



Maritime Economic Geopolitics and Risk Transmission: A Systematic Literature Review of the Impact of U.S.-Iran Tensions on International Trade Flows in Indonesian Waters

***Anwar T¹**

Politeknik Maritim AMI Makassar,
Indonesia

Muhammad Sahid²

Universitas Islam Negeri Alauddin
Makassar, Indonesia

Amrin²

Politeknik Maritim AMI Makassar,
Indonesia

Muhammad Ilham⁴

Politeknik Maritim AMI Makassar,
Indonesia

***Corresponding author:**

Anwar T, Politeknik Maritim AMI Makassar,
Indonesia. ✉anwarthr@gmail.com

Article Info:

Article history:

Received: May 08, 2026

Revised: June 22, 2026

Accepted: June 24, 2026

Keywords:

Energy Security; Maritime Security;
Persian Gulf; Sea Lanes of
Communication; Strategic
Chokepoint

Abstract

Background: Geopolitical tensions in the Persian Gulf, particularly between Iran and the United States, constitute a systemic risk factor for global maritime trade. However, their cascading implications for *sea lanes of communication* (SLOCs) in Southeast Asia, especially Indonesian waters, remain insufficiently examined in the international academic literature.

Objective: This study aims to examine how Iran–United States tensions in the Persian Gulf function as a systemic disruptive variable within the global maritime security architecture and how their implications for SLOCs in Indonesian waters remain analytically underrepresented.

Methods: This study conducted a PRISMA-compliant systematic literature review of 30 peer-reviewed articles published between 2002 and 2025, selected from the Scopus database using predefined inclusion criteria related to maritime security, energy geopolitics, and strategic chokepoints in the Persian Gulf and Southeast Asia. The review was supplemented by VOSviewer keyword co-occurrence bibliometric analysis to map thematic clusters and identify structural gaps in the literature.

Results: The findings identified three principal risk transmission mechanisms: energy supply volatility through the Strait of Hormuz, tanker rerouting dynamics through Indonesian straits, and intensifying great-power naval rivalry in the region. Keyword co-occurrence analysis quantitatively confirmed the absence of strong conceptual linkages between the Persian Gulf geopolitics cluster and the Indonesian maritime security cluster in the global literature.

Conclusion: This study affirms the urgency of reorienting international maritime security discourse to position Indonesia as an active geostrategic actor rather than a passive recipient of regional conflict dynamics.

To cite this article: T., A., Sahid, M., Amrin, & Ilham, M. (2026). Maritime economic geopolitics and risk transmission: A systematic literature review of the impact of U.S.-Iran tensions on international trade flows in Indonesian waters. *Glosains: Jurnal Sains Global Indonesia*, 7(3), 915–930. <https://doi.org/10.59784/glosains.v7i3.784>

INTRODUCTION

In the contemporary geopolitical landscape, characterized by the complexity of interdependence among nations and the fragmentation of the multilateral security order, tensions between the Islamic Republic of Iran and the United States in the Persian Gulf region have emerged as one of the most decisive *disruption variables* in shaping the architecture of global maritime security stability over the past two decades.

Bilateral relations, which historically have gone through various phases of escalation ranging from the 1979 diplomatic hostage crisis to naval confrontations during the Tanker War

era of the 1980s to a series of military provocations and energy infrastructure sabotage incidents occurring between 2019 and 2024, demonstrate that this conflict is not merely a bilateral competition between hegemonic powers, but a structural phenomenon capable of systematically destabilizing the global energy governance and maritime security systems (Bakhshandeh & Yeganeh, 2023). These tensions do not exist in isolation within a geopolitical vacuum; rather, they operate within a networked system of energy interdependence, international trade, and security alliances linking the Middle East with East Asia, Southeast Asia, and even the global economic order as a whole.

At the heart of these Iran–U.S. conflict dynamics, the Strait of Hormuz a narrow waterway with a minimum width of just 33 kilometers connecting the Persian Gulf to the Gulf of Oman and further into the Indian Ocean serves as a critical node in the global energy supply chain that lacks adequate structural substitutes in the short term (O'reilly, 2008). The Strait consistently handles approximately 20 to 21 percent of the world's total crude oil trade, or the equivalent of over 17 million barrels per day under normal conditions, making it the energy chokepoint of the highest strategic importance on Earth (U.S. Energy Information Administration, 2023). Every episode of military escalation in the region whether in the form of provocative military exercises, threats to close the strait, attacks on commercial tankers, or Iranian-sponsored armed proxy activities in Yemen, Iraq, and Lebanon directly drives global energy price volatility and exacerbates security risk calculations for energy-importing nations worldwide, particularly in East Asia and Southeast Asia, which collectively have the highest aggregate levels of energy import dependence (Tabari, 2016).

Although the geopolitical urgency of these Iran–United States dynamics has spurred the growth of substantial academic literature, a significant epistemological limitation can be identified in the existing research corpus to date: the dominance of a Middle East-centric perspective in analyzing the impact of these tensions has systematically produced an analytical blind spot that overlooks the structural resonance of disruptions in the Persian Gulf across other regions functionally connected within the global maritime trade system. Most previous studies have situated the impact of Iran–U.S. tensions exclusively within a Middle Eastern analytical framework, focusing on the region's internal dynamics, the responses of Gulf Arab states, U.S. sanctions policies, and nuclear proliferation implications. Meanwhile, the transmission channels linking instability in the Persian Gulf to structural disruptions in the Sea Lanes of Communication (SLOC) in Southeast Asia, which serve as vital arteries for global trade and East Asian energy security, have been virtually absent from mainstream international academic discourse (Szalai, 2025).

This analytical gap becomes increasingly critical when confronted with the fact that countries such as the People's Republic of China, Japan, South Korea, and India which are the largest oil importers from the Persian Gulf region rely on the reliability and stability of shipping routes traversing Southeast Asian waters, including the Strait of Malacca, the Sunda Strait, and the Lombok Strait, for their energy supply security. Any disruption to the smooth flow of crude oil from the Persian Gulf not only results in direct economic impacts in the form of surging energy commodity prices but also triggers a series of strategic responses from importing nations that directly impact security dynamics in the Southeast Asian region (Álvarez, 2014). Within this framework, Indonesia's role as the world's largest archipelagic nation geographically positioned as a guardian state for the most vital strategic chokepoints in Southeast Asia becomes an analytical variable that cannot be further overlooked.

Indonesia, with its unique geostrategic position as a nation controlling three of the four most significant maritime *chokepoints* in Southeast Asia, holds a role that structurally far exceeds its own economic or military capacity within the global power hierarchy. Through its involvement in the Maritime Silk Road Initiative (MSRI) launched by China as part of the broader Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), Indonesia has solidified its position as a critical node in the maritime trade and connectivity network linking the Indian Ocean with the Western Pacific (Pattiradjawane & Soebagio, 2015; Saha, 2016). The Strait of Malacca, traversed by over 80,000 vessels annually and handling approximately 25 percent of global maritime trade, along with the Sunda Strait and the Lombok Strait, which serve as strategic alternative routes, lies within or directly borders Indonesia's sovereign territory and Exclusive Economic Zone, making the stability of Indonesia's

national waters an integral component of the global maritime security order (Sumrahadi, 2025).

The escalating tensions between Iran and the United States in the Persian Gulf region have transmission mechanisms that can directly exacerbate maritime security pressures in Indonesian waters through at least three main channels. First, the escalation of conflict threatening disruptions to oil supplies from the Persian Gulf drives the acceleration of alternative oil tanker routes and an increase in commercial vessel traffic volumes through Indonesian waters, which in turn heightens the probability of security incidents, maritime crime, and environmental accidents in these heavily trafficked shipping lanes. Second, concerns about energy security among East Asian nations particularly China and Japan have driven the intensification of naval presence in the Indian Ocean and Southeast Asia on escort and supply route protection missions, complicating Indonesia's security calculations and potentially eroding the principles of freedom of navigation that underpin Indonesia's free-and-active foreign policy. Third, the volatility in global energy prices resulting from tensions in the Persian Gulf has direct macroeconomic impacts on Indonesia as a country that still maintains energy subsidies and faces a significant trade deficit in oil and gas during certain periods.

Paradoxically, although Indonesia occupies a geostrategic position that objectively makes it highly vulnerable to various implications of the dynamics of Iran-U.S. tensions, the body of international academic literature specifically analyzing the causal relationship between conflict escalation in the Persian Gulf and the stability of Sea Lanes of Communication within Indonesia's jurisdictional waters remains very limited. Existing studies tend to analyze Indonesia's maritime security within the context of internal threats such as piracy, smuggling, and bilateral territorial conflicts, while the external dimension namely the transmission of risks from geopolitical hotspots in the Middle East to Indonesia's national maritime stability, has not received academic attention commensurate with its urgency. This research gap is not merely a technical academic shortcoming; it represents a strategic deficit that could have serious implications for Indonesia's capacity to formulate comprehensive and proactive maritime security policies.

Based on the identification of this substantial research gap, this article aims to conduct a systematic and critical mapping of the relevant global literature to analyze how the international academic community perceives the impact of Iran-United States tensions in the Persian Gulf on the stability of maritime communication routes in the Southeast Asian region, with Indonesia as the primary analytical focus. Using a systematic literature review approach grounded in the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) methodology, this article simultaneously seeks to explicitly identify unresolved research gaps in the existing literature and propose a future research agenda that can strengthen the academic foundation for formulating more adaptive and responsive Indonesian maritime security policies to global geopolitical dynamics.

The main contribution of this article lies in its effort to build an analytical bridge between two domains of study that have long operated separately: Middle East conflict studies on one hand, and Southeast Asian maritime security studies on the other by positioning Indonesia not merely as a passive object of impact, but as a geostrategic actor with the interests and capacity to shape regional responses to global energy and maritime security instability.

The main contribution of this article lies in its effort to build an analytical bridge between two fields of study that have long operated separately: Middle East conflict studies on one hand, and Southeast Asian maritime security studies on the other. It positions Indonesia not merely as a passive recipient of impacts, but as a geostrategic actor with the interests and capacity to shape regional responses to global energy and maritime security instability.

Accordingly, this study aims to: (1) map the bibliometric characteristics and publication trends in the global literature on the nexus between U.S.-Iran tensions and Southeast Asian maritime security; (2) identify the risk transmission mechanisms through which Persian Gulf instability affects sea lanes of communication in Indonesian waters; and (3) delineate the analytical gaps in the existing discourse that constrain the formulation of proactive Indonesian maritime security policies. Based on the identification of these issues and gaps in the literature, this study is designed to answer the following three main research questions:

RQ1: What are the bibliometric characteristics and trends in the global literature regarding the mapping of correlations between U.S.-Iran geopolitical tensions and maritime

security stability in the Southeast Asian region.

RQ2: To what extent is the current literature capable of identifying the transmission mechanisms of the impact of Persian Gulf instability on sea lines of communication (SLOCs) within Indonesia’s maritime jurisdiction.

RQ3: What analytical gaps (*research gaps*) remain in the international maritime security discourse that hinder the formulation of Indonesia’s maritime security policies that are proactive in addressing global geopolitical crises.

METHOD

Research Design and Approach

This study employed a systematic literature review (SLR) as its primary methodological framework, an approach that, epistemologically, was grounded in the principles of transparency, reproducibility, and the minimization of selective bias in identifying, evaluating, and synthesizing available scientific evidence. Unlike conventional narrative reviews, which grant researchers greater subjective leeway in selecting and interpreting sources, the SLR approach adopted in this study required an explicit search protocol, predefined inclusion and exclusion criteria, and a reporting process that adhered to methodological standards verifiable by independent parties.

Referring to the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) reporting framework, which has become the de facto standard for reporting systematic reviews in high-impact journals, all stages of this research process, from formulating search strings and conducting the screening process to extracting data and synthesizing findings, were carried out in full compliance with the protocol designed before the data search began.

The choice of the SLR design in this study was based not only on technical methodological considerations but also on substantive justification rooted in the characteristics of the research problem under examination. When the primary objective of the research was to identify a research gap in the existing literature (namely, the absence or insufficiency of studies analyzing the transmission of the impact of geopolitical tensions in the Persian Gulf on the stability of maritime communication routes in Indonesian waters and the broader Southeast Asian region) an approach capable of providing a comprehensive and systematic mapping of the entire relevant literature landscape became a methodological necessity. Thus, the SLR served not only as a tool for summarizing existing findings but also as a diagnostic mechanism that enabled researchers to precisely map the boundaries of established knowledge and the analytical spaces still awaiting exploration.

Consequently, the final corpus used for in-depth analysis consisted of 30 articles that were substantially relevant to the research questions posed. The entire literature selection process was systematically documented in the PRISMA flowchart presented in Figure 1.

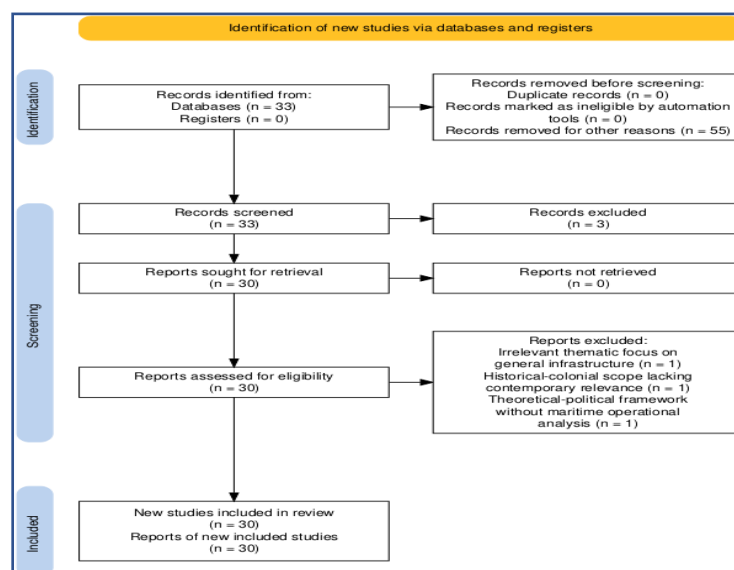


Figure 1. PRISMA Method

Based on a review of the titles and abstracts, three articles were excluded from the research dataset because they did not meet the criterion of thematic focus on maritime security as the primary analytical variable. Reasons for exclusion included: (1) a thematic focus on general infrastructure without specific maritime analysis; (2) coverage of colonial history lacking contemporary relevance; and (3) the use of a political theory framework without operational analysis of maritime communication routes (Freyman, 2022; Guzansky, 2015; Ittmann, 2025).

Data Sources and Search Strategy

The entire literature search process in this study was conducted exclusively through the Scopus database managed by Elsevier, a decision based on a number of methodological considerations that are academically justifiable. Scopus is the largest multidisciplinary bibliometric database currently available, with a scope of over 90 million records from more than 25,000 active journal titles that are strictly indexed based on standardized peer-review quality criteria. In the context of research spanning the intersection of international security studies, energy geopolitics, and regional maritime security a domain that is inherently multidisciplinary and requires a literature review across various subdisciplines of the social sciences and international relations Scopus's comprehensive coverage makes it the optimal choice compared to specialized databases that have limitations in cross-disciplinary coverage.

Methodologically, this study conducted a two-stage search process designed sequentially, with each stage built upon a critical evaluation of the results and limitations of the previous stage. The decision not to apply filters based on publication year ranges or document types in both search phases reflects a commitment to comprehensive inclusivity in literature coverage; temporal or typological restrictions imposed a priori risk introducing selection bias that could compromise the validity of the research gap mapping, which is the primary objective of this study.

In the first phase, the search was conducted using keywords designed to capture literature across a broad thematic range, encompassing geopolitical concepts related to the Persian Gulf region and maritime security in general. This phase yielded 88 document records drawn from various academic disciplines and subdisciplines.

Although the volume of results obtained reflects the availability of sufficient literature within the relevant thematic domain, an initial evaluation of the thematic distribution of these records revealed that a significant proportion of the retrieved documents addressed geopolitical and security issues in contexts not specifically related to the nexus between the Persian Gulf and maritime security dynamics in Southeast Asia. Many of the documents identified at this stage focused their analysis on the dimensions of Iran's nuclear proliferation, domestic political dynamics in the Arabian Gulf region, or Southeast Asian maritime security as standalone domains without explicitly linking them to Persian Gulf geopolitical variables. Thus, although the first stage successfully confirmed the existence of partially relevant literature, it simultaneously exposed limitations in thematic specificity that necessitated refining the search strategy.

In the second stage, the search strategy was refined through the construction of a semantically more precise *search string*, integrating Boolean operators and limiting the search scope to the title, abstract, and keywords of the documents (TITLE-ABS-KEY). The *search string* applied is as follows:

TITLE-ABS-KEY ("Iran-US" OR "Strait of Hormuz" OR "Persian Gulf") AND ("Energy Security" OR "Oil Supply" OR "Maritime Security") AND ("Indonesia" OR "Southeast Asia" OR "Malacca Strait")

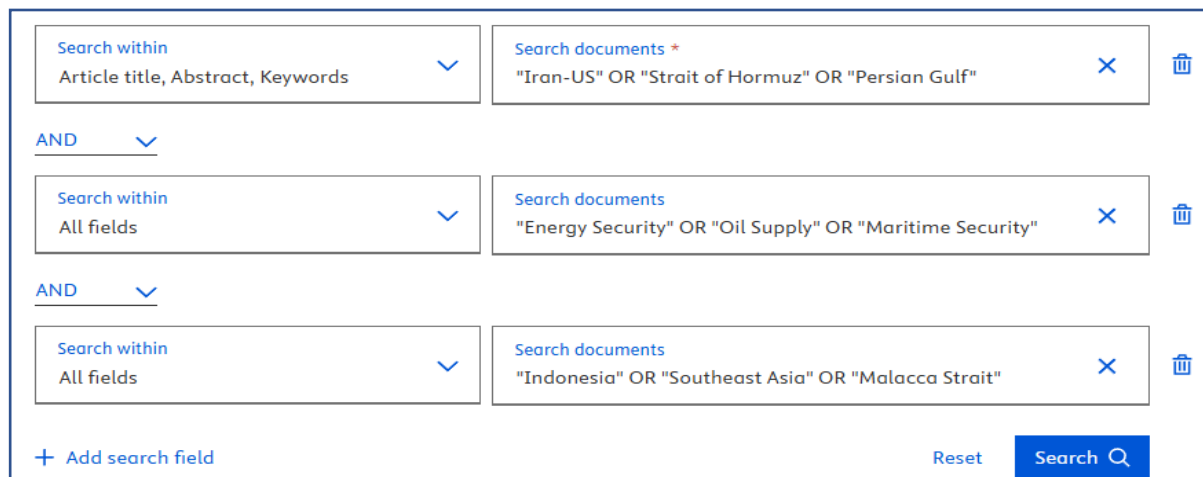


Figure 2. Boolean Operators in the Search Field

This search string construction reflects the conceptual logic of the research, which seeks to capture documents that simultaneously address three interrelated thematic clusters: first, the geopolitical dimensions of the conflict or regional dynamics centered in the Persian Gulf; second, implications for energy security or global oil supply as a mechanism transmitting the impact; and third, the relevance of the Southeast Asian region or Indonesia specifically as the geographical context receiving the impact. The use of the OR operator within each thematic cluster is designed to maximize search sensitivity by accommodating common terminological variations in the literature, while the AND operator linking the three clusters serves to enhance specificity by requiring the simultaneous presence of representations from all three thematic dimensions in each retrieved document (Booth et al., 2012). Consequently, the second stage yielded 33 articles with a substantially higher level of thematic relevance to the focus of this study.

Table 1. Summary of Included Literature for Systematic Review

No	Author(s)	Journal / Publisher	Year
1	(Si & Rahman, 2024)	<i>Environmental Science and Pollution Research</i>	2023
2	(Szalai, 2025)	<i>Geopolitics</i>	2023
3	(Zohourian, 2020)	<i>Journal of Constitutional Studies: Hermeneutics and Legal Theory</i>	2020
4	(Mansor Majdin et al., 2023)	<i>Humanity</i>	2024
5	(Ahmed et al., 2022)	<i>WSEAS Transactions on Power Systems</i>	2022
6	(Subba, 2025)	<i>Advances in Geographical and Environmental Sciences</i>	2025
7	(Ittmann, 2025)	<i>Fueling Empire: The British Imperial Oil Complex 1886–1945 (Book)</i>	2025
8	(Pratson, 2023)	<i>Communications in Transportation Research</i>	2023
9	(Mamipour et al., 2023)	<i>Energy Policy</i>	2023
10	(Karim, 2023)	<i>Bay of Bengal Geopolitics and the Quad (Book)</i>	2023
11	(Bakhshandeh & Yeganeh, 2023)	<i>International Studies</i>	2023
12	(Garlick & Havlová, 2020)	<i>Understanding China</i>	2023
13	(Nikbakht et al., 2023)	<i>Environmental Science and Pollution Research</i>	2023
14	(Chandra, 2023)	<i>Maritime Boundary Disputes in Areas of Hydrocarbon Potential (Book)</i>	2023
15	(Freyman, 2022)	<i>One Belt One Road: Chinese Power Meets the World (Book)</i>	2022
16	(Ahmadi Nohdani et al., 2021)	<i>Geopolitics Quarterly</i>	2021
17	(Ramkumar et al., 2020)	<i>Energy Geoscience</i>	2020

18	(Garlick & Havlová, 2020)	<i>Journal of Current Chinese Affairs</i>	2020
19	(Fulton, 2018)	<i>China's Relations with the Arab Gulf Monarchies (Book)</i>	2018
20	(Tabari, 2016)	<i>Lex Petrolea and International Investment Law (Book)</i>	2016
21	(Le Billon, 2016)	<i>Ashgate Research Companion to Critical Geopolitics (Book Chapter)</i>	2016
22	(Lv & Wang, 2015)	<i>Journal of Transportation Systems Engineering and Information Technology</i>	2015
23	(Guzansky, 2015)	<i>Global Power Shift</i>	2015
24	(Samaan, 2014)	<i>Contemporary Review of the Middle East</i>	2014
25	(Álvarez, 2014)	<i>Studies of Asia and Africa</i>	2014
26	(Levi, 2013)	<i>Security Studies</i>	2013
27	(Modarress et al., 2012)	<i>Journal of Transportation Security</i>	2012
28	(Gholz & Press, 2010)	<i>Security Studies</i>	2010
29	(Mohan, 2009)	<i>India's Energy Security</i>	2009
30	(O'reilly, 2008)	<i>Unexceptional: America's Empire in the Persian Gulf 1941-2007 (Book)</i>	2008
31	(Lee, 2005)	<i>Pacific Review</i>	2005
32	(Singh, 2003)	<i>International Studies</i>	2003
33	(Jae-Hyung, 2002)	<i>Contemporary Southeast Asia</i>	2002

Screening, Selection, and Data Management

All document records generated from the second search phase were imported into the Rayyan AI platform to be managed through a structured screening process. Rayyan AI is an artificial intelligence-based systematic review management platform specifically designed to facilitate the efficient screening of large-scale literature, with the capability to process bibliographic metadata and document abstracts as well as provide initial classification suggestions that can be reviewed and validated by researchers. The use of this platform in this study is not merely for procedural efficiency but also to enhance consistency and auditability in the screening process, given that inconsistencies in the application of selection criteria are one of the most common sources of bias in systematic reviews.

The inclusion criteria applied in the screening process include: documents that substantively discuss the maritime security or energy implications of the geopolitical dynamics of the Persian Gulf on the Southeast Asian region or Indonesia; documents that analyze the strategic functions of maritime chokepoints in Southeast Asia within the context of the Asia-Pacific region's energy security; and documents that discuss Indonesia's or the region's maritime security policies in relation to global energy supply dynamics. Conversely, excluded documents are those whose analysis is limited to internal dynamics of the Middle East region without linking them to implications for maritime communication routes in Southeast Asia, as well as documents that discuss Southeast Asian maritime security solely in the context of local non-traditional threats such as piracy or smuggling without relevance to Persian Gulf geopolitical variables.

Based on a review of the titles and abstracts conducted by consistently applying these selection criteria, three records were excluded from the research dataset because they did not meet the requirement of thematic focus on maritime security as the primary analytical variable. Thus, the final corpus used for in-depth analysis consists of 30 articles (from the initial 33 records retrieved) that have substantial relevance to the research questions posed.

Data Extraction and Thematic Analysis

A comprehensive full-text analysis was conducted on the 30 articles that passed the screening process using the Humata AI platform as a data extraction tool, accompanied by a thorough manual review. Each article was analyzed to identify: the main arguments regarding the mechanisms through which the geopolitical impact of the Persian Gulf transmits to regional maritime security; the theoretical framework adopted; the methodology employed; and specific findings related to maritime communication routes in Southeast Asia and Indonesia's strategic position. This systematic extraction approach allowed researchers to build a comprehensive understanding of how each article contributes to or, conversely, confirms the lack of attention to

the nexus between Persian Gulf instability and Indonesia's maritime security.

To complement the thematic narrative analysis and strengthen the empirical evidence regarding the existence of a research gap which serves as the central argument of this study—the structural relationships among keywords within the entire document corpus were visualized using VOSviewer software. The keyword *co-occurrence* analysis generated by VOSviewer enabled the identification of dominant thematic clusters in the literature, mapping the strength of associations between concepts, and most crucially for this study's argument an explicit visualization of the absence of strong connections between the Persian Gulf literature cluster and the Indonesian or Southeast Asian maritime security literature cluster within a single integrated bibliometric framework. Thus, the VOSviewer visualization serves not merely as an aesthetic complement to the presentation of the methodology, but as bibliometric evidence that independently confirms the validity of the research gap claim put forward by this study.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

Annual Publication Trends

Before conducting an in-depth thematic analysis, this study mapped the chronological trends in the literature to understand the dynamics of global academic interest in this issue (Mohan, 2009). Based on data extracted from the Scopus database, the annual distribution of publications from 2002 to early 2025 is presented in Figure 3 below:

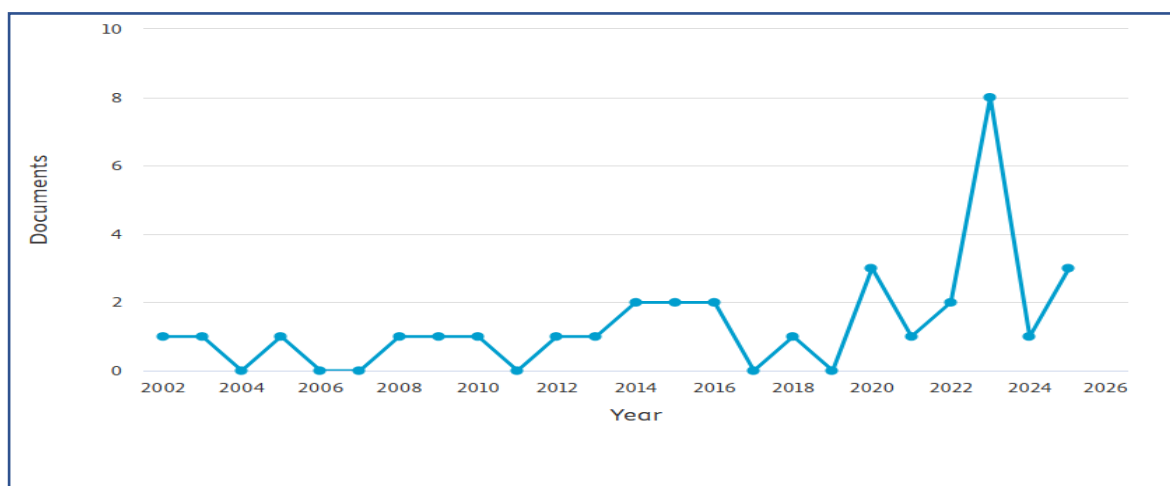


Figure 3. Annual Distribution of Publications Related to Iran-U.S. Maritime Security and Southeast Asian Sea Lanes (2002–2025).

Bibliometric data indicate that over a span of nearly two decades (2002–2019), knowledge production related to this topic developed inconsistently, marked by sporadic publication patterns averaging fewer than two documents per year. This phase reflects the low epistemic attention of the global academic community, where the issues discussed were still positioned as peripheral phenomena that had not yet received adequate theoretical articulation or empirical urgency. However, since 2020, an exponential acceleration has been observed, with production peaking in 2023, which recorded eight documents in a single calendar year—a quantitative achievement that simultaneously marks a significant intensification of scientific interest.

This sharp increase cannot be separated from the surrounding geopolitical context. Temporally, the surge in publications in 2023 coincides with the escalating tensions in the Persian Gulf region, marked by a series of tanker seizures and threats to the security of global shipping lanes during the 2019–2024 period. This correlation indicates a dialectical relationship between empirical dynamics on the ground and the production of academic discourse, wherein geopolitical realities serve as a catalyst for the reorientation of research agendas. Thus, this transformation marks a fairly fundamental paradigm shift: the Iran–United States conflict is no longer reduced to a regional issue of the Middle East, but is beginning to be understood as a strategic node within

the global maritime security architecture and international energy stability, particularly in relation to chokepoints that have direct implications for the Southeast Asian region (Karim, 2023).

Although data indicates a decline in the number of publications in 2024, early indications for 2025 show a strengthening recovery trend. This confirms that the discourse regarding the transmission of geopolitical risks to Indonesia's maritime sovereignty has not experienced a structural decline but rather tends to move cyclically in response to the intensity of global dynamics. Therefore, this issue remains strategically positioned within the contemporary research landscape, not only due to its enduring relevance but also because of its urgency in bridging the analysis between the global scale and increasingly complex regional implications.

Bibliometric Visualization: Mapping Geopolitical Disconnections in Global Maritime Security Literature

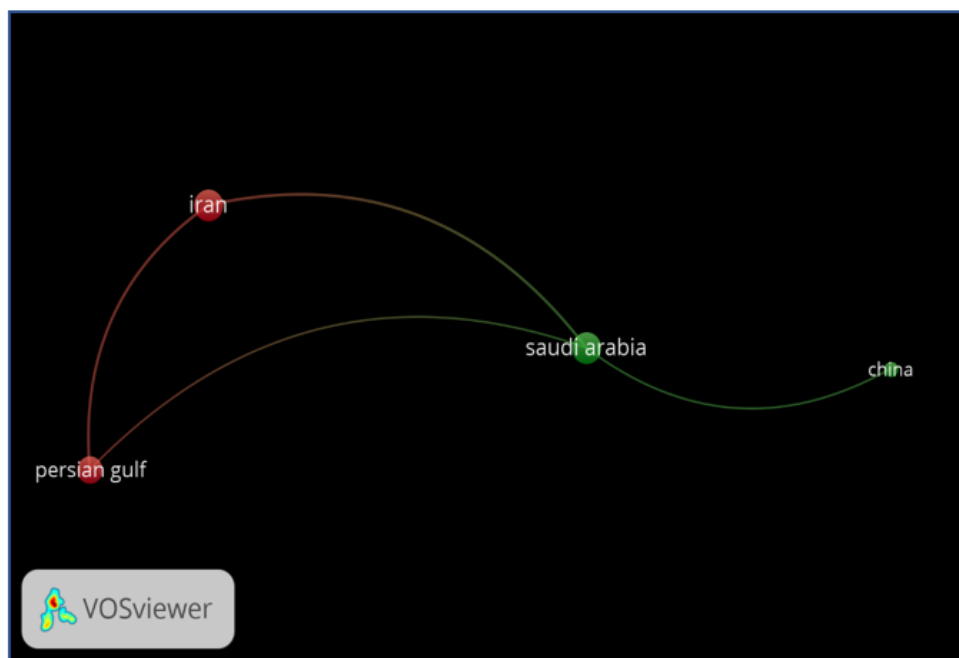


Figure 4. VOSviewer keyword co-occurrence network of 30 selected articles. Node size reflects keyword frequency; link thickness reflects co-occurrence strength. Notable absences: the absence of nodes for Indonesia, the Malacca Strait, and the Maritime Silk Road confirm the identified research gap.

To strengthen the empirical validity of the research gap claim, which serves as the structural argument of this study, a bibliometric analysis based on keyword co-occurrence was conducted using VOSviewer software version 1.6.20, a bibliometric network visualization tool that has gained widespread recognition within the international academic community as one of the most reliable approaches for quantitatively and visually mapping the intellectual structure of a research domain. This analysis was applied to the entire corpus of 30 articles that had passed the screening process, by extracting author keywords and Scopus-indexed keywords from each document, then visualizing the strength and frequency of co-occurrence among these keyword pairs in the form of a network map that can be interpreted intuitively.

The visualization results presented in Figure 1 present a bibliometric network map that, at first glance, appears simple in terms of the number of mapped nodes. However, it is precisely within this structural simplicity that the most critical diagnostic information for the argumentation of this study lies. The resulting network map displays four keyword nodes connected within two distinct color clusters: Iran and the Persian Gulf form a red cluster connected to one another by relatively strong links, while Saudi Arabia and China form a green cluster connected through different association pathways. Structurally, Saudi Arabia positions itself as a mediating node connecting the two clusters, reflecting its central role in the literature as a pivotal actor linking the geopolitical discourse of the Persian Gulf with the strategic interests

of East Asian powers in the context of global energy security (Nikbakht et al., 2023; Si & Rahman, 2024).

A substantive interpretation of this network configuration requires special attention to what is not visible in the visualization, not just to what is explicitly mapped. Within a bibliometric analysis framework, the absence of a node from a keyword co-occurrence network map serves as a valid quantitative indicator of the underrepresentation of that concept within the analyzed literature corpus (Cobo et al., 2011; Mamipour et al., 2023).

In the context of this study, the fact that the keywords Indonesia, Maritime Silk Road, Malacca Strait, Lombok Strait, or Sea Lanes of Communication do not appear as connected nodes in this bibliometric network despite the search strings explicitly including these terms as search components constitutes strong and independent bibliometric evidence of the absence or fragility of conceptual connections between these two thematic domains in the existing literature. In other words, the global academic community writing about tensions in Iran, the Persian Gulf, and their implications for energy security does not consistently and substantively integrate the Indonesian perspective or the dynamics of maritime communication routes in Southeast Asia into their analyses (Ahmed et al., 2022; Ramkumar et al., 2020; Zohourian, 2020).

These bibliometric findings have implications that go beyond mere technical confirmation of the literature's incompleteness. The findings reveal a deeper epistemological pattern: the dominance of a great-power-centric analytical framework in the global discourse on energy and maritime security, where interactions among major actors such as the United States, Iran, Saudi Arabia, and China dominate the academic discursive space, while countries that are geographically and functionally situated at the intersection of energy-producing and energy-consuming regions such as Indonesia with its strategic chokepoints, do not receive attention proportional to their actual geostrategic urgency.

The dominance of the Iran–Persian Gulf cluster on one side and the Saudi Arabia–China cluster on the other in this bibliometric map visually crystallizes the tendency in the literature to view the relationship between Middle Eastern energy producers and East Asian energy consumers as a direct bilateral relationship, overlooking the structural mediating role played by middle-ground countries like Indonesia, whose maritime territory serves as the physical infrastructure enabling such relationships to take place (Álvarez, 2014).

The relatively loose connection between the Iranian and Chinese nodes in the network map, mediated through the Saudi Arabia node without any strong direct link, suggests that the existing literature has not adequately analyzed how tensions directly involving Iran influence China's strategic calculations regarding the security of its energy supply routes, an issue that logically should yield strong conceptual connections given China's high dependence on oil imports from the Persian Gulf region (Jae-Hyung, 2002). The absence of strong conceptual bridges between the Persian Gulf geopolitical cluster and the Asia-Pacific energy security cluster-Pacific in the existing literature, as visualized by the VOSviewer map in Figure 1, indirectly helps explain why the impact of escalation in the Persian Gulf on the stability of chokepoints in Indonesia—which are critical links in that energy supply chain—is also absent from the dominant academic discourse.

Thus, the bibliometric visualization generated through this VOSviewer analysis serves not merely as a graphical representation of keyword distribution within the literature corpus; it operates as quantified empirical evidence of a structural gap in the global scientific knowledge architecture regarding the nexus between Persian Gulf geopolitics and Southeast Asian maritime security. The absence of Indonesia and the entire conceptual constellation encompassing the geostrategic roles of the Malacca Strait, the Sunda Strait, the Lombok Strait, the Maritime Silk Road, and Southeast Asia's SLOCs from this global intellectual map quantitatively confirms what has until now only been articulated qualitatively: that the academic “blind spot” regarding Indonesia as a critical variable in the global maritime security system is not a subjective conclusion built on researcher bias Ahmadi (2021), but rather an objective condition reflected in the structure of the literature itself and can now be demonstrated through standardized and replicable bibliometric analysis. It should be acknowledged that this review has several methodological limitations (Cobo & Herrera, 2011).

The reliance on a single database (Scopus) may have excluded relevant studies indexed in

other repositories. The search strings, while comprehensive, may not capture all terminological variations used across disciplines. Furthermore, the bibliometric analysis reflects keyword patterns rather than the substantive depth of individual studies, which may understate emerging but not yet consolidated research streams (Cobo & Herrera, 2011).

Discussion

Energy Security and the "*Malacca Dilemma*": Two Chokepoints in a Single Vulnerability System

A systematic review of the literature corpus analyzed in this study consistently reveals an interdependent structural relationship between security stability in the Strait of Hormuz and security conditions in Indonesian waters, particularly the Strait of Malacca, operating through analytically identifiable risk transmission mechanisms. This relationship is not a coincidental or temporal correlation, but rather reflects a functional interdependence embedded within the architecture of the global energy supply chain, in which both straits play complementary roles yet cannot fully substitute for one another in the short term (Mansor Majdin et al., 2023; Singh, 2003).

The Strait of Malacca, which stretches approximately 800 kilometers geographically and is only 2.8 kilometers wide at its narrowest point in the Philip Channel, functions as a major maritime artery connecting the Indian Ocean with the South China Sea and the Western Pacific, handling over 80,000 vessels annually with a total cargo volume accounting for a quarter of global maritime trade, as well as more than 15 million barrels of oil per day flowing to East Asian nations (Modarress et al., 2012).

Within the analytical framework extensively developed in the literature on Asia-Pacific energy security studies, the structural dependence of major energy-consuming nations in East Asia particularly China, Japan, and South Korea on the reliability of the Strait of Malacca as an oil transit route from the Persian Gulf has been conceptualized through the term "*Malacca Dilemma*," a concept first explicitly articulated by Chinese President Hu Jintao in 2003 and subsequently developed into a productive analytical framework within the literature on maritime strategy and energy security (Levi, 2013).

This concept captures the geostrategic reality that reliance on a single narrow and easily disrupted maritime route creates conditions of systemic vulnerability that can be exploited by competing powers or exacerbated by the escalation of conflict in the upstream region of the energy supply chain. Its relevance to the dynamics of Iran–United States tensions lies in the fact that any escalation threatening the smooth flow of oil through the Strait of Hormuz not only creates direct pressure on the global energy market, but also drives the acceleration and increase in the volume of oil tanker traffic through the Strait of Malacca, which in turn worsens congestion, increases the risk of accidents, and heightens the probability of security incidents on a route whose absorptive capacity is already operating near its optimal limit (Jae-Hyung, 2002; Lee, 2005).

The analyzed literature consistently classifies these dynamics as a manifestation of what can be termed a "cascading risk architecture" a tiered risk structure in which instability at a single critical point within the global energy supply network has the capacity to weaken the resilience of other functionally interconnected critical points within the same system. Within this framework, the Malacca Strait operates not as an independent security system, but as a component of an interdependent chokepoint ecosystem, where security degradation in the Strait of Hormuz is transmitted through identifiable mechanisms (increased traffic volume, surge in operational pressure on maritime surveillance systems, acceleration of illegal economic activities exploiting congestion for camouflage, and intensification of naval rivalry among major powers) resulting in tangible security pressures in the Malacca Strait and the broader Indonesian waters. Thus, Indonesia, as a country whose sovereign territory encompasses the entire ecosystem of this chokepoint, structurally bears the burden of risks stemming from conflicts occurring thousands of kilometers away in the Persian Gulf region.

Indonesia's Strategic Straits as Global Mitigation Infrastructure: The Sovereignty Dimension in Rerouting Functions

One of the most significant findings emerging from the full-text analysis of 30 articles in this research corpus is the identification of the multidimensional role played by Indonesia's straits particularly the Lombok Strait, the Sunda Strait, and the Makassar Strait in the architecture of global energy supply chain resilience during disruptions along the main routes. This role extends beyond the technical navigational functions that have long dominated discourse on these straits; it touches on a deeper geopolitical dimension regarding how Indonesia's maritime geography positions the country as an irreplaceable provider of global security infrastructure in times of crisis.

Under normal conditions, the Lombok Strait and the Sunda Strait function as alternative routes used primarily by ships with drafts too deep to safely traverse the Malacca Strait, particularly Very Large Crude Carriers (VLCCs) and Ultra Large Crude Carriers (ULCCs), which form the backbone of crude oil distribution from the Persian Gulf to refineries in East Asia. However, the function of these straits undergoes a qualitative transformation during geopolitical crises: when escalations in the Middle East threaten the reliability of the Strait of Hormuz, or when security disruptions in the Strait of Malacca itself increase the risks of transit through that main route, the Lombok Strait, the Sunda Strait, and the Makassar Strait shift functions to become critical rerouting routes bearing the burden of redistributing tanker traffic volumes that suddenly increase dramatically (Lv & Wang, 2015; Pratson, 2023). In a scenario of major escalation in the Persian Gulf, the projected additional burden on Indonesia's alternative straits could reach levels never before anticipated in national maritime security infrastructure planning (Subba, 2025).

The dimension most frequently overlooked in the literature and which therefore represents the most significant original contribution of this study is the sovereignty implications inherent in the function of international rerouting through Indonesian waters. When international tanker fleets reroute through the Lombok Strait or the Sunda Strait in response to a crisis in the Persian Gulf, they are not merely utilizing a geographically available corridor; they are transiting waters under the full jurisdiction of the Indonesian state pursuant to the international law of the sea regime established in the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), under which Indonesia possesses specifically defined rights and obligations regarding navigational safety, maritime environmental protection, and vessel traffic regulation. The drastic increase in traffic volume through these straits during a crisis, without a proportional increase in Indonesia's surveillance, law enforcement, and maritime traffic management capacity creates a situation where Indonesia's sovereignty over its own waters risks becoming *de facto* nominal, constrained by an insufficient capacity to manage international traffic flows whose volume far exceeds the operational design of existing maritime security systems.

From this perspective, the analyzed literature positions Indonesia not merely as a passive recipient of the impacts of global geopolitical dynamics, but as the owner and manager of maritime security infrastructure that serves as the last resort guarantee for the stability of international energy distribution during crises. This status carries dual, paradoxical implications: on the one hand, it grants Indonesia a geopolitical bargaining position that is objectively highly significant; on the other hand, it burdens Indonesia with security management responsibilities whose costs far exceed the capacity allocated in the existing national defense and maritime security budget.

Maritime Sovereignty, the No-Sheriff Doctrine, and the Imperative of Strategic Hedging

The third dimension of this research's thematic synthesis addresses the most controversial yet simultaneously most relevant normative and prescriptive questions for policy formulation: how should Indonesia strategically position itself amidst the pressures arising from the rivalry of major powers in maritime regions bordering or intersecting with its sovereign territory? An analysis of the latest texts in the research corpus reveals a productive conceptual tension between two distinct policy orientations: an approach that is more accommodating toward the military presence of major powers as an exogenous stabilization mechanism, versus an approach that is more assertive in affirming the capacity and authority of littoral states to manage maritime security independently (Chandra, 2023; Zohourian, 2020).

This conceptual tension crystallizes in the literature through debates regarding the relevance and desirability of doctrines that can be categorized as the “no-sheriff” approach a strategic orientation that rejects a unipolar maritime security framework centered on the dominant presence of a single military power Gholz (2010), and instead advocates for a security architecture based on the collective capacities of littoral states and regional multilateral mechanisms as the primary foundation of stability (Samaan, 2014). In the specific context of Southeast Asia, this doctrine operates in tension with the empirical reality that the combined maritime military capabilities of ASEAN states remain insufficient to fill the vacuum that would be left if the naval presence of extra-regional powers were significantly reduced from the region Garlick (2020) a reality acknowledged even by the most vocal proponents of the no-sheriff approach (Guzansky, 2015; Le Billon, 2016).

In this context, the analyzed literature converges on identifying strategic hedging as the policy framework most compatible with Indonesia’s long-term national interests an approach that consciously avoids exclusive alliance commitments that could limit Indonesia’s diplomatic maneuvering flexibility among competing powers, while simultaneously building internal capacity that enables Indonesia to operate independently in managing its maritime security. The relevance of this concept to the context of this study lies in its specific implications: in the face of pressure arising from tensions between Iran–United States tensions on maritime communication routes in Indonesian waters, strategic hedging requires Indonesia to adopt a position that is not exclusively aligned with either bloc in the conflict, while actively strengthening its surveillance, law enforcement, and maritime traffic management capacities in its strategic straits as a demonstration of effective sovereignty that does not rely on the security umbrella of any external power (Fulton, 2018).

CONCLUSION

This study has systematically mapped the global literature on the nexus between U.S.-Iran tensions and maritime security stability in Southeast Asia, identifying critical research gaps through PRISMA-compliant review and VOSviewer bibliometric analysis. The findings reveal three interrelated propositions.

The first proposition asserts that Iran–U.S. tensions in the Persian Gulf region possess analytically identified risk transmission mechanisms affecting the stability of maritime communication routes in Indonesian waters, operating through energy security- s, the dynamics of rerouting international shipping traffic, and the intensification of rivalry over the naval presence of major powers in waters bordering or intersecting with Indonesian jurisdiction. These transmission mechanisms are not hypothetical; they can be empirically identified in historical episodes of escalation and can be analytically modeled to anticipate future escalation conditions.

The second proposition confirms that while the substantive urgency of this geopolitical nexus is unquestionable, its representation in the corpus of international academic literature is highly disproportionate to its level of urgency. A bibliometric analysis using VOSviewer quantitatively confirms that keywords related to Indonesia, the Malacca Strait, the Lombok Strait, and the Southeast Asian Sea Lanes of Communication do not form strong connections with the literature cluster on the Persian Gulf and energy security within the keyword co-occurrence network. This condition represents an academic blind spot that is not merely a technical shortcoming, but a strategic deficit that can have tangible implications for the quality of maritime security policies formulated without an adequate analytical foundation.

The third proposition asserts that Indonesia, in its capacity as a guardian state of the most vital maritime chokepoints in Southeast Asia, possesses strong strategic interests and solid academic justification for advocating a reorientation of the global maritime security discourse to better integrate the perspectives of littoral states within the analytical framework of regional geopolitical crisis impacts. Positioning Indonesia not as a passive object of impact, but as an active geostrategic actor managing maritime security infrastructure that serves as a last-resort guarantee for the stability of global energy distribution, constitutes a conceptual reframing with significant normative and prescriptive implications for Indonesia’s foreign and defense policies.

Based on the three concluding propositions above, this study proposes a series of policy recommendations aimed at relevant stakeholders within the Indonesian government, with a

particular emphasis on the Indonesian Maritime Security Agency (Bakamla) and the Indonesian Navy (TNI AL) as the institutions most directly responsible for implementing national maritime security policy.

First, the findings suggest that strategic investment may be warranted to strengthen maritime surveillance capabilities, maritime traffic management, and navigation safety infrastructure in the Lombok Strait and the Sunda Strait as part of a strategy to anticipate a surge in the volume of rerouted international vessels in a crisis scenario in the Persian Gulf. This strengthening includes, but is not limited to, the modernization of Vessel Traffic Services (VTS) systems, the enhancement of air and maritime patrol capabilities, the development of emergency response and oil spill containment facilities, and the construction of maritime communication infrastructure capable of operating reliably under conditions of dramatically increased traffic volume. This investment must be explicitly integrated into the National Medium-Term Development Plan as a component of national security with direct relevance to global economic interests a framing that could open opportunities for mobilizing international support to cover part of the investment costs.

Second, The analysis indicates that Indonesia could consider reaffirming and operationalizing its position as an assertive yet constructive steward of maritime sovereignty through the strengthening of the architecture of maritime diplomacy within the ASEAN framework and relevant multilateral maritime security forums. Concretely, this means promoting the establishment of a more institutionalized and operational ASEAN maritime security coordination mechanism that goes beyond the political declarations that have so far dominated the output of ASEAN maritime cooperation, with Indonesia taking an active leadership role as the country with the greatest maritime interests and the most decisive geographical capacity within the regional maritime security ecosystem. This maritime diplomacy must explicitly place the issue of risk transmission from the Persian Gulf geopolitical crisis to Southeast Asian chokepoints on the substantive agenda, rather than focusing solely on traditional security threats such as piracy and smuggling, which have long dominated the agenda of ASEAN maritime cooperation.

Third, the findings suggest that a national energy security strategy could be developed that explicitly accounts for scenarios involving disruptions at international chokepoints as risk factors that must be anticipated in medium- and long-term planning. This strategy includes diversifying national energy supply routes, developing strategic energy storage capacity, accelerating the transition to renewable energy sources to reduce dependence on oil import routes, and establishing rapid response mechanisms that enable the government to manage the impact of global energy price volatility triggered by escalation in the Persian Gulf on national economic and social stability in an effective and planned manner, rather than reactively. This study acknowledges several limitations. The reliance on a single database (Scopus) and English-language publications may have excluded relevant studies from non-English sources or alternative databases. Future research should expand the database coverage, incorporate primary data through expert interviews or case studies, and develop quantitative risk assessment models that can empirically measure the cascading effects of Persian Gulf instability on Indonesian maritime security infrastructure.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The authors sincerely express their gratitude to the anonymous reviewers and the editorial team of *Glosains: Jurnal Sains Global Indonesia* for their constructive feedback and valuable suggestions that significantly enhanced the quality of this manuscript. Appreciation is also extended to all individuals and institutions who provided support, resources, or funding that were crucial to the successful completion of this research.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTION STATEMENT

Author 1 conceptualized the research framework, conducted the systematic literature review, performed the bibliometric analysis, and drafted the manuscript. Author 2 provided critical intellectual revisions, validated the methodological approach, and supervised the overall study. Both authors reviewed and approved the final manuscript for submission.

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