ARCHIPELAGIC SEA LANES:
DESIGNATION FACTORS AND EFFECTS ON
OPERATIONAL ART

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The contents of this paper reflect my own personal views and are not necessarily endorsed by the Naval War College or the Department of the Navy.

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If Indonesia, or a future archipelago, fails to provide sufficient routes or otherwise impedes the use of all normal routes through archipelagic waters, the operational commander must be able to weigh the relative flexibility of utilizing or bypassing archipelagic sea lanes. Course of action development must take into account the operational impact of factors as diverse as operational protection, security, surprise, deception and logistics, in addition to the restrictions imposed on the scheme of maneuver and synchronization of forces into a crisis region.

The United States must continue to be engaged both at the operational and strategic levels concerning maritime and, more specifically, archipelagic transit regimes. Policy makers must include the operational commander's perspective in any future dialogue. If the United States becomes lax or steps back from the process, the consequences may adversely affect the United States capacity to provide global reach through sea power.
ABSTRACT

With the recent approval by the International Maritime Organization of Indonesia’s proposal for partial archipelagic sea lane designation, operational planners must now consider what impact designated sea lane routes will have on employment of forces in the region. Furthermore, operational commanders must strive to obtain a firm understanding of the rights and responsibilities of transit regime through archipelagic waters.

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Introduction

With the recent approval of the Government of Indonesia’s proposal for “partial designation of Archipelagic Sea Lanes” (ASL) at the 69th Session of the Maritime Safety Committee (MSC) of the International Maritime Organization (IMO), Indonesia has taken a giant step, in their view, in continuing to provide for improvements to security and sovereignty of its archipelagic territory. The proposal, which was worked in consultation with the United States, Australia and other maritime nations since the mid 1990’s, sets the precedence for future archipelagic states to follow in designating ASLs within their archipelagic waters.

This paper will furnish a brief overview of the history behind Indonesia’s initiation for designating ASLs. It will provide an in-depth understanding and analysis of the operational design and strategy factors commanders will need to assess in the future when operating in and around an archipelagic state’s territorial area. Additionally, the possible future impact on the way maritime nations can or may conduct operations and the restrictions to flow of forces and materials into and out of specific areas of operations (AO) will be considered. Factors important not only during times of war, but also during rapid responses to conflicts and crisis’s in Military Operations Other Than War (MOOTW) and normal peacetime operations.
History and Perspective on Archipelagic Sea Lanes

Having gained their independence from the Dutch in 1945, Indonesia formally proposed a new concept concerning the marine territory of an archipelago calling it the Archipelagic State Concept or “Wawasan Nusantara” in December of 1957. The basic precept maintains that -

“All the waters between islands in Indonesia, no matter how wide or deep, are under the sovereignty of the Republic of Indonesia. All the waters in those areas and the air space thereabove, including the seabed and subsoil as well as the living and nonliving marine resources therein, are under the jurisdiction of Indonesia.”

This was an effort to forward the view that an Archipelagic State should have the right to:

“Maintain sovereignty over national waters to manage the living and non-living resources... to create a unified defense and security system and to maintain laws and regulations relating to the sea”

The Indonesian government pursued and pushed for acceptance of this concept in the international arena and specifically in the United Nations and at the IMO.

There was much internal and international debate over the subject as Indonesia’s archipelago forms natural geographical “decisive points” (choke points) as it lies in the crossroads between the South China Sea, Pacific and Indian oceans and essentially divides the Asian continent from the Australian subcontinent. This was especially important to maritime nations who did not want the strategic maritime routes of the Lombok, Sunda and Malacca Straits impeded. The issue of Archipelagic States was but one of the myriad of issues, territorial sea limits and innocent passage rights to name two others, at hand during the Third United Nations Convention on the Law Of the Sea (UNCLOS) discussions that lasted from 1973 –1982.
After much deliberation and coordination between maritime nations, the IMO in December 1982 formally recognized the archipelagic state concept as part of the landmark document, the "1982 Law Of the Sea (LOS) Convention." The LOS Convention detailed a set of legal regimes to govern almost every aspect of use of the world's oceans to ensure maritime and coastal interests were properly balanced and preserved. One of the foremost being the "right of innocent passage" through territorial waters for surface vessels. The LOS Convention also formally defined an archipelagic state.

"An Archipelagic state is a state formed wholly by one or more archipelagoes. Straight baselines may be drawn joining the outermost points of the archipelago. Archipelagic waters and airspace enclosed within these boundaries are subject to that archipelagic state's sovereignty, subject to certain navigational rights guaranteed to the international community through the UNCLOS and IMO. Furthermore, the Archipelagic State may designate sea lanes and air routes threreabove, suitable for the continuous and expeditious passage of foreign ships and aircraft through or over its archipelagic area. In the absence of such designations, ships and aircraft may transit through all normal routes used for navigation. Additionally, all ships and aircraft enjoy a right of archipelagic sea lane passage (ASLP) designated by archipelagic state under their normal mode of transportation."

Thus, almost overnight Indonesia grew from an area of 2 million square kilometers to an archipelagic state covering 5 million square kilometers more than half now being archipelagic waters. This set in motion the Government of Indonesia's (GOI) initiative to institute a designated set of ASLs to further their objective of protecting their nation and unifying its territory. This would enable Indonesia to specifically define the routes through which nations could exercise the right of archipelagic sea lanes passage.
On the basis of 1982 LOS Convention's ratification by the GOI in 1985, the Armed Forces of the Republic of Indonesia/Navy has endeavored to determine Indonesia's archipelagic sea lanes or "Alur Laut Kepulauan Indonesia" (ALKI). This effort culminated in 1995, when the Indonesian Government considered the time ripe to submit a proposal to the IMO regarding the designation of Archipelagic Sea Lanes. The proposal would be submitted to the IMO in London for acceptance as the competent international organization in accordance with the provisions of the LOS Convention. Indonesia also held continuous consultations with other countries concerned, particularly with the United States and Australia, who had significant interests in how the GOI would implement measures that might affect maritime traffic in the Indonesian archipelago.

The United States, whose primary focus was the capability to provide global reach through sea power, wanted to ensure that all normal avenues of approach and transit through the area would be properly included in the designation. The Australian government not only had regional security interests but also strong economically driven concerns over any erosion of free access through the sea-air gap to their north. Any routes lost through the area could force delays in shipping and receiving commerce. These delays could affect things as diverse as the consequences to perishable goods, to the price of goods due to increased shipping costs because of re-routing of maritime traffic.

In 1996, Indonesia formally proposed to the IMO three Indonesian Archipelagic Sea Lanes. ALKI I, which in its northern part branches out towards Singapore and the South China Sea. ALKI II, the central route, traversing the Lombok Strait to the Sulawesi Sea. And ALKI III which branches out into three spurs to the south, while in the north ALKI III branches out towards the Sulawesi Sea and the Pacific Ocean (see Figure 1).
This proposal for Indonesia's ASLs was discussed in-depth during the 67th Session of the IMO Maritime Safety Committee (MSC) in December 1996 and the 43rd Session of the IMO Sub-Committee on Safety of Navigation (NAV) held in London, July 1997.  

The major obstacle the Indonesians had to overcome was that the proposal only accounted for designation of three north-south routes through the archipelago. Both the United States and Australian representatives took the view that this was unacceptable, as the proposal did not meet the "all routes normally used for international navigation" by maritime traffic as required by LOS Convention. More specifically, there was neither an east-west corridor proposed nor a sufficient number of spurs and connectors designated in the proposal (refer to Figure 1). After much debate and coordination during and after the sessions between the United States, Australia and other maritime nations, Indonesia acquiesced and agreed to put forward a proposal for partial designation.  

In December 1997, the 20th Session of the IMO Assembly adopted the procedures and the provisions to allow for partial archipelagic sea lane designations. This partial designation was contingent upon Indonesia maintaining the status quo throughout the remaining portions of the archipelago, i.e., ships and aircraft would continue to exercise ASLP through all normal (undesignated) routes. The IMO also authorized MSC-69 to discuss the Indonesian proposal, and if the proposal fulfilled all requirements set forth, the MSC was to adopt it on behalf of the IMO eliminating the requirement to discuss the topic at the 21st Session of the IMO Assembly in 1999.  

On 19 May 1998, some 41 years after Indonesia proposed its archipelagic state concept the IMO officially adopted Indonesia's partial archipelagic sea lanes proposal for the
three north-south archipelagic sea lanes,\textsuperscript{18} with a few stipulations. The two primary ones being: continued research and validation on east-west routes, and that all normal routes through the archipelago presently under review would be utilized for maritime traffic until some future date for redesignation or additional ASL routes were approved.

Thus Indonesia became the first archipelagic state to propose and gain international acceptance of its archipelagic sea lanes in accordance with the provisions of the 1982 LOS Convention.

Pursuant to its agreement with the IMO, the designation of Indonesia's archipelagic sea lanes will enter into force at least six months after the enactment of the Government Regulation by the Indonesian Government. It is anticipated that this will take place in 1999.\textsuperscript{19}

\textbf{Implications & Factors}

Before continuing into the analysis of ASL implications on operational planning, one should have a basic understanding of what is allowed under 1982 LOS Convention with regard to rights of innocent passage, archipelagic sea lanes passage and transit passage.

“Innocent Passage” allows for the continuous and expeditious transit of shipping through territorial seas but does not allow for the launching/recovery of aircraft, and formation steaming. Additionally, as it only applies to surface navigation, submarines must transit on the surface and show their flag. Above all else, these rights can be suspended temporarily for host nation security concerns.\textsuperscript{20}

“Archipelagic sea lanes passage” provides for the rights of navigation and overflight in the normal mode solely for the purpose of continuous, expeditious and unobstructed transit through the archipelago on designated ASLs. The normal mode in this instance includes
formation steaming, launch/recovery of aircraft, and submerged submarine transits. The routes for ASLs if designated are defined as 50-nautical mile (NM) width corridors as depicted on proper navigational charts. Moreover, unlike innocent passage the rights of ASLP cannot be suspended by a coastal nation for any reason.  

"Transit Passage" rights apply to operations in international straits that are under the territorial seas of one or more nations (i.e. straits that include all overlaps of the littoral territorial seas – normally, these straits are 24 NM or less in width). A prime example is the Malaccan strait, which includes the territorial seas of Singapore, Malaysia and Indonesia. The rules governing transit passage rights through international straits are similar to ASLP rights.

The impact of having designated ASLs is that shipping and air traffic can be restricted to a specific number of routes that are precisely defined in terms of direction and width. The LOS Convention makes the stipulation that it is the host nation’s prerogative to submit ASLs that they want approved. Without continued interface by other maritime nations in the designation process, an archipelagic state may only propose a small number of ASLs for designation that best serve their interests. If this ASL proposal is submitted as a complete vice partial designation and approved, the other normal routes not included could be lost to prospective use and possible consideration in future ASL designations. Finally, “innocent passage” does exist throughout archipelagic waters in addition to ASLP on a day-to-day basis. The restrictive nature of ASLs become a significant influencing element if, or when, an archipelagic state suspends innocent passage rights under the auspices of host nation security.
Physical Impact on Factors of Operational Art

If Indonesia fails to provide sufficient designated sea lanes - i.e., to include an east-west corridor plus a sufficient number of connectors and spurs, or otherwise attempts to impede the use of all normal sea lanes - then the following potential consequences to operational planning elements may impact the operational commander:

Factor Space. Space may contract if transit rights are impeded and a conflict or crisis involves actions on both sides of the neutral archipelago. Conversely, expansion of space may occur if, for operational protect and security reasons, a force needs to travel around the neutral region. Indonesia, due to its geostrategic position already impacts to some extent the direct movement of personnel and material by creating operational decisive points or choke points where one must flow forces and material through its natural barriers (islands, straits) within the archipelago. While space is normally considered to be “static or fixed, and hence unchangeable, with time being (the) dynamic and changeable factor,”\(^2\) the additional constraints of ASLs and innocent passage rights, permits factor space to become dynamic.

Factor Time and mobilization efforts. Mobilization timing increases if it is determined that the risk-reward ratio is too high if ASLs are utilized, or a predesignated ASL is not established for the shortest and most expedient route through the archipelago to the AO. This is probably most critical when conducting MOOTW, as the operational commander may be conducting operations in one part of a theater and need to rapidly move forces and material to a crisis in another part of the theater. With the large amount of traffic that would be required to squeeze through these ASLPs, delays of critical importance to an operational commander may become significant enough to consider alternate routes and the associated delays in transit time.
Mass. Insufficient routing within an archipelago will adversely impact the sequencing and synchronization of forces, concentration of mass and thusly-combat power. Additionally, there is the increased possibility of the loss of initiative (loss of offensive) or, even worse, the initiative shifting to the adversary due to the lack of sustained combat power. This would be the case when the operational commander must employ alternative routing. Thus, increasing the LOCs and possibly reaching his culminating point much earlier than anticipated due to the increased distances involved and stretching of limited force assets to meet all operational requirements. The operational commander must keep in mind that power projection (combat power) and distance can be inversely proportional, i.e. the farther you travel the less assets (force) you will have due to complications involved in sustainability, logistics, and timing.

Economy of Force factors. The dilemma of having insufficient ASLs will drive the operational commander to extend and expand his overall force structure and logistics trail, committing more assets to secondary efforts to support movements, deception actions and operational protection requirements. Consequently, the ability to achieve mass at the decisive point and time is diluted. Force structure composition impact from ASLs is directly related to the size and strength of force required in the region. “The more distant the strategic (or operational) objective, the larger the combat and noncombat sources of national power required to accomplish it.” An operational commander must be able to analyze the decisive points of an archipelagic state’s ASLs, against the larger support requirements to move force structure a much greater distance to avoid archipelagic route restrictions.

Security and Surprise factors. Due to the funneling of forces created as both commercial and military assets are forced to utilize designated ASLs, an increased risk to
force structure is immediately present. Both detection and mobility of forces within the restrictive boundaries of ASLs work in favor of the adversary and have a negative impact on the elements of operational security and protection. Both security, “the purpose of which is to never permit the enemy to acquire unexpected advantage;” and surprise, “the purpose of which is to strike the enemy at a time or place or in a manner for which it is unprepared,” are compromised when an operational commander must move forces through ASLs. While one has the inherent right of “self protection,” sufficient Air Warfare (AW), Under Sea Warfare (USW), and Indications and Warning (I&W) support become critical factors due to a contraction of operational space throughout the restrictive transit regime of an archipelago. In addition, while a belligerent nation cannot conduct offensive operations within the ASL, it now has the opportunity to position forces and conduct intelligence operations in the vicinity of ASL created decisive points. The operational commander must assess the increased risk in utilizing ASLs (space/time advantages) over the possibilities of degrading or eliminating the capacity to move forces into theater undetected. Alternative courses of action must be developed to limit force structure risk from attack at an inopportune time in a limited factor space environment.

*Lines of Operations* and *Logistical* factors. To avoid the restrictive characteristics of ASLs, an operational commander may be forced to find alternate transit routings, increasing supply line distances, to keep from “putting all one’s eggs in one basket (both forces and supplies through the same restricted area).” Lines of operations, while normally interrelated with Lines of Communication (LOC) in a maritime environment, may in the case of ASLP also become lines of supply. In effect, LOO, LOC and lines of supply are consolidated into Sea Lines of Communication (SLOC) during ASLP for “there are only so many routes in
certain areas (restricted waters). This consolidation of SLOCs and subsequent requirement to pursue other transit routes, may become a critical vulnerability for operational planners to consider in a protracted conflict where timing and flow of resources into an area is vital in the early stages of a build-up. As was the case during the gulf conflict where everything hinged on the ability to rapidly build up forces and material in the region to prevent Iraq from pushing further south into Saudi Arabia. In addition, "...The factors of space, time and force cannot be analyzed and practically applied in isolation from each other." This is especially evident with archipelagos and issues of maritime passage and logistical support.

An analogy of transit passage follows:

"If a Battle Group were prevented from transiting through the Indonesian Archipelago and the Malaccan Strait, a battle group transiting from Yokosuka, Japan to Bahrain would have to reroute around Australia. Assuming a steady 15 knot pace, the six ship battle group (all consuming conventional fuel) would require an additional 15 days and 94,050 gallons of fuel to transit an additional 5,800 NM. Additional fuel cost would be approximately $2.9 million."

This example dramatically demonstrates the increased space and transit time factors, the effects on increased logistical support (e.g. fuel) and the possible implications of stretching out the Force concentration if complications arise.

*Deception* factors. With limited lines of operations and approach open, the operational commander's ability to effectively employ deception operations is severely restricted. Without the capacity to develop believable deception operations, due to factors of space, time and synchronization complexities, the ability to conduct deceptive actions in support of "Operational Security (OPSEC)" and force movements becomes mute. With the Indonesian archipelago, the adversary may monitor the limited lines of approach, and conducting his own due diligence of time and space factor management, eliminate possible
courses of action by friendly force commanders as unfeasible due to increased transit times. Thus increasing the difficulty of projecting believable friendly false force movements as part of any deception, OPSEC and operational protect actions.

*Maneuver.* Without the capacity to conduct operations in all cardinal directions, maneuvering schemes would become overly constrictive. This would diminish or exclude the possibilities of envelopment maneuvers and leave only direct avenues of approach open to the operational commander. In the case of Indonesia, the capacity to traverse over 1200 NM of the archipelago in an east-west direction would be a crucial element in any scheme of maneuver.

*Simplicity* factors. The ability “to prepare, clear, uncomplicated plans and concise orders,”\(^{37}\) may be affected as the simplest and most expedient routes are bypassed due to operational protect and OPSEC reasons affecting the use of limited ASL routes. This would lead to a requirement for an increase in detailed planning, along with a more complicated timeline to synchronize force employment into the crisis or conflict area.

Moreover, all of the previously mentioned factors influencing an operational commander’s course of action development will become even more exacerbated if, in addition to inadequate maintenance of ASLs, Indonesia also suspends the right of innocent passage.

One of the principal reasons the United States keeps forces forward deployed, such as Sixth Fleet assets in the Mediterranean and Seventh Fleet assets in the Western Pacific, is to influence the factor of reaction time favorably. “Reaction time can be shortened, especially in a crisis or sudden outbreak of hostilities, by deploying forces in forward areas or in the areas of potential trouble.”\(^{38}\) However, the advantage of forward-deployed forces can be
quickly nullified if crucial distances initially accounted for in the planning process are increased due to an archipelagic state’s ASL and “innocent passage” restrictions.

**Summary and Conclusions**

Designation of ASLs may reduce the flexibility available to operational commanders in transiting Indonesia’s archipelagic waters. In the past, ships and aircraft could utilize all normal routes (a rather vague open-ended standard); with formal designation, the actual number of routes, along with the 50 NM route maximum width restriction may have the practical effect of reducing in some measure, the commander’s flexibility and mobility. This impact may be made worse if Indonesia chooses not to designate a sufficient number of sea lanes, interferes with passage rights that currently exist on non-designated routes, or chooses to suspend the rights of innocent passage in areas outside such normal routes. Thus, it has become essential and in the operational commander’s interests to have a firm understanding of the rights and responsibilities of transit regimes through archipelagic waters.

When planning operations in a regional context involving archipelagic waters, operational commanders must take into consideration the impact limited transit routes will have on the factors of space, time and force management and the various ways this may adversely affect his or her ability to exercise and maintain mobility. The commander will need to balance the impacts of ASLP on a diverse set of operational factors. Planners must review the restrictions to operational maneuver not only due to ASL route dimensions, but also the lack of sufficiently designated routes in all cardinal headings. Force protection, always paramount in any operational movement, may be compromised by the limited capacity to employ deception, surprise, OPSEC and operational protection elements to
effectively support transiting forces. The commander must weigh the loss of rapid force employment into a region with the increased logistical requirements and time to mobilize forces if ASLs are bypassed. Additionally, the complexity of sequencing and synchronizing force movements to achieve concentration of mass with or without ASLs utilization must be factored into the overall space, time and force equation.

Policy makers concerned with Indonesia’s designation process and its impact should consider and consult with operational level planners. Operational level planners need to become engaged in the process at an early stage to prioritize and provide input to the process. This is to ensure that the requirements of speed, flexibility and mobility, force concentration and streamlined logistical trails are met by securing a sufficient number of sea lane routes through an archipelago.

The United States must continue its strategy of “peacetime engagement,”39 especially in the maritime theater of operations. This must not only take place at sea but in the conference and board rooms of nation states, ensuring that both economic and operational commander perspectives are folded into any future dialogue regarding the issue of archipelagic sea lanes. Moreover:

"...Without international respect for the freedoms of navigation and over flight set forth in the [LOS] Convention, exercise of our forces' mobility rights would be jeopardized. Disputes with littoral states could delay action and be resolved only by protracted political discussions. The response time for U.S. and allied/coalition forces based away from potential areas of conflict could lengthen...Forces may arrive on the scene too late to make a difference, affecting our ability to influence the course of events consistent with our interests and treaty obligations."40
NOTES


3 Atje Misbach Muhjiddin, “Some Aspects that Should be Considered in Designating Indonesia’s Sea Lanes,” (University of Hawaii School of Law: n.d.), 2. Paper is on file with the Department of Ocean Law and Policy, Naval War College, Newport, RI.

4 Joint Chiefs of Staff, Doctrine for Joint Operations (Joint Pub 3-0) (Washington D.C.: February 1, 1995), III-21 defines “decisive points are usually geographic in nature, such as a constricted sea lane, a hill.... They could also include other elements such as ... critical boundaries, airspace...”


7 1982 LOS Convention, Art. 53.


11 1982 LOS Convention, Art. 53.


13 “Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia,” Pg. 2 Para 8.


16 1982 LOS Convention, Art. 53.
19 “Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia,” p.3.
20 1982 LOS Convention, Art. 53.
21 Ibid.
23 1982 LOS Convention, Art. 53.
25 Vego, 32.
26 Vego, 67.
27 Joint Pub 3-0, A-2.
28 Doswald-Beck, p.13, par.30.
29 Ibid.
30 Vego, 47. Lines of operation may coincide with lines of communication due to nature of ocean transit.
31 Vego, 51. “SLOCS ...come into play in restricted waters or choke points ...there are only so many routes in certain areas.”
33 Vego, 73.
35 Joint Pub 3-0, GL-11. Operational security in part covers “... Selecting and executing measures that eliminate or reduce to an acceptable level the vulnerabilities of friendly actions to adversary exploitation.”
36 Joint Pub 3-0, GL-10. Part of the requirement to include deception operations is “... Deceptive OPSEC measures are designed to distract foreign intelligence away from, or provide cover for, military operations and activities.”
37 Joint Pub 3-0, A-2.
38 Vego, 62.
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