INTRODUCTION
Transportation system satisfies the mobility needs and it supports economic development and enhances the flow of global trade. The Sea Lanes of Communication (SLOCs) are subject to intense geopolitical considerations, since these routes are forced to pass through very critical passages, capes and straits. The safety and security issues of SLOCs are the major concerns in international maritime security strategies. Every capable nation takes the advantage of SLOCs to pursue its maritime trade activities. In the post-World War II era the establishment of industries on modern lines with the minimum resource base has witnessed an increase in its dependency on global trade both for raw materials and finished products and this has intensified the usages of sea routes or sea-lanes which are directly related to the flow of international trade. Even in these days of information technologies countries still depend on SLOCs since most of the imported as well as exported goods pass through some of the world's most treacherous choke points like the Strait of Hormuz, the Straits of Malacca, Lombok and Makassar and for this purpose a guaranteed and secured oceanic or maritime trade routes is a prime requisite.

The main aspects of political geography are locations, space, territorial control, power projection, sphere of influence, sphere of interest and accessibility. These elements are found in operating maritime transportation. Maritime transportation is constrained by its geography which involves geopolitical considerations. It supports existing trade and expands it and secures its circulation. The geopolitical importance of maritime controls as a generator of wealth was acknowledged early in the history of international maritime transportation. With the opening up of markets and countries seeking integration with the world economy, seas have assumed an unparalleled flow of energy requirements to supply energy to their growing economies as well as unimpeded access to sources of raw materials and markets for their industrial products.

The spatial distribution of transport infrastructures and networks varies enormously. Some regions are characterized by the coexistence of several transport modes, while in other regions only one mode can provide transport service. The evolution of transport concerns both infrastructure and the vehicles used. Fluvial transportation even if slow and inflexible, offers a high capacity and a continuous flow. Regions having high density of
Administrative Divisions of Japan
hydrographic networks, fluvial transportation can be a better mode of shipment between various economic activities. Various industrial growths occurred along these inland waterways.

**The Research Study**

Map 1.1 shows the location of Japan in East Asia and Map 1.2 shows the administrative divisions of Japan, which is the study area for this research work. This study shows the importance of SLOCs of Japan in pursuing its overseas trade in the era of globalization. Japan is an island nation located in the western part of the North Pacific Ocean, off the coast of East Asia. It occupies four main islands- Hokkaido, Honshu, Shikoku and Kyushu and many smaller ones extending in arc from Hokkaido in the northeast to the Ryukyu Islands in the Southwest. Honshu, comprising about three-fifths of the total land area of Japan, is the most important island. According to Trewartha, 'next to Honshu, Hokkaido is the largest of the Japanese islands which equals to 21.2 percent of the nation’s area' (Trewartha, 1965: 313). Japan is separated from the Southeastern Pacific Coast of the Soviet Union and the East Coast of Korea by the Sea of Japan. It is separated from China by the East China Sea. At the point nearest to the Asian Continent it is separated from the tip of the Korean Peninsula by 110 miles of the Korean Strait. To the north of Japan lies the island of Sakhalin and to the northeast, the Kurile Island Chain both of which belong to Russia. Japan has a total area of 143,706 square miles and is the most industrialized Asian country to have the same standard of living to that of European countries.

Little more than 100 years ago, Japan was a feudal state living in self-imposed isolation. Shortly after 1868, with the ending of feudalism and the start of Meiji Era, modernization of the economy became a declared goal of the Japanese government. There was a considerable growth of output, but largely of traditional goods produced in traditional ways, the only modern industry to develop significantly before the first decade of the 20th century was the manufacture of cotton textiles. The first four decades after the opening of Japan's ports to United States' ships in 1854 saw rapid growth of exports of traditional goods, such as raw silk and tea. By the beginning of the 20th century it became a world
power. This remarkable transformation was made evident by Japan's victory in the Russo-Japanese War. World War II devastated much of Japanese economic base. It also probably ended the possibility of an economically self-sufficient Japanese empire. By the time World War II began in 1939, Japan's textile industry dominated the world markets and the Japanese metals, machinery, chemicals, transportation equipments and armaments industries were of substantial importance. After the recovery from the World War II, its economy started to prosper. The basis for renewal rapid growth and for a structural transformation of the economy was laid by revised government policies toward science and technology, manpower training and research along the industrial experience gained before and during the war. Its remarkable economic growth took place since 1952. During this time it mainly imported raw material for its industrial growth like oils from Middle East and coals, grains and iron-ore from United States and Australia. By the end of 1960, it has achieved the status of one of the most developed nations of the world, leading in ship building, fish production, chemicals and transport equipments. From the 1950's through the 1970's almost everybody took the economic boom for granted, thereby helping to sustain it. Japanese businessmen, anticipating rapid stable growth, boldly invested their earnings and public savings in the expansion and improvement of old industries and the development of new ones. They paid for licenses to use foreign technology and for necessary raw materials imports by enlarging the foreign markets for their manufactures. The period after 1973 was a remarkable watershed for Japan.

Today, Japan is not only the most westernized and technologically advanced nation in Asia, it is also the third greatest industrial power in the world. Still the country is considered to be one of the oldest nations of the world; it upholds its much of the older culture. It is the second largest economy in the world, only after United States, and it depends on the most strategic energy resources of the world like oil, coal, iron-ore, natural gas as well as other equally important raw materials from the countries like Middle East, Australia, United States and Southeast Asia, on the other hand exports most valuable technical equipments to its trading partners. The industrial base of Japan has shifted from light industries to heavy industries, the production of which accounts of some 70 per cent of the total value of yearly exports.
Japan has few resources other than its large, well-educated highly trained labour force. It was the capacity of Japanese to import and improve foreign technology and labour skills through publicly financed education and privately financed on-the-job training and maintains an extraordinary high rate of savings. Foreign trade is essential to the Japanese economy. The domestic market is unable to fully absorb the manufactured goods that are produced by Japanese industry. Furthermore, because Japan must import much of the raw material on which its industries depend, the country also export a substantial proportion of its natural product to affect a favorable balance of trade. The foreign markets for Japanese goods shrank after WW II. Certain markets, such as Manchuria and Korea, were temporarily lost to Japan as a result of the breakup of the empire. Trade with China declined for political reasons after the establishment of the communist regimes and trade with United States for a time declined because of the economic barriers set up to protect its own industries from competition. During 1950s Japan attempted to expand its trade with other countries of the Far East. In the 1960s Japan also increased its trade with several countries outside Asia. By the late 1970s and early 1980s the United States was Japan's leading trade partner. Trading was also expanded with the countries of Middle East, Australia, Korea, China, Taiwan and Canada.

Japan's shipping capacity, though badly damaged during World War II, was restored and greatly expanded after the war. According to Halsey and Friedman (1982), 'In 1979, the Japanese merchant fleet had a capacity of 39 million gross registered tons, the largest in the world' (Halsey and Friedman, 1982:463). Daniel has stated that, 'Japan is highly urbanized, with 56.4 percent of the population living within 30 kilometers of the three largest cities of Tokyo, Osaka and Nagoya' (Daniel, 2008:482). Till date Japan completely relies on SLOCs for the 99 percent of its imports from all over the world.

Research Questions
Over the years the subject matter of political geography has widened up its field to study the contemporary issues of geopolitics and geo-strategy. This has made the subject interesting and more relevant. Overseas trade and SLOCs have become more politically vulnerable, each and every country took part in global trade, frames their own rules and
regulations which affects the relationships with their trading partners. The geographical location of a particular country determines its accessibility or inaccessibility to maritime trade routes, which has always been the dominant mode of global trade.

- This research tends to focus on the importance of sea lanes of communication of Japan to pursue its overseas trade, how Japan command and control over the sea lanes to get access to trading, strategic minerals, islands and other materials gains.
- It seeks to examine the evolution of Japanese trade and its major trade routes. It analyses the important link between Japanese sea lanes of communication and its geography in charting out any strategy even in these days of information technologies. It analysis the trend in structural change in Japan’s import and export in terms of quality and value.
- To better comprehend and discern the causes of threats of Japan’s SLOCs. To understand the complementary and competitive nature of overseas trade between Japan and its trading partners.
- To analyze how geography of Japan determines that ocean is the only cheap traffic lane for transporting goods and resources in bulk.
- The SLOCs are subjected to so many threats like piracy, terrorism, smuggling and drug trafficking. Why the maritime nations are yet to come up with suitable solutions to solve these problems. How far information technology helped in mitigating the safety and security of SLOCs.
- What are the steps taken by Japanese government to ensured secured SLOCs for the free flow of trade? What is the role of Japanese technology in upgrading the sea port infrastructure to decongest the traffic or are there any possibilities to demarcate new trade routes in the near future to the existing choking points?
- What type of relationship Japan has with its major trading partners and how would it affects its future pattern of trade, how does Japan influence the world economy?
Scope of the Study

The importance of SLOCs has been augmented, it is not only important for Japan but for the economic and political well being of billions of people throughout the world. The topic has enormous potentiality for research explorations and investigations. The commercial and strategic significance of sea is increasing, as they provide a link between naval deployment in different regional and sub regional seas. As this interdependence continues to grow the issues of concrete cooperation and communication for the management and safeguarding of these passage have become indispensable on the political agenda of different states and institutions. Since this research is based on geographical perspectives it could add new dimension to the field of geo-economics to geopolitics in particular. Over all geopolitical parameters are taken to evaluate the concepts, importance of Japan’s SLOCs.

Two hypotheses have been taken for this research. The first one is globalization has made transportation much safer and faster and thereby reducing the relevance of SLOCs. The second one is geography of Japan has been rendered less important in the era of Globalization for its economic development as the information technologies which have created the cyber space superseded the importance of sea lanes of communication in pursuing foreign trade of Japan. For this research, empirical study was conducted in Tokyo as well as in Yokohama to study the Japanese Port System and interview was scheduled with government officials and researchers in the concerned subject. A semi-structured questionnaire has been prepared to carry out the survey.¹

Literature Review

Studies have already been conducted by researchers with different background regarding Japanese seaborne trade and its strategic sea routes. Therefore there is no dearth of published materials like books, articles and reports on this particular issue. In this study the main reliance will be on the official documents and statistical data issued by the governmental and non governmental organization as the primary source of materials.

¹ See appendix 1

A recent publication of a monthly survey report named *East Asia Update 2006* by World Bank 2006, focusing on trade related and maritime affairs of East Asia is quite helpful. The *Preliminary Report of Port and Harbour Statistics*, which is issued by the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications, Statistical Research and Training Institute, Tokyo provides exclusive summary of the development of Japanese Ports and Harbours on monthly basis. This proves a clear understanding to one about the latest developments that are taking place within the port areas and water front zones. Another monthly report produced by Transport Research and Statistics Division, Ministry of Land, Infrastructure and Transport is *Survey on Port and Harbour* to depict the state of ports and harbour and to prepare materials for developing, using and managing ports and Harbour. The Report on *Survey on Coastwise Vessel Transport* by the above mentioned organization also produces fundamental statistical materials to ascertain the coastal vessel situation and to facilitate development of traffic and economic policies of the nation.
In secondary sources, books and articles on Japan’s resources and trade related problems, security issues related to sea lanes of communication, historical background and economic development, economic conditions of Asia-Pacific countries are chosen as the major theme for the literature review.

The book *Japan: A Short Cultural History (1982)*, written by G.B.Cullen deals with the entire history of Japan starting from the feudal age to the present century, it explains the major events that took place during this period in five chapters. The greatest merit of this book is that it brings together in one volume the entire gamut of the multiple dimensions of Japanese history including evolution of sea-borne trade and its routes. However, this book lacks in analytical approach and some of the terminologies used by the authors are not clear for a layman to understand.

*Japan's Economy in War and Reconstruction* was first published in 1949 by Jerome B. Cohen. It describes with much statistical evidence a remarkable experiment in planned industrial expansion prior to 1941, then continues with a survey of the war years, showing both the successes and failures of the planning, controlling, financing, and developing of Japan's war industries. The first chapter is devoted to the careful planning of the years before the war. The next chapters discuss Japan's efforts to cope with the problems of munitions, food supply, and labour as the Allied war effort gradually wore her down. There are detailed studies of separate industries, shipping, and agriculture, and a discussion of the parts played respectively by air, sea, and land operations in the destruction of Japan's ability to wage successful war. The last part of the book deals with the post-war problems of Japan from the war's end to the latter part of 1948- three years of occupation by the Allied Powers. Cohen discusses the three key economic factors- the basic reforms, the rapidly mounting inflation, and the slowly increasing, but still low level of production. The book provides a very handy reference to know the overall growth process of Japan, but one demerit is that it did not provide any maps pointing out the areas affected by World War II and its recovery through industrialization to make the readers more clear about the topic of discussion. It mainly deals with the statistical data using certain economic terminologies, at times it becomes monotonous to read. Wolf Mendl in his book *Japan's Asia Policy: Regional Security and Global Interests (2001)*
explains the historical roots of Japan's foreign policy, especially the Asia-versus-the-West debate. The book provides a readable and up-to-date analysis of Japan's relations with comparisons with the policies of powers of equal status in the post-war world. Various policy options are discussed as well as the determinants and characteristics which are likely to govern the conduct of Japan's external relations. The book underlines the importance of the international environment in shaping the direction of Japan's foreign policy. It has become part of the Japanese tradition in the post-war era to steer the ship of state with the view to keeping open as many options as possible and adjusting to circumstances as they arise.

The Economic Development of Japan: A Quantitative Study by Ryoshin Minami is an example par excellence to give a complete coverage of almost all trade related data of Japan since 1945. The book has seven chapters each focusing on particular issues or events that Japan has experienced after 1945. Maps and Graphs used in the chapters makes one clear about the structure of trade over the years. This book is yet to produce an effective and precise response as to what a Japanese economic system is and how this study would add to what a layman who already know about its economics and their model of development, how should one evaluate Japanese present economic systems within a broader context of human experiences in growth and development process.

Edward. F. Davison's How Japan's Economy Grew So Fast: The Sources of Post War Expansion (1980), is an important book for specialist interested in Japan's relations with its major trading partners over the issues of oil crisis during 1973. It has four chapters which are mainly a narrative of various Japanese diplomatic actions, maneuvers and other interaction between Middle East countries. It is written smoothly by the author who is a close observer cum participant in various workshops. This book lacks in analytical judgments which is a problem for readers who are not well grounded with the oil crisis issues of Middle East. A. Olsen in the book Japan: Economic Growth, Resource Scarcity and Environmental Constraints (1978), correlated the three major factors in the growth and expansion of Japanese trades, they are the availability of resources, accessibility of markets and infrastructural development in three parts. It also focused on environmental
constraints of Japan like pollution, oil spillage and industrialization which are affecting the coastal fishing resources. This book only focused on the quantitative aspects, totally sideling the qualitative one, it did not talk about the fast hand remedies to tackle such problems, and it just provided a list of the causes and problem of Japanese economy.

Tsuru, Shingeto in the book *Growth and Resource Problems to Japan (1978)*, provides a comprehensive detail about Japan’s geography, its strategic minerals, choke points, sea lanes of communication and global power’s interest in this particular region. This book is excellent for geographers to understand the arguments made by the authors, written in a highly readable style and updated with the latest developments in Japan’s sea transport networks but it lacks in conceptual clarity and some of the maps given are not in conformity with the discussions made by the authors.

The article, ‘Did Japan ever Suffer from a Shortage of National Resources before World War II (2002)’ by Yasuba, Yasukichi provides a comparative analysis of the resource materials of Japan before and after Second World War and how does Japanese economy grew so fast with the minimum resource base. It analyzes thoroughly the causes of resource problem, its spatial distributions and the main imported raw materials from other countries with maps, flow charts and diagrams. The book, *The Problem of Japanese Trade Expansion in the Post War Situation (2000)*, by Miriam Southwell provides excellent material base for any research work. It deals with the economy of Japan, significance of chokepoints in maritime trade and transport, solutions for maintaining peace and security through international negotiations and so on. It is a much more compact book which makes it somewhat difficult for the general reader but for anyone exploring the problem as a whole or in a specific region, it is invaluable.

*Modern Japan: A Historical Survey* by Mikiso Hane (1992) is about the general history of Japan from the Meiji restoration in 1868 to the present. Hane provides a very readable account of the political and military history, along with good coverage of social, economic and cultural history. The coverage of recent history is fairly brief, with only 80 pages covering the entire post-war period, so those who want a description of the Japanese economic miracle should consult other books as well. One merit of this book is the select bibliography at the end which is separated into different sections by subject,
making it easy to find further reading on any particular topic. The content of the book can be used as surveyed materials which is suitable for the newcomer to Japanese history.

*The Making of Modern Japan*, by Kenneth Pyle, in 1995 is perhaps the best textbook on modern Japanese history. Pyle divides each chapter on certain historical themes instead of writing one long narrative on modern Japan. The author focuses on the trends of modern Japanese history, leaving out minor details in order to give the broader picture and context of the historical forces governing the making of modern Japan. The book is an invaluable asset not only for those who know little about Japan but also as a reference for the more knowledgeable. No other book offers such a clear history outlining the key trends and themes shaping Japanese history since the Tokugawa period. *The Making of Modern Japan* is the only book of its kind and a must-read for anyone aspiring to understand modern Japan.

The book *Japan Rising: The Resurgence of Japanese Power and Purpose*, by Kenneth Pyle in 2007, traces the development of the Japanese military since the close of the Cold War and the beginnings of the new war on terrorism. The best part of this book is the clear reading of Japanese security strategy, starting in the early 50s, as affirmatively choosing alignment. The book follows that choice and the debates and factions around it from the early post-war era, through the Cold War, and into the post-1989 and post-1991 eras. The book is enlightening, seeing a history where Japanese are given agency for their own history and are shown with real choices and understanding both of their potential roles as a full modern power and the issues they will need to deal with to get there. After the occupation of Japan ended in 1952 by the United States, the Japanese nation would emerge as one of the strongest economical nations in the world.

Masao Oda, in the paper “Transportation of Japanese Sea borne Trade and Related Laws and Regulations” (1979), gives data on Japanese overseas trade, its structure and pattern, major trading partners to analyze the trend in exports and imports. Some of the statistics used in the article are superfluous and are not directly related to the topic under discussion and as such become a hindrance for the reader. However it gives quick access to fascinating and wide ranging aspect of Japanese trade for a layman to understand.
Hideaki Kaneda in the book, *Japan’s Maritime Strategy in the New Era* (2002), consist of short essays mostly by American strategic analysts on Japanese maritime trade routes, divided into three sections on the strategic framework, multilateral security issues and country profiles. It is not a handbook as it cannot be readily or conveniently movable as a reference but it provides excellent material base to understand the military potentials and naval base strategies for the Asia Pacific region. This book can provide excellent material base for any research work to know Japanese international relations with other countries. The book, *Japan’s Sea-Lane Security, 1940-2004: A Matter of Life and Death* (2005), by Evan Graham explores the vital linkage between Japan’s Sea-lane security, concerns comprehendingly across fields including military strategy, diplomacy and negotiations. Apart from Japan’s history, this book also provides us with latest maritime issues of North Pacific region as well. Maps and flow charts are given to show the network of Japan’s sea routes starting from Middle East and its extensive networks over the Pacific belt. The author keeps analysis to a minimum and makes few judgments therefore make the reader in a dilemma to understand the logic behind such explanations. However attempts have been made to define and explore complex ideas and difficult concepts in an easily intelligible and lucid manner.

The book *Japan and South East Asia, edited by Wolf Mendl*, which comprises of several articles by different scholars, is an invaluable resource for students and scholars as it gives a complete overview of Japanese foreign policy and Japan-South East Asian relations. This is the most comprehensive study of the evolution of Japanese-Association of Southeast Asian Nations relations (ASEAN) in the post-Cold War period. This work is a valuable addition to the study of Japan’s foreign policy in the new world economic order. This book is recommended at all levels, which undoubtedly, gives the most comprehensive and balanced treatment of Japan's contemporary relations with Southeast Asia to date. There are no other book-length works on this area except Wolf Mendl's edited work, *Japan and South East Asia*.

The book *Modern Japan: A Very Short Introduction* by Wolf Mendl is arranged chronologically, and starts with a brief history of Japan prior to its opening up and
modernization in the nineteenth century. It proceeds with the arrival of commodore Perry and the subsequent Meiji restoration. Likewise, most of the twentieth century Japanese history is presented from a critical angle that tries to take into the account Japan's own perception and understanding of those events. One of the particularly pleasing traits of this book is the attention that it gives to cultural and artistic developments. Many of Japan's most famous writers and artists have been spotlighted. However, it would have been more pleasing if the book mentioned some of the greatest scientists of the twentieth century like Yukawa and Tomonaga, who have helped put Japanese science in the World map. Overall, this is an interesting and informative book on Modern Japan. It is a very helpful first step in getting oneself acquainted with this fascinating country and its culture. Japan is arguably today's most successful industrial economy, combining almost unprecedented affluence with social stability and apparent harmony. Japanese goods and cultural products--from animated movies and computer games to cars, semiconductors, and management techniques are consumed around the world.

Dalchoong Kim's book, *Resource Maritime Transport and SLOCs Security in the Asia Pacific Region* (1988) incorporates two major parts. The first part opens with a discussion on geography, distribution of minerals, choke points, its connectivity networks of the entire Asia Pacific region where as the second part deals with the security concerns, major incidents that have taken place and its consequences in future. The book throws light on the international relations between the countries of Asia Pacific, their newly emerging trend of economic dependencies and trade related activities. It lacks in quantitative analysis and much more focused on qualitative aspects. Sometimes it becomes difficult for the readers to understand author's argument and judgments regarding any area specific discussions who are not so much familiar with the maps and diagrams of Pacific region.

To understand the economic growth of Pacific Asia the book, *Emerging Economic Systems in Asia: A Political and Economic Survey* (2000) edited by Kyoto Sheridam is reviewed. The book examines a series of case studies to identify the conditions of Asian economic system. The whole book is divided into three parts comprising East Asia, South
East Asia and South Asia. It’s an amalgamation of different articles showing background, trading activities of the whole of Asia. The book left to the reader on a new area of comparative inquiry into economic activities. The explanation given in different articles is much more like a generalized version of economic systems in Asia; some of the arguments given by the authors are somewhat repetitive in nature. *A Short Economic History of Modern Japan, 1867-1937*, by Allen, (1945) is a result of a study of Japan's economic affairs that has extended over a considerable period. The book was completed on the eve of Japan's surrender to the United Nations. The author has tried to describe the process of economic development in Japan between the time when it first entered into the initial phase of Westernization and the beginning of the war with China in 1937. The book is intended to provide a background of knowledge rather than suggestions for policy or speculation about what is to come. The main emphasis throughout has been on industrial and financial development and organization and on economic policy, although the study has not been confined to those fields. It is hoped that economists and others who concern themselves with economic affairs and policy will find some general interest in tracing the evolution of a modern industrial system within a society so differently constituted from that of Western nations.

“Security of SLOCs in East Asia and the Role of Navies” (2001) by Seo Hang Lee, “Maritime Security in Southeast Asia: Issues and Perspectives” (2000) by Frances Sai and “Current State of Maritime Security” (2001) by Kazumine Akimoto is a very good set of literature. All of them deals with security issues concerning maritime disputes, sea piracy, terrorism, pollution and drug trafficking, taking examples from Southeast and Northeast Asia but they lacks in analytical details of the current situations. They failed to provide true judgments regarding what is there in the discussions. Absence of maps and diagrams makes the reader difficult to understand aspects related to case studies. Mihir Roy, in his paper “Energy and Sea lanes of Communication” (2001) explains the importance of connectivity networks of sea lanes of communication of different parts of the world, he also provided a ground for analyzing regional security issues through negation, cooperation and diplomatic efforts by the member nations. This is a good article, which explains the importance of this communication from all different angles.
Yet certain aspects of discussions are not clear, the author tried to club each and every aspects of regional securities of Northeast Asia within a short framework makes hard for one to correlate one aspect with the other.

The article "Analysis of the Impact of the Maritime Transportation System on Singapore/Malacca Strait: Application of an Integrated GIS Tool" (2004) by Kim Doong and "Congestion Management in Singapore Strait" (2002) by M.Goh talked about latest technical development of maritime transportation in Southeast Asia. It also focused on security issues with latest maps and techniques identified the most congested parts of the strait and provided temporary solutions. These two articles are the product of a good research work provides an insight to the geopolitical situations of a region, yet lacks in conceptual clarity, some of the discussions are lengthy and irrelevant. Brief and crispy sentences would have made the reader to handle it more comfortably.

There are several articles written about the Strait of Malacca, however the three most relevant articles dealing from three different angles has been consulted to get a comprehensive accounts of this particular Strait. "Politics of controlling the Strait of Malacca: A Balance sheet since November 1971" (1975) by Peter K.H. Yu deals with the different political situations of the nation influencing the stability of this particular Strait, the article "Navigational safety and Protection of Marine Environment in Malacca Strait" (2001) by Parry Oei deals with the safety and protection of marine environment, latest scientific developments, research in preserving marine ecology of the region and finally the article "Malacca Strait: A Zone of Growing Tension" (1983) by S.S.Bhattacharya gives a comprehensive accounts of the geopolitical set up of the straits, international treaties, agreements to secure regional peace by the littoral states. All the three articles have concentrated on political and economic factor in governing the maritime security issues in the Strait of Malacca which is indispensable for instant reference. However it has neglected the socio cultural and demographic factors for such happenings and none of them could provide good data to comprehend their point of discussions.
Maritime trade has been of great significance in the past and continues to be so even today. The seas and oceans are the reservoirs of strategic natural resources. Trade through seas and oceans is prevalent from ancient times. There have been voyages to explore new lands and facilitates trade through seas in the past. History bears example of these voyages undertaken for various purposes including trade and commerce. The sea makes the globalization possible. The economy of water transportation causes countries to specialize in whatever they can produce most economically. The potential for maritime trade magnifies the effect of naval power. Maritime trade and commerce has contributed in a significant way to the development and growth of economies. There are commodities which traverse through the sealanes and reach their destinations. Sea lanes are thus called the arteries of a country's economy. Due to the strategic significance of these lanes, it becomes imperative that they are safeguard from various kinds of threats.

In total there are four chapters to complete this research work. Brief analyses of each of the chapters are as follows.

Chapter one studies the subject matter of political geography and geopolitics in relation to the development of SLOCs. It explores the historical development of the ancient maritime trade routes and its world-wide evolution. It examines the classical theories of sea power by Mahan and Julian Corbett which produced valuable insight of the maritime strategy during WW I and II. This study also defines the term maritime strategy, sea power and strategic geography. It examines the significance and role of seas and oceans as facilitators in terms of their contributions to economic growth of countries. Today no nation is self-sufficient and they are all involved at different levels in trade process. Globalization has increased the volume and efficiency of international trade over the last thirty years. Global trade allows for an enormous variety of resources and made them more widely accessible. It seeks to address the significance of maritime trade for global economy in terms of oil transit, transportation of goods and other natural resources through the strategic SLOCs such as Straits of Hormuz and Malacca. The overall impact of globalization on the maritime world is to make it even more important to national and global economies and therefore even more critical to economic well-being. The maritime
world is going to be continually more economically important as more and more national economies increase their dependence on overseas trade. Even today geopolitics is most commonly understood as a discipline which deals with the influence of geographical space on the politics of state.

Chapter two deals with the geopolitical issues of Japan’s SLOCs and its future problems and prospects. It gives the introduction of important straits related to Japan’s maritime security issues and the possible problems that can arise if they are blocked. It specially stressed on the security issues of SLOCs and choke points of Southeast Asia which are so vulnerable to maritime threats like piracy and terrorism. A special section has been devoted to study the piracy issues in the Strait of Malacca. It also talks about the countermeasures taken by Japan as well as various other countries to safeguard their maritime interests specially those taken on bilateral, multilateral and regional levels. These measures include joint naval exercises among the navies of the country, anti-piracy patrols, joint search and rescue operations and maintaining the law of the seas. Maritime power, especially the way countries apply it, holds the key to future regional security. Regional countries are spending more and more on their navies. The major maritime power of the United States, China, India and Japan as well as Russia all seek to extend their strategic influence in the region using sea power while many coastal states are developing powerful sea denial forces. In order to establish a multilateral regional security framework, there has to be a basis of common interests strong enough to make the countries in the region perceives security problems as common concerns. The Asia-Pacific region has not yet reached such a stage. Therefore in the maritime transportation, the existing security arrangements should be maintained for regional security. These arrangements include a set of friendly relations with the United States as hub security cooperation among Association of Southeast Asian Nation (ASEAN) in the areas of intelligence, infrastructural development and standardization of weapons systems.

Chapter three studies the evolution of port system in Japan, major port legislatures, port management bodies, description of the five major ports of Japan- Port of Tokyo, Port of Yokohama, Port of Kobe, Port of Nagoya and Port of Osaka, present status of ship
building industries of Japan, different types of newly introduced cargo ships, containerization, major shipping companies of the world, rules implemented by port authorities to prevent maritime disasters, Japan’s investment in human infrastructures, and expenditure in importing port technologies.

It is much easier to move heavier goods by water than by land and air. Moreover, the sea borne highway is much more flexible than any pathway across the land. Goods for international trade are transported by sea. With increasing transnational trade, shipping assumes considerable significance. Consequently, development of ports and maritime infrastructures has also gained immense significance. Sea power thus becomes relevant in modern period. Japan is investing much on its sea transport infrastructure by modernizing its seaports with best facilities of loading and unloading cargoes. One of the striking features of it is that all ports are concentrated along the coastlines which led to heavy concentration of traffics throughout all seasons and it is still looking for green field sites along the same coastlines, since its dependence on foreign trade has increased considerably.

Any disruption on these high seas can impact all shipping worldwide. The importance of the sea for Japan’s survival and prosperity will continue to increase. Japan is very poor in energy resources and it imports more than 80 percent of its energy requirements. Japan’s dependency on oil for its energy consumption is much greater than that of United States and West European countries. Japan’s security role is to support US force presence in the Southeast Asia. Japan is not only providing military bases for the United States, but also extending financial support to US force deployed in Japan. Japan as a trading nation, depends very much on the safety of sea lanes in the world for its survival and prosperity. This chapter also focuses on the global solutions to problems of maritime security including new measures taken by the International Maritime Organization particularly the International Ship and Port Facility Security (ISPS) Code amendments to the Safety of Life at Sea Conventions (SOLAS) and proposed amendments to the convention for the unlawful acts against the safety of maritime navigation. It also discusses at length the regional organizations, Asia Pacific Economic cooperation (APEC), ASEAN, ASEAN
Regional Forum (ARF), Asia Maritime Security Initiative, Council for Security Cooperation in the Asia Pacific (CSCAP) towards maritime security. Many countries do not have the capacity to participate in cooperative process on an equal footing. Finally, the need for a proper balance is emphasized between security and the free movement of trade. Japan not only depends on the SLOCs, but also relies on them that pass through numerous potential hotspots. It deliberately tries to maintain friendly relations with Southeast Asia to make sure that trade routes remain open all year round, if the straits are closed, transit time and distance would increase and raise the freight rate. These SLOCs cross the waters of several countries including Malaysia, Indonesia, and Singapore and two way trade transiting through them is important not only for Japan but also for the whole of Northeast Asia.

Chapter four deals with the evolution of Japanese overseas trade, its major exports and imports and their present trends, its major trade partners, like its trade relations with China, U.S.A., Korea, European Union, Middle East and Australia. It also explains the role of the Ministry of International Trade and Industry (MITI) and describes the present Japanese export and import policies. Japan has a close trading relationship with the markets of both the developing as well as the developed countries. It is very complementary in the case of Southeast Asia, since it imports raw material from them and in return exports finished goods. Japan’s trade relationship with United States was complementary as well as competitive, since both the economies are developed one, Japan’s imports with the United States has increased over the years. The newly industrialized economies of Asia like South Korea, Taiwan, and China, are the new markets for Japanese commodities. Japanese trade is governed by both internal and external forces like the problem of minimum resource base, waste disposal and pollution of coastal lands and over industrializations which restrict any further exploitation of its resources, again the international pressure from different coastal nations has restricted its fishing and whaling in high seas. It has many unsolved maritime boundary disputes.

Technological transformation affecting water transport have concentration on modifying water canals such as dredging port channels to higher depths and on increasing the size,
the automation and the specialization of vessels example container ships, tankers, bulk carrier. These transformation partially explain the development are all focused in the relatively narrow seas of East Asia that are distinguished by high levels of maritime activity, dense and increasing, shipping traffic, conflicting claims to maritime jurisdiction, increased exploration for offshore oil and gas and unresolved maritime boundaries. A higher level of cooperation in managing these pressures at sea is an essential requirement of the emergent maritime future of the region. As the pacific trade increased considerably after the World War II, so did the importance of the passage. The challenge now is to build a regional security environment in which countries are more prepared to cooperate and reduce their naval spending and levels of naval capacity.

Even at the end of this 20th century most of the world’s goods move by ship. Though there are enormous technological advances in transportation systems, prevailing winds, as well as oceanic currents and weather of a particular region till determine the safest and most efficient trade routes. Globalization of the world economy and the corresponding dependence of a greater number of nations on foreign trade have made the security of global maritime trade more critical.