



The Strategic Value of Bengkalis from a Maritime Axis Perspective

1st M. Saeri
Department of International Relations
Universitas Riau
Pekanbaru, Indonesia
m.saeri@lecturer.unri.ac.id

2nd Ahmad Jamaan
Department of International Relations
Universitas Riau
Pekanbaru, Indonesia
ahmad.jamaan@lecturer.unri.ac.id

3rd Satya Wira Wicaksana
Department of International Relations
Universitas Riau
Pekanbaru, Indonesia
wicaksana56@gmail.com

4th Yessi Olivia
Department of International Relations
Universitas Riau
Pekanbaru, Indonesia
yessi.olivia@lecturer.unri.ac.id

5th Ahmad Fuadi
Department of International Relations
Universitas Riau
Pekanbaru, Indonesia
ahmad.fuadi@lecturer.unri.ac.id

Abstract. *This research critically analyzes Bengkalis' strategic importance within the context of the World Maritime Axis. Employing a qualitative methodology and an extensive academic literature review, this study unveils the multifaceted dimensions contributing to Bengkalis' strategic significance. Bengkalis, despite being an outermost coastal region, shares direct borders with neighboring countries, primarily Malaysia and Singapore. Even though some inland areas are relatively distant from the coastal shores of the Malacca Strait, the connectivity between them constitutes a cohesive strength, positioning Bengkalis as a prominent maritime axis. As a border region, Bengkalis holds substantial potential for bolstering the maritime axis policy initiated by the Joko Widodo administration. The maritime infrastructure in Bengkalis has witnessed significant physical improvements, enhancing the well-being and safety of its residents, particularly in terms of facilitating the mobility of people, goods, and services. However, its contribution to economic prosperity remains suboptimal. Ports and docks primarily serve the purpose of connecting regions within Bengkalis and to other areas within Riau Province. Connectivity beyond the borders of Riau Province and international boundaries remains limited, resulting in a heavy reliance on agricultural produce, particularly plantation goods, as the dominant source of local revenue. This reliance on crude oil persists as the largest contributor to the regional budget (APBD).*

Keywords: *Bengkalis, Maritim Axis, Strategic Values, Riau Province.*

I. INTRODUCTION

When extensively delineated, the Global Maritime Axis concept encompasses the development of port infrastructure, the presence of ships and facilities in various Indonesian ports, and unhindered maritime transportation connectivity (maritime highways) to and from international shipping routes. Maritime highways, as a maritime connectivity, are a key element in enhancing and fostering the economy of regions related to various associated infrastructures. Infrastructure is the pivotal factor for the progress of a nation. This is because infrastructure development will

generate a resurgence and stimulate interest in other economic activities [1].

As an archipelagic nation with vast seas and an extensive coastline, Indonesia places a significant strategic emphasis on its maritime and marine sectors from economic, environmental, socio-cultural, legal, and security perspectives. However, historically, these sectors have not received the same level of serious attention when compared to the terrestrial sector. Indonesia is a maritime nation consisting of thousands of islands, with an extensive territorial sea area. Indonesia's sea territory extends 3,288,683 square kilometers along the equator, between the continents of Australia and Asia, while its land area is 1,904,569 square kilometers. This demonstrates that the maritime region, which consists of hundreds of smaller, inhabited and unoccupied islands and five larger, populated islands, is larger than the land area. Essentially, the sea acts as a bridge connecting two islands. [2].

Indonesia's location in the equatorial zone allows it to serve as a direct link between the economies of developed nations and the continents of Australia and Asia. Furthermore, Indonesia's location between the Pacific and Indian seas makes it a key hub for connecting East Asian, Southeast Asian, and South Asian nations. Indonesian waterways are home to several strategically significant international maritime commerce routes, including Malacca, Sunda, Lombok, and Makassar straits. [3].

II. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Riau Province covers an area of 87,023.66 square kilometers, comprising twelve regencies and cities. The province boasts abundant natural resources, including oil and gas and gold, alongside forestry and plantation yields. The Regional Autonomy Law of Riau Province implements a financial balance system between the central government

and local regions. According to the Central Statistics Agency in 2018, the population of Riau Province was approximately 6,814,909 individuals, with the largest population residing in Pekanbaru City at around 1,117,359 people and the smallest population in Meranti Regency, totaling 184,372 individuals [4].

Riau Province consists of 12 regencies and cities, of which 7 are coastal regions, namely Indragiri Hilir Regency, Rokan Hilir Regency, Bengkalis Regency, Pelalawan Regency, Siak Regency, Kepulauan Meranti Regency, and Dumai City. The regencies and cities within the province that are coastal areas have the potential of marine resources that significantly influence the economic factors in Riau Province [5].

Bengkalis Regency is one of the regencies in Riau Province, with a total land area of approximately 8,403.28 square kilometers, comprising 15 main islands. Geographically, the region of Bengkalis is divided into three categories: the geographical area of coastal islands, coastal areas, and mainland areas. A portion of the Bengkalis region is situated along shallow waters, while another part constitutes a passage from the expanse of land in the central and eastern regions of Sumatra Island [6].

Bengkalis Regency, situated along the Malacca Strait, holds strategic potential within the maritime perspective and maritime mapping as a part of the maritime axis. From a maritime standpoint, several relevant aspects include:

1. Strategic Location: Bengkalis is positioned along a busy international trade route connecting the Indian Ocean and the South China Sea. Its proximity to the Malacca Strait makes it a vital point in the maritime traffic and maritime trade flow.
2. Connectivity: Bengkalis can serve as a hub between various islands in the Riau Archipelago. With adequate port facilities, Bengkalis can become a crucial point of connection for the distribution of goods and human mobility between regions.
3. Economic Potential: Through the maritime sector, Bengkalis has the potential to boost the local economy. Trading activities, fisheries, accommodation, and maritime tourism can significantly contribute to economic growth and regional development.
4. Maritime Mapping: Maritime mapping involves collecting and analyzing geographical data to understand the characteristics and potential of marine resources in the region. Bengkalis can

engage in maritime mapping to identify the potential within the maritime sector, such as locations rich in fisheries, marine energy potential, or attractive maritime tourism areas.

5. Infrastructure Development: To support its role as a maritime axis, it is crucial to develop adequate infrastructure. This entails the development and enhancement of ports, improvements in road and maritime transportation connectivity, and providing supporting facilities such as docks, warehouses, and logistics terminals.

III. CONCLUSION

Maritime Infrastructure in Bengkalis includes facilities and resources that support maritime activities, maritime transportation, and the maritime economy in the region. Here are some of the maritime infrastructure components present in Bengkalis [7]:

Port: Bengkalis has the Bengkalis Port, which serves as the primary port in the area. This port provides facilities for ship loading and unloading, cargo shipment, and other maritime transportation-related activities.

Wharves: Bengkalis possesses wharves used for berthing various vessels, including passenger ships, cargo vessels, and fishing boats. These wharves facilitate the loading and unloading processes and vessel servicing activities.

Ferry Network: Bengkalis has a ferry network that connects the region with its neighboring islands. These ferry services provide inter-island transportation, facilitating accessibility for the local population and trade.

Bonded Logistics Center: Bengkalis also has a Bonded Logistics Center (BLC) that serves as a hub for collecting and distributing goods in the region. This BLC facilitates import-export activities and inter-regional trade.

Navigation Facilities: To enhance maritime safety, Bengkalis is equipped with navigation facilities such as lighthouses and other navigation aids. These assist vessels in safe and precise navigation in the surrounding area.

Fishermen's Support Facilities: Because Bengkalis is a coastal area rich in marine resources, maritime infrastructure also includes facilities that support fishermen, such as fish auction sites, fish storage areas, as well as facilities for the repair and maintenance of fishing vessels.

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