



Strait of Hormuz: Will the World's Oil Route Be Disrupted?

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ABSTRACT

This article examines geopolitical tensions between Iran and the United States and their potential impact on the Strait of Hormuz, one of the most strategically important maritime chokepoints in the global energy system. The study analyzes the historical evolution of Iran–United States relations, the geopolitical importance of the Strait of Hormuz, and the economic consequences of possible disruptions in global oil supply chains. Using qualitative analysis based on academic literature, policy reports, and energy market data, the research explores how geopolitical conflicts influence global energy markets and international diplomacy. The paper also evaluates the strategic responses of major powers such as the United States, Russia, and China while highlighting the diplomatic dilemma faced by developing countries like India that depend heavily on imported energy resources. The study concludes that sustained diplomatic engagement and multilateral cooperation are essential for maintaining stability in this vital maritime corridor.

Introduction

The Strait of Hormuz is widely recognized as one of the most important maritime chokepoints in the global energy system. Situated between Iran and the Arabian Peninsula, this narrow waterway connects the Persian Gulf with the Gulf of Oman and the Arabian Sea. Every day millions of barrels of crude oil pass through this route, making it a vital artery of the global economy. Because of this strategic position, political or military conflict in the region has the potential to disrupt global energy supplies and trigger worldwide economic consequences.



The geopolitical significance of the Strait of Hormuz has increased in recent decades due to rising tensions between Iran and the United States. Their relationship has been shaped by decades of diplomatic confrontation, sanctions, and occasional military incidents. These tensions repeatedly raise concerns about possible disruptions to maritime traffic in the Persian Gulf region.

The global economy is highly sensitive to fluctuations in oil supply. Even small disruptions in major transportation routes can lead to significant increases in oil prices. Developing economies that rely heavily on imported fuel are particularly vulnerable to these changes. As a result, the security of maritime chokepoints such as the Strait of Hormuz has become a major topic of discussion in international relations and global economic policy.

Literature Review

Scholars have long emphasized the strategic role of maritime chokepoints in shaping global geopolitics. Klare (2019) argues that competition for energy resources and transportation routes has historically played a major role in international conflict. Control over strategic locations that influence global energy flows provides states with significant geopolitical leverage.

Yergin (2011) highlights the central role of oil in modern global politics. According to his analysis, access to energy resources and secure transportation routes remains one of the most important concerns for major industrial economies. The Persian Gulf region therefore occupies a central position in global strategic thinking due to its vast energy reserves.

The International Energy Agency (2023) estimates that roughly one fifth of the world's oil consumption moves through the Strait of Hormuz. Because of this dependence, even minor disruptions in this corridor can generate significant volatility in global markets. Energy analysts therefore consider the stability of the strait to be a critical factor in maintaining global economic stability.

Research by Cordesman (2020) notes that military tensions in the Persian Gulf region have frequently raised fears of disruptions in oil transportation. Iran has occasionally threatened to restrict passage through the Strait of Hormuz in response to sanctions or military pressure from Western powers. Although these threats have rarely been implemented, they have nonetheless contributed to uncertainty in global energy markets.



Other scholars focus on the broader geopolitical rivalry between Iran and the United States. Walt (2018) explains that the roots of this rivalry lie in historical developments such as the 1953 coup in Iran and the Islamic Revolution of 1979. These events reshaped the political order of the Middle East and produced long term mistrust between the two countries.

Recent scholarship also highlights the increasing involvement of other global powers in the region. Lo (2022) argues that China's growing demand for energy has encouraged it to expand diplomatic and economic relations with Middle Eastern states including Iran. Similarly, Russia has strengthened its strategic partnerships in the region as part of its broader effort to challenge Western influence in global politics.

Theoretical Framework

This study draws primarily on the realist tradition in international relations theory. Realist scholars such as Waltz (1979) argue that states operate in an anarchic international system where survival and security are the primary objectives. As a result, states constantly seek to increase their power and protect their strategic interests.

From this perspective, the rivalry between Iran and the United States can be understood as a competition for regional influence and strategic control. The Strait of Hormuz becomes a crucial geopolitical asset because it serves as a vital corridor for global energy transportation.

The concept of geopolitical chokepoints is also relevant to this study. Chokepoints are narrow passages through which major volumes of trade must pass. Because these routes are difficult to bypass, they become highly sensitive locations during periods of geopolitical tension.

Methodology

This research adopts a qualitative methodology based on the analysis of secondary data. The study relies on academic books, peer reviewed journal articles, policy reports, and international energy statistics. These sources provide insight into both the historical development of Iran–US relations and the economic importance of the Strait of Hormuz.

The research combines descriptive and analytical approaches. The descriptive component examines historical and geopolitical developments, while the analytical component evaluates the economic and political consequences of possible disruptions in oil transportation.



Global Economic Implications

Disruptions in the Strait of Hormuz could have major consequences for global energy markets. Because such a large proportion of the world's oil exports pass through this corridor, interruptions in shipping could rapidly increase international oil prices.

Developing countries are especially vulnerable to such shocks because they rely heavily on imported energy resources. Rising oil prices increase transportation costs, manufacturing expenses, and consumer prices. These pressures can contribute to inflation and economic instability.

India's Strategic Dilemma

India is one of the world's fastest growing major economies and a large importer of crude oil. Much of its energy supply originates from the Persian Gulf region. Consequently, stability in the Strait of Hormuz is directly linked to India's economic security.

At the same time India maintains complex diplomatic relations with several major powers involved in Middle Eastern politics. It has strong defense ties with the United States and Israel while also maintaining strategic relations with Russia and Iran. Balancing these relationships requires careful diplomacy and a commitment to strategic autonomy.

Conclusion

The Strait of Hormuz remains one of the most strategically important locations in the global energy system. Ongoing geopolitical tensions between Iran and the United States create uncertainty regarding the stability of this vital maritime corridor.

Although a complete blockade of the strait remains unlikely under normal circumstances, even limited disruptions could generate serious economic consequences. Ensuring the security of this route therefore requires sustained diplomatic engagement and international cooperation.

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