

**TITLE: THE GEOSTRATEGIC POSITION OF THE STRAIT OF HORMUZ IN
INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS.**

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Resume.

The Strait of Hormuz is a narrow maritime passage, 55 km wide, located in the Middle East. It holds and plays a decisive geostrategic role in international relations due to its geographical position, as well as its economic and security significance.

First, because of its strategic geographic location, the Strait of Hormuz connects the Persian Gulf to various oceans and seas, including the Indian Ocean and the Mediterranean Sea. It also serves as a maritime link between the Middle East and Asia.

Second, its importance is reflected in its regulation of a large portion of the global economy. In this regard, the Strait is a key transit route for more than 20 percent of the world's consumption of hydrocarbons, as well as their derivatives. It is therefore a crucial chokepoint that regulates global trade and the world economy.

Finally, the Strait is a site of persistent security challenges and rivalries among major powers. Iran frequently uses the Strait as a means of pressure and deterrence when it perceives its interests to be threatened or its existence at risk, as illustrated by the recent U.S.-Israeli military operation "Epic Fury" in March 2026.

Divergent interpretations of the Montego Bay Convention on the Law of the Sea also generate tensions among major powers regarding the legal status of the Strait of Hormuz.

This study, based on documentary and academic research, primarily aims to demonstrate the importance of the Strait of Hormuz in international relations. It thus serves as a decision-making aid for the international community regarding the crucial role of the Strait and the need to consider strengthening its legal framework, given its vital importance to global affairs.

Keywords : Strait of Hormuz, strategic chokepoint, transit passage, hydrocarbons, major maritime route, security challenges.

INTRODUCTION

Since the launch of military operations by the United States of America and Israel in March 2026 against the Islamic Republic of Iran, the world has been on the brink of total suffocation and is holding its breath. Iran has expanded the conflict to several countries in the Middle East and has even threatened to block the Strait of Hormuz, located southeast of Hormuz Island near the port city of Bandar Abbas.

The exponential rise in the price of Brent crude oil, which has exceeded 100 US dollars per barrel, has triggered widespread inflation across multiple sectors of activity, thereby destabilizing and endangering the global economy. For their part, the United States have threatened to reopen the Strait of Hormuz by force should Iran carry out its threats.

Faced with this situation, voices are being raised around the world urging the belligerents to spare the Strait of Hormuz from their disputes by keeping it open for transit and the free movement of goods and people, in order to avoid a global crisis.

This persistent concern of the international community regarding a simple junction and transit point leads us to ask the following question:

What is the place and role of the Strait of Hormuz in international relations?

This study is structured around one general objective and three specific objectives.

The general objective is to demonstrate the crucial role of the Strait of Hormuz in global geostrategic relations.

The specific objectives aim to show:

- the geographical importance of the Strait of Hormuz
- that the Strait of Hormuz is a key regulator of the global economy based on hydrocarbons
- that the Strait of Hormuz is a genuine lever of pressure and deterrence for Iran

In other words, this article seeks to highlight the geostrategic importance of the Strait of Hormuz in international relations from a geographical, economic, and security perspective.

METHODOLOGY AND RESEARCH METHOD

MATERIALS AND METHODOLOGY

This study is based on documentary analysis related to the Law of the Sea, particularly the Montego Bay Convention of 1982, as well as United Nations reports and those of its specialized agencies on the management of straits.

Academic research articles and publications by various authors in this field have also been consulted.

These different sources led us to examine literature on international relations, international law, geopolitics, international economics, international trade, and political science in order to better understand the geostrategic stakes of the Near and Middle East, as well as the economies of the countries concerned.

We also engaged with colleagues from the belligerent countries in order to foster constructive and fruitful exchanges on the different aspects of the conflict and the strategic position of the Strait of Hormuz. Online data and specialized digital magazines were also of great value.

After gathering all the information, we sorted, grouped, and organized the data according to the scientific method, which consists of structuring information into themes and sub-themes. Thus, our study is divided into three main axes:

- **Axis 1:** The Strait of Hormuz as an unavoidable geographical position
- **Axis 2:** The Strait of Hormuz as a major economic transit route
- **Axis 3:** The Strait of Hormuz as a tool of pressure and a source of global security challenges

Following this approach, we are able to provide a theoretical analysis of the place and strategic role of the Strait of Hormuz in international relations.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The Strait of Hormuz occupies a central place in international relations due to its geographical position, its role in regulating the global economy through the transit of hydrocarbons and related products, and the security challenges surrounding it.

• An exceptional geographical location

The Strait of Hormuz is located in the Middle East, in the Persian Gulf, near the small island of Hormuz, southeast of the port city of Bandar Abbas in the Islamic Republic of Iran. It lies between Iran and the United Arab Emirates to the north, and between Iran and Oman to the south.

Iran controls the northern shore through its strategic islands (Hormuz, Hengam, Qeshm, Larak), while Oman monitors the southern shore from the Musandam Peninsula.

Considered one of the most important straits in the world, it lies along an ancient trade route linking Asia, the Mediterranean, and Europe, and connects the Persian Gulf to the Gulf of Oman, as well as the Arabian Sea to the Indian Ocean.

It is one of the most heavily used maritime passages in the world, stretching approximately 212 kilometers in length and about 30 nautical miles (55 km) in width, of which only about 10 nautical miles are considered safe due to depth constraints.

Two additional navigation channels, each about 3.5 km wide, have been established to ensure maritime safety and facilitate transit.

The Strait is used in part for transporting hydrocarbons from six Middle Eastern countries: Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Iran, Iraq, Qatar, and Bahrain.

The legal framework governing the Strait of Hormuz is the Montego Bay Convention of 1982, signed by Iran and Oman but ratified only by Oman. This Convention stipulates that the territorial waters of states may extend up to 12 nautical miles (approximately 19 km). From this perspective, the waters surrounding the Strait fall under the sovereignty of the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Sultanate of Oman.

Thus, the geographical position of the Strait of Hormuz represents a major geostrategic asset in international relations.

• A prime transit and passage route

Hydrocarbons and various essential goods transit daily through the Strait of Hormuz. In terms of oil, more than 20 million barrels—representing about one third of seaborne oil transported by tankers passed through the Strait between 2024 and 2025, accounting for approximately 20% of global consumption.

Additionally, about one-fifth of the global trade in liquefied natural gas passes through this route.

Other non-hydrocarbon products also transit through the Strait, including phosphate, urea, and fertilizers. For instance, more than one million tons of fertilizers leave the Gulf each month through this passage. India alone obtains over 40% of its urea and phosphate fertilizer needs through this route.

Exporting and importing countries are located on both sides of the Strait at relatively equal distances.

Thus, producers in the Middle East and consumers in Asia, Africa, and Europe—particularly China, Japan, South Korea, and India—depend heavily on the uninterrupted flow of hydrocarbons and related products through the Strait. Any disruption or closure could lead to famine, runaway inflation, and multifaceted global crises.

In sum, the Strait of Hormuz is a key transit point for a significant portion of global trade and economic activity, playing a major regulatory role in the world economy and international relations.

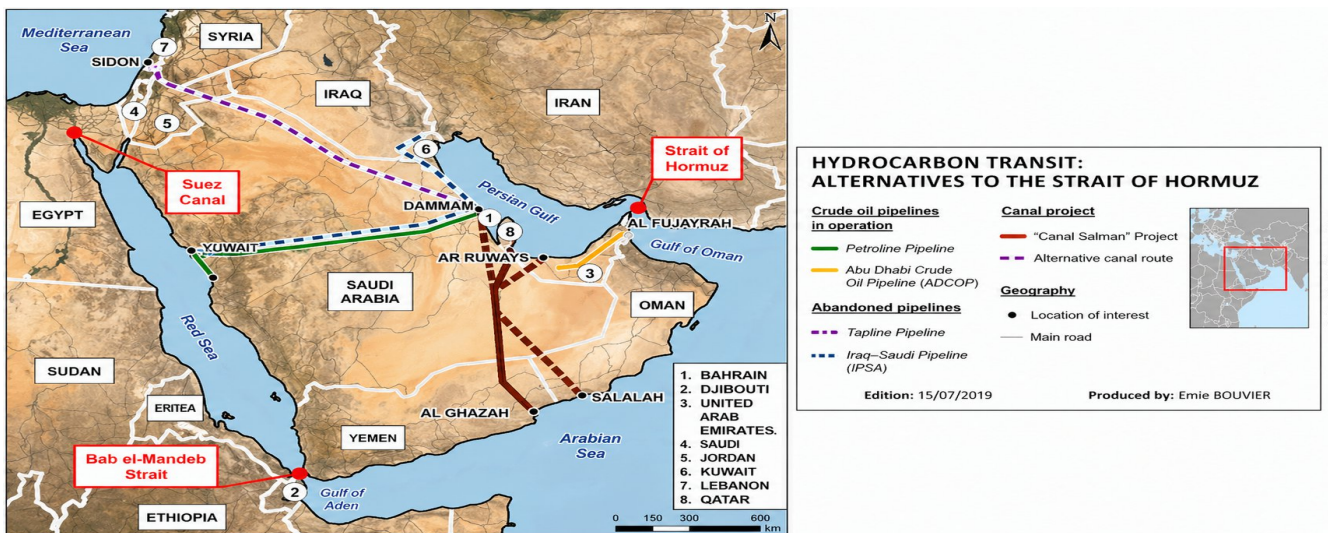
• Persistent strategic and security challenges

Security challenges revolve around its use by Iran as a tool of pressure and deterrence, as well as ongoing rivalries among global powers.

Regarding Iranian deterrence, it is important to note that the Strait of Hormuz is the only truly fast and deep-water passage for very large oil tankers, unlike other ports in the Middle East.

The Abu Dhabi Crude Oil Pipeline (ADCOP), approximately 360 to 400 km long, with a capacity of 1.5 to 1.8 million barrels per day, represents an alternative route, but it does not fully replace the strategic importance of the Strait

Fig1



- Emirati Habshan–Fujairah Pipeline (yellow/orange)
- Saudi East–West Pipeline to Yanbu (green)
- Strait of Hormuz (in red)

This is what makes the Strait indispensable, with no real viable alternative.

Aware of this strategic advantage, Iran uses it as a means of pressure and deterrence when confronted with crises involving the United States of America and its allies, as is the case with the Israeli–American military operation “**Epic Fury**” against Iran.

This situation leads to a decline—or at least a strong downward trend—in maritime traffic, accompanied by a sharp rise in hydrocarbon prices and risks of global energy shortages.

For their part, the United States of America and Israel have chosen to disregard international law, ignoring repeated warnings and appeals from the United Nations to respect state sovereignty, particularly that of Iran.

China and Russia, traditional allies of Iran, have maintained a low profile in their support and have refrained from directly confronting the United States.

The Gulf countries, allies of the United States, find themselves in a dilemma, increasingly realizing that their security is not fully guaranteed by the United States.

It can therefore be asserted that the Strait of Hormuz remains in a prolonged period of high tension, where its function as a “strategic chokepoint” is deliberately exploited to reshape and redefine global power dynamics, thereby maintaining markets in a state of uncertainty.

It should also be noted that any potential closure of the Strait of Hormuz would compel dependent countries to seek alternative routes in order to diversify their supply chains.

Debates are emerging regarding maritime security, and there are concerns that Iran might attempt to control traffic or impose transit fees.

Such an option would never be accepted by certain powers, including Israel and the United States, which would lead to persistent tensions in this region of the Middle East.

Furthermore, differing interpretations of the legal status of the Strait of Hormuz generate tensions and rivalries among major powers.

For some, the Strait is an international waterway that must remain open to unhindered maritime navigation. Others, including Iran, argue that the sovereignty of Iran and Oman prevails over this area under the provisions of international maritime law, particularly the Montego Bay Convention.

Article 44 of this Convention states that: “States bordering straits shall not hamper transit passage (...). The exercise of the right of transit passage shall not be suspended.”

However, since Iran has not ratified the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, it cannot be legally bound by its provisions. Consequently, from a strictly legal standpoint, no international sanctions could be applied in the event of a blockade.

GENERAL CONCLUSION

At the end of this study, it clearly emerges that the Strait of Hormuz occupies a central place in international relations, given its fundamental role.

Its advantageous geographical position is evident in the fact that it serves as a junction point between several countries, oceans, and seas, which grants it considerable strategic value.

As the only reliable and secure transit route for more than 20% of the global economy, the Strait of Hormuz is crucial for the regulation of global trade and economic stability.

The persistent rivalries among major powers—particularly Iran’s use of the Strait as a tool of pressure and deterrence—clearly demonstrate its importance.

Ultimately, the Strait of Hormuz stands as a true strategic chokepoint, an unavoidable junction around which the global economy and security dynamics are organized—and potentially disrupted.

It is therefore essential to avoid linking geopolitical conflicts to the Strait of Hormuz.

While the Strait holds undeniable geostrategic importance, it could also become a source of major disruptions if blocked by Iran. For this reason, reflections should be undertaken to grant it a new legal status. This would involve revising the Montego Bay Convention on the Law of the Sea, particularly concerning transit passage through international straits.

Although this study does not claim to be a comprehensive solution to all the challenges of international relations, it is intended to serve as a solid foundation and a starting point for students, researchers, and others interested in the geostrategic issues surrounding the Strait of Hormuz in the Middle East.

For decision-makers, development partners, and funding institutions, this document is made available as a tool to support informed decision-making.

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