint that directly affects the energy security of Asia and Europe. This kind of dependency means that instability in one region can have effects across the world, since, as Meghan O'Sullivan explains, "as long as we're connected to global

markets, … changes in Saudi Arabia or Iran or Iraq are going to affect global prices" (O'Sullivan, 2019). This connected system of trade routes and dependencies shows how control over the flow of energy resources translates into political and strategic power. (U.S. Energy Information Administration, 2025) summarises this by noting that "chokepoints are narrow channels along widely used global sea routes that are critical to global energy security."

Table 1 shows that the Strait of Hormuz has remained steady from 2023 to early 2025 despite rising regional tension and constant threats to maritime security, oil and gas shipments. According to the (U.S. Energy Information Administration, 2025), total oil flows averaged **21.4 million barrels per day in 2023**, **20.3 million barrels per day in 2024**, and **20.1 million barrels per day during the first quarter of 2025**. This stability shows that global energy trade continues to depend heavily on Hormuz, even in times of political conflict.

Volume of crude oil, condensate, and petroleum products transported through the Strait of Hormuz, 2020–1Q25 (million barrels per day)	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	1Q25
Total oil flows through Strait of Hormuz	**19.1**	**19.4**	**21.4**	**21.4**	**20.3**	**20.1**
Crude oil and condensate	14.3	14.4	16.0	15.5	14.3	14.2
Petroleum products	4.8	5.0	5.5	5.8	5.9	5.9
World maritime oil trade	**71.4**	**72.6**	**74.3**	**76.0**	**75.5**	**75.7**
World total petroleum and other liquids consumption	**91.0**	**96.6**	**99.5**	**101.8**	**102.7**	**102.1**
LNG flows through Strait of Hormuz (billion cubic feet per day)	**10.7**	**10.7**	**11.0**	**10.5**	**10.3**	**11.5**

Table 1. Volume of crude oil, condensate, and petroleum products transported through the Strait of Hormuz. (U.S. Energy Information Administration, 2025)

Although Saudi Arabia and the UAE have built limited backup routes, such as the East–West pipeline to Yanbu and the Habshan–Fujairah pipeline, these only provide short-term relief in the event of a disruption. (U.S. Energy Information Administration, 2025) estimates that "about 2.6 million barrels per day of capacity from the Saudi and UAE pipelines could be available to bypass the Strait of Hormuz in the event of a supply disruption." However, this amount is small compared to the total flow through Hormuz, which makes the strait the core transit corridor for the world's oil and LNG exports.

Routine Maritime Presence Ensuring Energy Flow

Continuous multinational naval presence at the Strait of Hormuz is important for the security of energy transit across the Strait. This presence helps support trade and prevents attacks against commercial ships. The United States manages this effort through the U.S. Coast Guard's Patrol Forces Southwest Asia, located in Bahrain. The Sentinel-class Fast Response Cutters are high-tech, 46-meter patrol boats designed for coastal security and conduct daily patrols through the Arabian Gulf and the Strait of Hormuz. These patrol boats carry out maritime interception and maritime domain awareness operations in coordination with regional partners (U.S. Coast Guard Atlantic Area, 2025).

The United States Fifth Fleet is the leading American naval force responsible for maintaining United States power and ensuring maritime security across the Middle East. It is headquartered in Manama, Bahrain, and oversees operations across the Arabian Gulf, the Gulf of Oman, the Red Sea, and parts of the Indian Ocean. The fleet combines manned and unmanned systems to maintain alertness and deterrence in these critical waterways and supports the wider U.S. naval mission of protecting global energy routes (U.S. Navy, 2023).

European involvement through the EMASoH initiative and Operation AGENOR provides additional maritime awareness and reassurance for commercial vessels. The initiative aims to give European countries more up-to-date information and ensure safe passage through the Strait (Norwegian Armed Forces, 2024). All these overlapping security measures show the importance of maintaining continuous surveillance and cooperation among different nations to secure the Strait of Hormuz.

Red Sea Attacks, Energy Market and Insurance Instability

From the end of 2023, the Red Sea became increasingly unsafe as Yemen's Houthi movement aimed at international shipping routes. The Houthis' maritime torment increased throughout 2024 after their dissatisfaction with the genocide on Palestinians in Gaza. The Houthi's attacked any ship that they believed had any cooperation with Israel and Western countries. Many researchers and reports claim that Iran has armed, trained, and funded the Houthis, with Reuters saying there was a step-up in weapons

supplies in the wake of the Gaza war (Reuters, 2024). Separate regional research also reports that Iran is providing missiles, drones, and training to the Houthis (Sana'a Center, 2024).

Houthi attacks rose significantly in 2024, and they raised the costs for shipowners and insurers. Reuters informed that the price of insuring a ship through the Red Sea doubled in September 2024 because of the increased danger, and some insurance companies temporarily stopped offering coverage for ships in the area. For those that still did, the price of their special war-risk insurance was more than double (Reuters, 2024).

After a period of calm times in early 2025, the Houthis started to apply violence to the ships that were passing through the Red Sea. In July 2025, two Greek-operated ships, Magic Seas and Eternity C, were hit and later sank (Reuters, 2025). With the new start of attacks on ships in July 2025, insurance costs rose again, and many suppliers changed routes through the Cape of Good Hope, making the route longer and causing freight rates to rise.

Controlling Yemen's west coastline is essential to stopping the attacks. In the Security Council report there is a mention that Houthi rebels control the Hodeidah port and many other places on the western side of the country (Security Council Report, 2024).

Energy Dependence and Global Power Dynamics

World energy dependence shows both connection and delicacy within the world economy. The IEA claims that it has been "at the heart of international energy security for 50 years – working to avoid, mitigate and manage energy disruptions and crises" (IEA, 2025). The flow of energy connects national economies in shared vulnerability. According to the United States EIA, "about 63 percent of the world's oil production moved on maritime routes," and "chokepoints for maritime transit of oil are a critical part of global energy security" (EIA, 2025). The dependence on a few major sea passages means that "dependence on a limited number of critical chokepoints introduces significant strategic vulnerabilities" (EIA, 2025). These facts show that economies are intertwined with each other, and if one country is affected, it can have consequences for

many others. Because countries depend on the same energy routes, powerful countries try to compete to protect or control the routes. This competition is what shapes world maritime strategies.

4.2 Competing Maritime Strategies

Between the power struggle of the United States and China, the world's major maritime chokepoints have become important locations. Each country views control over sea routes as a foundation of national power, trade resilience, and geopolitical influence. China sees infrastructure diplomacy and economic connectivity as the core of its strategic approach and the United States continues to rely on naval dominance, cooperation, and the security of trade corridors. Times are changing quickly, USA and China are challenging each other across the world's oceans in every turn, while they are shaping the significance of key chokepoints.

The United States and global sea control

With strong alliances and a powerful navy, the US has tried to protect freedom of navigation since the end of World War II. This idea comes from the work of Alfred Thayer Mahan (1890), a 19th-century American naval officer and theorist who argued that control of the sea, including key maritime chokepoints, gives a nation decisive global influence. The American naval presence provides freedom for the trading system and guarantees the undisturbed movement of energy and freight through critical straits and canals.

Linking the Atlantic and Pacific markets and accommodating about 40% of US container movement is the reason why the Panama Canal remains a backbone of the system (CSIS 2024b). Researchers report that the Panama Canal is one of the most strategically significant locations in the Western Hemisphere because of its role in sustaining US naval mobility and supply chains (CSIS 2024b, CEBRI, 2024).

Recent talks in Washington have been about reassessing how to keep influence around the canal as Chinese investment and logistical control have increased (Atlantic Council 2024b). American officials often talk about working with Panama under the Neutrality Treaty, but policymakers say that trying to take back direct authority would hurt diplomacy and might even give China more power in the chokepoint (Baker Institute 2025). The US wants to mix military presence with diplomatic engagement and investment connections that keep access to the canal without being too obvious. This approach aligns with Washington's idea of a rules-based maritime order, but it is becoming more and more of a challenge to China's idea and ways of global integration.

China's maritime strategy and Latin America

China's maritime strategy has for some time now focused on the connectivity of global policy. The Belt and Road Initiative and its maritime side, the Maritime Silk Road, merge infrastructure, technology, and capital to set up trade corridors linking Asia, Africa, Europe, and the Americas. Chinese officials say that the BRI is mutually beneficial for development cooperation, but its methods of investment reveal long-term plans to integrate markets, supply chains, and transport routes led by Chinese design.

(Ellis, 2021) points out that the BRI operates more as a narrative that supports the growth of Chinese involvement and infrastructure dominance throughout Latin America. The most remarkable maritime example in the western part of the world is the Chancay port project in Peru. The port, valued at almost three billion US dollars and majority-owned by the Chinese company COSCO Shipping Corporation, is being built as the largest deep-water port on South America's west coast (AidData 2024; CSIS 2024a).

When it begins operations, it will accommodate vessels that cannot dock elsewhere in the region and shorten transit times between China and Peru by up to twenty days. Peruvian and Chinese leaders present Chancay as the gateway to a new trans-Pacific route that links Latin America directly to East Asia (AidData, 2024). For China, the initiative expands the Maritime Silk Road beyond the Indo-Pacific and shows how Chinese funding can reshape the geography of global shipping. Chinese state-owned

companies now operate or finance port terminals across Latin American countries such as Panama, Ecuador, Brazil, Mexico, and the Caribbean, each maintaining some level of cooperation with China.

Ellis (2021) also analysed that Chancay is part of a broader pattern of Chinese port, coastal, and logistics projects in Latin America. These deals show how the BRI's discourse of "connectivity" includes ports, railways, telecommunications, and energy grids. Western researchers argue that such projects, even though they are presented as business projects they have strategic consequences since control over maritime logistics could restrict Chinese rivals during crises (CSIS, 2024a). Panama has similar infrastructure arrangements that demonstrate China's growing influence in the region where the United States once held decisive power (Ellis 2021). The expansion of Chinese port operations in the Caribbean and Central America shows how China's maritime reach is spreading geographically and how it might challenge United States supremacy in its traditional sphere.

Egypt, the Suez Canal and BRICS alignment

When Egypt joined BRICS, it marked a major change in the geopolitical economy surrounding the Suez Canal. Leaders in Egypt describe BRICS membership as a way to strengthen exports, attract funding, and gain access to different capital channels that reduce dependence on Western institutions (Xinhua 2025). Joining BRICS brings Egypt closer to Russia and China, both of which see the Red Sea as an important route for their maritime trade. Officials of the Suez Canal Economic Zone (SCZONE) have openly said that investment from BRICS countries are very much needed in Egypt, integrating the canal into larger logistics and manufacturing networks (Modern Diplomacy 2025). For China, Egypt's location at the crossroads of Africa, Asia, and Europe makes it a key pillar of the Maritime Silk Road. Chinese companies have invested heavily in the SCZONE and in port developments at Ain Sokhna and Abu Qir. The former is on the Red Sea and the latter is on the Mediterranean sea and their goal is to create an industrial and shipping hub connecting the Indian Ocean to the Mediterranean (Modern Diplomacy 2025). Reporters say that this cooperation lets us

see how Beijing uses infrastructure and economic ties to develop strategic routes rather than relying on formal military partnerships like the United States. From Egypt's point of view, BRICS membership offers strategic options at a time when they are having domestic financial difficulties. Egypt opens up multiple external relations and the possibility of new loans through the BRICS New Development Bank. Egypt aligns with a growing bloc that seeks to rebalance global trade and supply chains. The Suez Canal already carries around 12% of world trade, therefore it becomes not just an Egyptian asset but also a chokepoint within the trade vision of the BRICS economies. Egypt's engagement with Western partners and BRICS members shows how chokepoint states can use competing maritime strategies to strengthen their own autonomy.

Critical reflection narratives and bias

Researchers of maritime conflicts often reveal the geopolitical perspective of their own backgrounds. Western policy literature usually portrays China's infrastructure expansion as a form of quiet enforcement (CSIS 2024a, Atlantic Council, 2024b). Analyst such as Ellis shows the strategic risks of Chinese connectivity while treating USA control of waterways as a neutral guarantee of global stability. This reflects a deeper bias within English-language discourse that links Western dominance with order and non-Western initiatives with deviation from order. Recognising this bias does not dismiss genuine concerns about transparency and dependency, but it calls for a more balanced understanding of maritime power. China's investments in global south countries show that influence at sea is now exercised through capital, infrastructure, and narrative power rather than naval presence. One important aspect of the geopolitics of maritime chokepoints is how Western and non-Western governments understand these changes differently, which influences how they react.

Link to regional security and vulnerabilities

The American and Chinese maritime policies interact to create overlapping zones of influence around important chokepoints. As smaller powers such as Egypt, Panama, and Peru cooperate with China and USA, competition increasingly spills into issues of regional security, partnership cohesion, and strategic vulnerability. In the next section the topic is about how these different dynamics play out in the security planning of chokepoint countries and the risks that come with the growth of sea power.

4.3 Regional Security and Strategic Vulnerabilities

Maritime Chokepoints and Shared Instability

Modern maritime security has a lot of different challenges. Global chokepoints such as the Strait of Malacca, the Gulf of Guinea, and the Horn of Africa represent lifelines of trade and a risk for instability. Every region has its own problems shaped by geography, governance, and external competition. The security of these chokepoints directly affects the stability of international commerce and the economic resilience of the surrounding states.

The Strait of Malacca and Southeast Asia

The Strait of Malacca is one of the most vital waterways for world trade as it links the Indian and Pacific Oceans and carries an important part of global shipping. The Strait's narrow and busy lanes, along with the closeness of multiple national jurisdictions, make it one of the most sensitive maritime spaces in Southeast Asia. Recent reports show that the Straits of Malacca and Singapore have experienced the highest number of piracy and armed robbery incidents across Asia, with the first quarter of 2025 recording the most cases since 2021 (ReCAAP ISC, 2025). Academic studies indicate that most piracy and armed robbery occur near Indonesia's Riau Islands and that most attacks are opportunistic rather than coordinated (Phayal, Gold and Prins, 2022). The closeness of territorial areas and the differing enforcement capacities between coastal states create

both physical and institutional vulnerabilities. Cooperation mechanisms such as the Malacca Strait Patrols and ReCAAP have helped reduce major disruptions, but differing national agendas make it difficult for countries to maintain long-term sustainability. Phayal, Gold and Prins (2022) also note that regional cooperation against maritime crime does not hold equal importance for all states.

Security in the Strait of Malacca depends on continuous surveillance, intelligence sharing among allies, and the political willingness of coastal countries to act as one. When the region's players cooperate closely, they can offset structural vulnerabilities, although temporary opportunistic piracy may still occur from time to time.

The Gulf of Guinea and West African Waters

The Gulf of Guinea is a little over 9,000 km long and has one of the most difficult maritime environments in the world. The waterways hold great importance for world trade but continue to experience constant criminal activity, including smuggling, piracy, and hijacking. The Gulf of Guinea is one of the most dangerous areas for seafarers, with attacks such as the seizure of vessels and the kidnapping of crew members for ransom being very common (Okpuvwie E. J, 2021). These crimes stem from poverty, unemployment, and weak maritime governance among coastal states, which discourage investment and undermine legitimate commerce(Okpuvwie E. J, 2021). The Gulf of Guinea accounted for most of the world's piracy incidents during the past decade, although studies show a continuous decline in attacks since 2010. The Yaoundé Code of Conduct, which strengthened collaboration among coastal states, has helped reduce hijacking and kidnapping, partly due to coordinated patrols (Marine Security Studies, 2024). However, without effective prosecution mechanisms, deterrence remains weak, and security continues to be fragile when regional enforcement capacities fluctuate.

Recent data from the International Maritime Bureau confirm that piracy in the region, although not as severe as at its peak, has increased slightly, with three more incidents recorded this year than last year. The Bureau reported fifteen incidents in the first nine months of 2025 compared with twelve during the same period in 2024, including two hijackings and the kidnapping of fourteen crew members (IMB, 2025). These incidents show that pirate groups still have the capacity and intent to operate far from shore despite active patrols. The persistence of piracy highlights that long-term resilience in

West African waters depends on sustained regional leadership, improved legal enforcement, and balanced economic development.

The Horn of Africa and the Decline of Somali Piracy

The Horn of Africa was once the symbol of world maritime disorder. Somali piracy emerged in the mid-2000s as local fishermen reacted to illegal foreign fishing and toxic waste dumping along the Somali coast. The collapse of state authority and the absence of coastal governance allowed armed groups to expand their operations, and many coastal communities initially viewed piracy as a form of defence against external exploitation (Lindley, 2016). Peaking between 2008 and 2012 with more than two hundred reported incidents yearly, this wave of attacks turned the Western Indian Ocean into one of the most dangerous zones for international shipping (Jakobsen, P. V. and Henningsen, T. B, 2024). A combination of international naval patrols, private security guards aboard commercial vessels, and the adoption of best management practices by shipping companies sharply decreased piracy after 2013 (Jakobsen, P. V. and Henningsen, T. B, 2024). These measures showed that coordinated maritime alliances can restore a degree of stability, even though conditions of poverty, illegal fishing, and weak governance remain unresolved. The experience of Somalia's coastal waters therefore show that resilient maritime security often depends not only on deterrence at sea but also on development and political stability inland (Lindley, 2016;Jakobsen, P. V. and Henningsen, T. B, 2024). Recent data confirm that the waters off Somalia and the wider Indian Ocean have remained largely stable. The International Maritime Bureau reported no successful hijackings in the first nine months of 2025, attributing the continued calm to naval vigilance and adherence to best management practices (IMB, 2025). While these results show the effectiveness of sustained international cooperation, they also underline the need for continued support to prevent a resurgence if surveillance or coastal development efforts decline.

Summary and Strategic Insight

Maritime security varies across global chokepoints. There were thirty one incidents recorded in the first nine months of 2025 in the Straits of Malacca and Singapore, mostly opportunistic cases involving minor thefts (IMB, 2025). The Gulf of Guinea reported fifteen incidents, including two hijackings and the kidnapping of fourteen crew

members, showing that organised attacks persist despite regional patrols (IMB, 2025). The waters off Somalia have remained stable, with no successful hijackings during the same period. This is because of constant naval presence and adherence to adopted best management practices (IMB, 2025). All these developments indicate that maritime insecurity has not disappeared but has become unevenly distributed. Southeast Asia faces low level but frequent threats, West Africa continues to struggle with violent organised groups, and the Horn of Africa demonstrates how sustained coordination can maintain stability. The comparative picture shows that the most effective deterrence comes from long-term regional cooperation supported by governance reform rather than short-term naval deployments.

4.4 Economic Resilience and Future Trade Routes

Climate Vulnerability and the Panama Canal

Recent disruptions have shown how world trade depends on a few limited major maritime chokepoints. The Panama Canal, the Red Sea, and the Suez Canal have shown how climate and dispute can delay or obstruct vessels by making ships find longer and more expensive alternative routes. These pressures have made countries and shipping enterprises work on greater resilience by funding multiple corridors, green technologies, and port systems that can adapt to new risks in the world maritime network.

The Panama Canal is worth more than just linking two oceans. It also gives considerable influence to the countries that manage its gates. The Panama Canal has experienced one of the most severe droughts in its history. From 2023 to 2025, decreasing rainfall quickly lowered water levels in Gatun Lake, which lies on the Atlantic side of the canal. This made the Panama Canal Authority reduce daily activities and impose strict restrictions. (Panama Canal Authority, (ACP) 2024b) reported that constant dry years have created lasting pressure on the canal's freshwater system, making water control both a national and worldwide concern. As (IMF, 2024) stated, the

drought has turned into a structural risk to trade throughput that affects global inflation and logistics costs.

Emerging Alternative Corridors

The newest and most ambitious plan to improve alternative connectivity is the India–Middle East–Europe Corridor, which was announced during the G20 summit in 2023. This initiative is supported by India, the United States, the European Union, and Gulf partners, and its goal is to connect Mumbai to Europe through rail and sea links passing across the Arabian Peninsula (G20, 2023). Western leaders believe that IMEC is one way to strengthen trade ties between Asia and Europe while reducing dependence on existing passages such as the Suez Canal.

Researchers report that major water lanes are going to have logistical and political challenges. (European Council on Foreign Relations, 2024) says in their publication "the IMEC was launched with great fanfare, but its implementation faces major logistical, political, and financial challenges that will require sustained cooperation among partners." The same study explains that "a lack of clear governance structures and the absence of committed investment coordination threaten to delay or dilute the corridor's potential impact." It also highlights that "regional instability, particularly in the Middle East, and competition with other infrastructure initiatives, such as China's Belt and Road, complicate progress." IMEC's success depends on overcoming long standing institutional and security barriers, which make it seem more like a promising concept than an achievable reality. With these problems, the idea reflects a broader trend in which infrastructure diplomacy and new routes are definitely becoming tools for resilience and strategic competition.

Resilience Through Older and Newer Routes

Many shipping companies were forced to change their travel routes because their assets and personnel were damaged by the increase in regional insecurity. (Maplecroft, 2024)

reported that “from its start in November 2023 the Houthi campaign caused major disruption to maritime trade flows as the spike in war risk premiums redirected ships to transit around the Cape of Good Hope.” This shift shows not only the importance of immediate responses to security threats but also a broader demonstration of maritime resilience. The same report stated that “shipping companies face insurance and security dilemmas as rerouting adds weeks to voyages and increases costs for fuel and crew,” reflecting how the economic burden became an inevitable trade-off for maintaining global trade continuity. Pole Star Global (2024) supports this conclusion, explaining that “escalating conflicts in the Middle East overshadow maritime trade, with a pronounced impact on the Suez Canal. In response, vessels are choosing the lengthier route through the Cape of Good Hope.” Such rerouting had significant economic and logistical effects. The same source noted that “this strategic shift reverberates across vital industries, causing disruptions in maritime trade while exacerbating rising shipping costs and inflation rates.” These developments show how costly but effective the shipping sector’s ability to redirect through older and longer routes can be during crises. The global maritime system relies on backups, where older pathways like the Cape of Good Hope act as stabilising alternatives when chokepoints become unreliable.

At the same time, attention has grown around the search for newer and less conventional maritime corridors that might complement long-term resilience. The Arctic region, particularly the Northern Sea Route, has become a frequent topic in researchers’ discussions. The Arctic Institute (2024) highlights that “the Polar Silk Road was added in 2017 to China’s mega-scale connectivity project,” signalling Beijing’s interest in expanding access to northern trade. The same report notes that “not a single COSCO or Chinese-owned ship has sailed along the Northern Sea Route for fear of secondary sanctions and staggering costs,” showing the constant constraints of this route. It also states that “the plan includes the Arctic Ocean as part of a broader strategy to diversify China’s access to global transportation corridors and secure its supply of strategic resources through what it calls the Polar Silk Road.” At the moment, the northern route seems more symbolic than practical, but it also reflects a deliberate attempt to establish alternative maritime linkages beyond traditional chokepoints.

All of this shows that maritime resilience is based on adaptability. While newer projects like the Polar Silk Road indicate long-term strategic thinking shaped by environmental

and geopolitical change, older routes such as the Cape of Good Hope provide immediate relief during disruptions. The coexistence of these pathways shows that resilience is not only a technical feature of shipping but also a geopolitical necessity within an increasingly uncertain world order.

Adaptation Through Technology and Diversification

The drive for diversification stems not only from recent crises but also from structural vulnerabilities. Depending on a few narrow waterways exposes the world economy to political disagreements, military tensions, and environmental disruptions. The wise approach for countries and shipping industries is to spread risk across many channels so that when problems arise, their effects are less severe. Adding variety also reduces the risk of financial loss through insurance, makes goods markets less volatile, and increases predictability. These measures make maritime trade more resilient and prevent world trade from reacting with sudden shocks.

In addition to physical diversification, technological and environmental adaptation have become central to maritime resilience. The International Maritime Organization's 2023 greenhouse gas policy states that shipowners must cut their emissions to net-zero by 2050. This has led to investment in cleaner fuels and designs that consume less energy (IMO, 2023). These changes aim to lower carbon emissions while encouraging vessel renewal and digital modernisation, improving long-term efficiency and reducing exposure to oil price changes. Over time, ports have become important players in resilience planning. Singapore's Smart Port Challenge and Europe's Port 4.0 framework link leading ports such as Rotterdam, Antwerp-Bruges, Hamburg, Valencia, and Barcelona. All of these ports have invested in artificial intelligence, digital twins (which are virtual copies of ports used to simulate and optimise operations), and automation to strengthen trade resilience and environmental sustainability (MPA Singapore, 2024 and

Port Technology, 2024). These new digital systems help with faster rerouting of cargo and much better coordination during crises.

Toward a Multi-Route Maritime System

World economic resilience now relies less on managing single chokepoints and more on cooperation and adaptability. The new and emerging routes such as IMEC, Arctic waterways, and the continued resilience of detours like the Cape of Good Hope show a move toward a multi-route maritime system. The technological upgrades of ports and fleets add new layers of protection against economic disruption. All these developments together suggest that future maritime stability will be shaped by innovation, partnership, and diversity rather than dominance by any one power.

5 Conclusion

The thesis goal was to give information about maritime chokepoints influence on geopolitics, trade, and energy security relations. In this thesis a literature-based and theory-driven approach was used to evaluate four major chokepoints, the Strait of Hormuz, the Strait of Malacca, the Suez Canal, and the Panama Canal. The goal was to understand how these narrow routes concentrate opportunity and risk, and how countries and companies adapt to risk.

This thesis shows that chokepoints combine value and liability. A few waterways control most of the world's energy and trade, but there is quick exposure to disruption in the chokepoints. Short disruptions increase costs and prolong shipments, and when many chokepoints are affected at once, regional chaos can become worldwide. The maritime system was built for speed, not for resilience, which is why structural instability is a problem (Bailey, R. and Wellesley, L. 2017).

All of the chokepoints are not the same. Straits such as Hormuz and Malacca are unavoidable and heavily trafficked. Man made canals like Suez and Panama are engineered shortcuts with few alternative routes. These differences explain why some disruptions cause more serious global effects. Energy routes are notably more sensitive because alternative corridors provide only partly relief.

Ongoing naval patrols by the United States and its allies in Hormuz show that economic linkages need constant protection. The Strait of Hormuz shows how energy dependence ties world markets to regional peace. The smallest threats can raise oil costs worldwide. The Strait of Malacca indicates that problems with security often come from weak governance instead of open confrontation. Piracy has decreased in places where coastal countries cooperate more, showing that regional collaboration reduces danger.

Decreasing water levels constrained capacity and increased prices, showing that climate adaptation is now an important part of trade resilience in the maritime waters. Environmental concerns are as serious as political ones. The drought that limited Panama Canal operations from the start of 2023 exposed how climate change directly affects global logistics. The same reasoning applies to the Suez Canal and the Red Sea, where natural and political stress make coastal areas less stable.

Flexibility is increasingly becoming key to maritime resilience. Ships rerouted around the Cape of Good Hope, when the Red Sea became dangerous. This change maintained the flow of trade and showed that older passages still stabilise the system, even though the trip was costlier and longer. Also new initiatives such as the India–Middle East–Europe Corridor and the Polar Silk Road bring new routes and more options. Port innovation and digital systems play a growing role in crisis response and recovery, showing how technology supports adaptability and efficiency.

Great power rivalry now comes from who gives the best infrastructure and financial help to a country, not who has the most naval presence. The United States relies on alliances and patrols, while China advances influence through investment and logistics networks. The Suez Canal and Egypt's growing partnership with BRICS illustrate how chokepoint states can use competition to attract capital and diversify diplomacy (Modern Diplomacy, 2025). Control over chokepoints now goes beyond territory occupation, nowadays it is all about governance, capital, and narrative power.

Three theoretical insights for this thesis are as follows. Chokepoints are relational rather than purely geographic. Their power lies in how trade, governance, and strategy interact. Efficiency and vulnerability are two in one because the maritime system is designed for maximum efficiency, which makes disruptions inevitable. Maritime order is being reshaped through subtle competition over infrastructure and capital instead of direct occupation.

Policies are clear. Chokepoint countries seek transparent governance and balanced partnerships to strengthen technology and resilience. Neighbouring countries should work together and establish mutual legal frameworks so that risk can be mitigated.

As a literature-based study, this research has limits. It relies on secondary sources and reflects some Western bias in available data. Future work should include local perspectives and practical testing. Chokepoint geopolitics might be clarified by research on disruptions and port financing.

In conclusion, maritime chokepoints remain where geography and power intersect. By compressing world trade into narrow corridors and turning movement into influence. The world economy has learned to live with their risks by having multiple routes, improving cooperation and adopting technology into it. When coordination and preparedness aligns maritime trade remains stable. When the chokepoints fail, then comes disruption ripple across oceans and economies. The future of maritime resilience will depend on how countries and companies turn these narrow spaces of vulnerability into shared waterways of security and adaptation.

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