



Social Sciences Spectrum

A Double-Blind, Peer-Reviewed, HEC recognized [Y-category](#) Research Journal

E-ISSN: [3006-0427](#) P-ISSN: [3006-0419](#)

Volume 04, Issue 01, 2025

Web link: <https://sss.org.pk/index.php/sss>



Check for updates

Shifting Interests of Europe Towards Strait of Hormuz After Ukraine Russia War: Analysis of EU Blue Economy

Huzaifa Shahzad

BS International Relations, Government College University Faisalabad, Punjab, Pakistan

Sadia Nawab

Ph D Scholar, Department of International Relations, Government College University, Faisalabad, Punjab, Pakistan

Dr. Adnan Nawaz

Assistant Professor (OPS), Department of International Relations, Government College University Faisalabad, Punjab, Pakistan

Dr. Bilal Bin Liaqat

Assistant Professor (OPS), Department of International Relations, Government College University Faisalabad, Punjab, Pakistan

Correspondence: bilalbinliaqat@gcuf.edu.pk

Article Information [YY-MM-DD]

Received 2025-01-13

Accepted 2025-03-17

Citation (APA):

Shahzad, H., Nawab, S., Nawaz, A & Liaqat, B, B. (2025). Shifting interests of Europe towards Strait of Hormuz after Ukraine Russia war: Analysis of EU blue economy. *Social Sciences Spectrum*, 4(1), 588-596. <https://doi.org/10.71085/sss.04.01.242>

Abstract

The main purpose of this study is to examine geographic, strategic, economic and geopolitical importance of SH, and dependence of Iran's Foreign policy and international relation. The only way for Middle Eastern countries for the transport of their oil and gas to Europe, Asia, Africa and major powers through sea is Strait of Hormuz, so the strategic importance of strait of Hormuz is not only the concern of middle east but also for the world and if Iran blocks the Hormuz strait in future that it will disturb world's blue economy. Due to the Ukraine-Russia war the Europe is facing energy crises and we know that the oil is one of the leading sources of energy so Europe is looking forward to Arab region to meet their energy crises. The SH got a lot of attention when Iran involves into a diplomatic crisis with the major powers such as we also seen issue like Iran-US or Iran with other major oil and gas exporters of the middle east in recent times.

Keywords: The strait of Hormuz, Major Powers, Persian Gulf, Blue Economy, Middle East, Europe, Asia, Africa.



Content from this work may be used under the terms of the [Creative Commons Attribution-Share-Alike 4.0 International License](#) that allows others to share the work with an acknowledgment of the work's authorship and initial publication in this journal.

Introduction

Energy trade playing a vital role in international relations, It's a global issue needed the attention of states and civil societies as well. The current century is characterized by the dependency of globe on oil and other natural resources which shape the geopolitics of the century. In the era of globalization, the transportation of oil and natural gas plays strategically importance for the shipping of resources. And for this shipping the world Watergates plays crucial role and seen very effective for the Great Powers. These Watergates are the narrow openings in the sea through which trade carried for circulation of resources.

As we all known that the major powers in the world are dependent on energy and the main source for energy for these superpowers like China, India, Turkey, France as well as US is strait of Hormuz plays a crucial role in economy of US and its allies. As we know the maritime trade is cheap as compare to air, road or rail and more effective way of transportation. Almost 20% of the world oil shipped through Strait of Hormuz daily. An average of 14 ships of crude oil passes through the Strait of Hormuz with the destination of Japan, India, China and Korea per day. (Briney, 22 jan 2020). European countries are highly dependent on the gas supply from Russia and during the Ukrainian Russian war this supply cuts off as most of the pipelines as these pipelines cross from Ukraine and then reaches to Europe. Gazprom was the leading gas supply company of Russia to EU for many years. Due to the cut off of pipelines the European commission has concerns and looking forward towards the Caspian Sea basin and Persian Gulf basin. Due to these concerns EU is looking for better diplomatic relations with Middle Eastern countries and better cooperation in energy department. (Sarkhanov & Muradzada, 2023)

The Strait of Hormuz has a great importance due to its geographical location. There are a lot of narrow choke points in Hormuz strait which are used for transportation. The narrowest choke point in SH is 29 nautical miles wide, and the widest choke point is 60 miles. The international economy of most of the Middle Eastern countries is dependent on Strait of Hormuz and currently there is no other way for the transportation of this regions product through sea. Almost 1 million barrels oil passes through SH on daily basis and 6 billion barrels oil passes annually. (Mheidat, 2021)

The United States and Iran relations disrupted by the Islamic revolution in Iran more than four decades ago started grow into a recovery process by Iranian nuclear deal with Europe and specially United states. But unfortunately this agreement couldn't exist for long and terminated with the announcement of President Trump administration, who individually withdraws from this deal in May 2018. In addition, he also claimed to recall all of Iranian sanctions which were terminated in 2015 and also asked the countries like China, India, and Turkey to withdraw from this agreement and to cancel their trade with Iran. Trump administration also threatens them to apply same sanctions on them if they will cancel their trade deals with Iran. Further on US also blocks the oil trade of Iran which causes more devastation in the relation of US and Iran. Iran responded to this sanctions by announcing to continue its nuclear agreement with other countries and in response of blocking the oil trade of Iran, Iran threaten to block Hormuz strait which is located in the south of Iran and known as the main Watergate for the transport of Arabian oil and gas towards Europe, Asia, Africa and the major powers. (Sayin & Kilic, 2020)

The maritime security of Persian Gulf is mainly covered by US navy in past and currently as well but after the involvement of Obama administration called for a "pivot to Asia" which was then followed by other presidents Donald Trump and Joe Biden. US administration continuously involved in Asia Pacific region because of revelry with China. And it seems that this revelry would decrease the footprints of US navy from Middle East and Europe, and this vacuum could be filled

by China or India. The Middle East and the Gulf could be a vital area for European economies as many of the chemical and metals ores are imported by Persian Gulf.

Literature Review

The article *“Fear of Strait of Hormuz Oil Gateway in Iran Israel Face-off”* by Eva Levesque analyzes the heat of fear around Strait of Hormuz due to the recent conflict between Iran and Israel. This narrow opening is a gateway for world's 36% of the oil the global oil trade, and any disruption in it can cause a major loss for the oil market. If this conflict continues, Iran could block or harass the oil shipments, it impacts countries like Qatar, Kuwait, Iraq, UAE, and Saudi Arabia who rely on this route. This may raise the oil prices above \$100 per barrel, particularly affecting developed nations dependent on energy imports. The region is monitored by western powers but prolong conflict in this region could strain alliances and sever environmental risks. (Levesque, 8 oct 2024)

The authors of article *“Geopolitical conflict threatens yet another shipping choke point”* highlights the concerns about threaten another shipping choke point known as Strait of Hormuz between Iran and Western powers. This crucial water channel holds approximately 20% of the world total oil exports and shared LNG, essential for global stability. Any threat or conflict can raise the oil prices and can disturb the oil chain. The article also discusses its impacts on other straits and regions as Red sea, Panama Canal, Bab-el-Mandeb and Suez Canal, which could be harmful for global trade (Fechner et. al., 2024).

The article *“Securing European Interests from the Mediterranean to the Persian Gulf: Rethinking EU Strategic Autonomy at Sea”* emphasizes how the EU must fight piracy, terrorism, and competition from nations like China and Russia, among other major maritime security threats. European naval capabilities have drastically decreased in spite of these threats; for example, the French Navy's fleet shrank from 147 ships in 1985 to 80 by 2022. In response, the EU is working to strengthen its maritime presence through programs like Operation Asides and higher defense spending, which reached \$345 billion in 2022. However, the need for the EU to reevaluate its strategy and attain more strategic autonomy at sea is highlighted by global rearmament trends and gaps in naval modernization. (Samaan J.-L. , 2024)

The paper *Europe's energy security amid Russo-Ukraine war: Navigating the future by employing modified scenario building technique* looks at how the European Union tackle the energy crises due to war which cuts 25% of the crude oil and 36% of the natural gas supply. Due to the conflict EU faces energy The EU implemented initiatives like REPowerEU to address this, with the goal of reducing reliance on Russian energy by two-thirds by 2030. Using a modified scenario-building technique, the EU is exploring pathways to diversify energy imports, boost renewable energy adoption, and improve energy efficiency to secure a sustainable energy future. (Rifat & Naz, 2024)

The study of article *“Evolutionary Game Model of Strategic Maritimes Transport Passages: A Case of Strait of Hormuz”* written by Daozheng Huang, Shun Wang, Sean Loughney, and Jinn Wang explains the game model to analyze the strategic importance of Strait of Hormuz and the major stakeholders involved in blue trade through Strait of Hormuz. He more says that the Middle Eastern countries are majorly dependent on SH for their oil supply. He analyzes that how the stakeholders like the states and other commercial entities respond to the threats in Persian Gulf. The article examines both the cooperative and non-cooperative behavior of the parties and how the conflicts change the decisions. He further explains for the strong and reliable policy alignment among the major players such as cost of the oil and gas, risk tolerance and the political relationships between the states (Huang et. al., 2022).

Research Questions:

- How Ukraine-Russia war reshapes the European Union perspective and focus on Strait of Hormuz within the Framework of Blue economy?
- How Iranian administration can affect the trade between Persian Gulf and Europe?

Research Methodology

The researcher used the qualitative method and secondary data, as this method evaluates all the articles relevant to the oil and gas trade through the Strait of Hormuz. The researcher also studies the impact of Ukraine-Russia war on Europe, as Europe faces the energy crises. The researcher is also looking forward for the interviews from the experts of the regions energy politics. The research also analyzes the economic impact of the strait on the international markets and the security policies of the great powers for the proper transportation through this strait.

Threats and Challenges to Europe

After the conflict between Russia and Ukraine after 2014 and recently in February 2022, Europe is continually having a threat from eastern side of it's continent-i.e. the conventional threats with Russia. Currently Europe is also facing energy crises and having a threat of absence of a single vision shifting the interest of Europe from Mediterranean towards Persian Gulf (Gaub, 2012). The nature and the scope of the southern region of Europe faces a variety of security challenges and because of these challenges they could not formed a unified or clear strategic circumstances.

Additionally, different solutions are needed for each danger because they are so diverse. Determining what European military forces, particularly warships, require to successfully handle these issues is made more difficult by this diversity. These security challenges of southern side of Europe can be explain in two ways first the challenge of illegal flows like human trafficking, arms proliferation or terrorism etc. and second Continued rivalry between nations, including Russia and the US, Israel and Iran, Algeria and Morocco, and Turkey with Greece and Cyprus. Instead of going to war, these disputes are currently restricted to political rivalry and tensions. But there's a chance that these disagreements will worsen in the future and might even result in naval conflicts. The challenge of preserving regional peace and security is increased by this circumstance.

The challenge of illegal flows causes to weak the resources of the states in Europe and Middle East as well. The states forces don't have the ability and capacity to stop this illegal flows because of which the non-state actors in the region can move freely. Another result of state failure in the region is slowly increase illegal migration from Europe. According to United Nations (UN) between January and June 2023, an estimate of 89,100 refugee and migrants entered in Europe. With is 79% increased as compared to 2022. (United Nation Higher Commissioner for Refugees, 2023). Majority of these migrates passes through Italy and entered into Europe which rises the questions on the security capabilities of Italy and European Union as well. These migrations are not only limited from southern side but in July 2023 almost six million migrants cross the border and entered into Europe from Ukraine and it is the need of time for Europe to limit this migration.

Further the issue of terrorism remains the main issue of Middle East security. In Sahel and Libya, the international terrorist organizations like Al Qaeda and Islamic state are actively operating in the region and continuously attacking against the government. In past the terrorist networks don't attack the ports of Mediterranean Sea but they use it as a gateway on the other side the Red sea area was always surrounded with conflicts. The Houthi insurgency repeated attacks on the trade ships of Saudi Arabia. (Samaan J.-L. C., 2020).

Another significant challenge to security is the arms proliferation and its illegal trade. In through Red Sea Iran provides support to Hamas and Palestinian Islamic jihad in East Mediterranean side. (Hinz, 2021). Due to which Israel blockade the Gaza strip since 2007. The weapons of mass destruction chemical and biological etc. are also transit through this route. After the world war and cold war, the main concern of the world is the proliferation of weapons in the region due to countries like Iran, Iraq and Libya. (Lesser & Tellis, 1996).

The regional competition is another major phenomenon on which the navy of European should pay attention. These regional competition is working like a fuel on fire as it increases the revelry in the region. Because of the revelries there are a lot of sea conflicts between the states which affect the blue economy. While these local and regional revelries put a negative impact on European interest, like the conflict of Israel and Iran. Since 2018 Israel revise its foreign policy towards Iran and diplomats of Israel put forward the policy of aggression open confrontation (Gordon et. al., 2023)

The relation between the Iran and Gulf fluctuates from time to time. For the past few years the tensions between Arab leaders and Iranian government are high. In 2016, the protesters in Iran surrounded the Saudi embassy in Tehran as a result most of the Gulf States closed their embassies in Tehran. Further in Yemen, the Islamic Revolution Group Corps (IRGC) uses missiles and drones on Saudi and Emirati cities and the support provided to IRGC is by Iran. In 2019 Iran was also considered as responsible of attacking the civilian ships of Oman and UAE. After which in the same year Iranian and UAE navies have a meeting to reduce the conflicts in the region. (Vahdat & Batrawy, 2019).

To address these issues is the need of time for Europe, as Europe is already facing energy crises and the only alternative of Russia for Europe is Middle East.

Naval Independence through Collaborative Partnership

In current arena the strong naval force can regulates the world economy because more than 90% of the trade carried out through Sea. And European autonomy in maritime required a strong and collaborative partnership between European countries. The policy introduces by EU in 2022 “coordinated maritime presence” is very necessary for EU countries for the partnership of countries in sea. It’s an approach through which countries share observations, information and analysis every situation together. The main goal is to increase cooperation and get more resources and interest across EU member states. (European Union External Action service, 2021)

A recent program by EU to increase the security in maritime which start from the northern Red sea to the center of Indian Ocean and from Strait of Hormuz to the southern part of Indian Ocean. This policy ensures the stability and safety in maritime for larger and stronger EU policy. The new initiative is an extension of the EUs 2015 launched CRIMARIO (Critical Maritime Routes in Indian Ocean) program. The security of shipping lanes of Indian Ocean is the main focus of CRIMARIO and it is currently having a close partnership with Middle East countries including Saudi Arabia and Jordan. Naval trainings and communication platforms among other forces are also a part of CRIMARIO program. In 2020, EU stretches its scope to Indio-Pacific and € 17.5 million are earmarked for the period of 2020-2025. (Crimario, 2024). Further the EU could get benefit if Gulf States particularly took part in maritime security.

In May 2022, the report by the European External Action Services (EEAS) addressed to the European Parliament and Council. This report express that EU wants more strengthening relations with Gulf and shows that Brussels wants to take more ambitious and active role in the region. (European Comission, 2022). If the focus of this new partnership on regional consultation and

economic relation, then it could be very effective for the EU and Gulf as well. Sharing of maritime information with both EU and Gulf is also discussed in the 2022 joint communication.

The countries like Saudi Arabia, Oman and UAE have the interest to modernize their naval force and took part in different trainings. On a bilateral level these training is carried out between the EU countries and Gulf as the French Marine National contributes to the training of Emirati forces. Further the Spanish and French companies provides warships to Saudi Arabia and Oman. And the European operations of Strait of Hormuz are monitored in Abu Dhabi. As a result, a greater diplomatic maritime agenda could be set between the Gulf and EU. The EU is thinking about establishing a long-term partnership with Gulf nations on marine security. Establishing an EU-Gulf maritime conference where navy commanders from both sides can gather and talk about issues could be one way to do this. Furthermore, the EU may set up a marine security-focused training facility in one of the Gulf nations, including Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, or Oman. The EU's prior success in establishing a comparable security center in Kuwait served as the impetus for this concept. So the cooperation between both regions could be beneficial for the security.

The security cooperation with Israel should also be consider as the Abraham accords in 2020, normalize the Israeli relations with Gulf Sates mainly with Bahrain and UAE. While there are some opportunities for marine cooperation between the EU and Israel, there are also major political obstacles. Unresolved issues, especially the Cyprus crisis, which continues to be a major source of friction, make it unlikely that Turkey's tense relationship with the EU would much improve. Closer cooperation is further hampered by Turkey's assertive maritime policies, such as its "Blue Homeland" concept, which asserts supremacy in the Eastern Mediterranean. The EU must exercise caution when it comes to naval cooperation with Israel. Although cooperation is feasible, Brussels must take care to avoid giving the impression that it supports Israel's contentious policies, particularly those pertaining to its operations in Gaza and the West Bank. (Frantzman, 2021).

Strategy with Real impacts

To compensate for its weak military, the EU would rather form alliances. Although it makes sense, sharing responsibility with others has drawbacks and expenses. The EU adopts the idea of "coordinated maritime presences," which emphasizes effective collaboration and the establishment of mechanisms to oversee these alliances. This strategy is significant from a strategic standpoint since it depends on adaptable collaboration rather than the establishment of long-term naval bases or the deployment of troops and ships in the area. This enables the EU to adjust to various circumstances without making significant commitments.

This line means that the EU's approach of relying on partnerships and flexible cooperation, rather than deploying large forces or maintaining permanent military bases, is similar to the U.S. strategy known as "offshore balancing." This U.S. strategy, discussed in the 1990s, focuses on influencing global security and power dynamics by working with regional allies rather than directly intervening with a large military presence. (Ikenberry, 2001). Offshore balance proponents, such as those who support the EU's coordinated marine presence, think that Western nations ought to lessen their sustained military engagement in the Middle East and other areas. They support a strategy of "restraint," which focusses on avoiding becoming heavily involved in local conflicts. Rather than acting directly, this strategy depends on collaborating with regional partners. In essence, it seeks to keep the region stable and exert influence from a distance, utilizing few resources and remaining "offshore."

Offshore balancing may be effective in the United States, but it is less appropriate for Europe for two key reasons. First, geography is a major factor. Because of its distance from the Middle East, the United States can afford to remain neutral and out of regional wars. However, Europe is closer, sharing boundaries with areas such as the Eastern Mediterranean. Europe finds it more difficult to avoid getting involved in regional conflicts, like those with Turkey, because of its close vicinity. Therefore, in these circumstances, the offshore balancing plan is less feasible for Europe.

Determining where to concentrate its naval resources is Europe's second challenge. In the future, Europe's navy will be required to defend the Baltic Sea and North Atlantic from possible Russian threats. Europe also aspires to expand its influence and presence in the Indo-Pacific area. The Mediterranean-Middle East region, which is situated between these two priorities, is hampered by this. It may consequently lose significance in the eyes of European governments and be given less funding than other sectors.

Conclusion

Europe's strategic autonomy, or its capacity to make its own security and defense decisions, will remain a significant topic in the future, but this is primarily due to the renewed military competition with Russia. To date, Europe has prioritized eastern threats, such as Russia, and has pushed the challenges of its southern regions, such as the Mediterranean and the Gulf, to the sidelines, attempting to contain rather than directly confront these southern threats.

However, Europe can no longer afford to overlook the Mediterranean and Gulf regions as the situation there grows more precarious. Their stability will be put to the test by issues like piracy, illegal migration, the proliferation of weaponry, and international conflicts. Europe is not yet ready to operate as a powerful naval force in these regions, notwithstanding these obstacles. Many European nations lack the resources to completely replace the American presence, even if the United States decides to refocus its attention to the Indo-Pacific. They are unable to manage fierce military wars or maintain control over the vast oceans, but they are able to safeguard their own shores.

Europe will require time and resources to strengthen its naval capabilities in order to close this gap. Building greater ties in the Gulf and Mediterranean, whether through joint projects like "coordinated maritime presences" or closer collaboration with regional navies, is one way to contribute. But eventually, in order to meet its strategic objectives, Europe will have to make investments in modern naval hardware. The success of this approach depends on the European nations cooperating as a single body. In short the cooperation will be beneficial for both regions.

References

- Briney, A. (22 jan 2020). The Strait of Hormuz is a Chokepoint Between Persian Gulf and The Arabian sea. *Thoughtco.*, 8.
- Crimario*. (2024, Feb). Retrieved from “CRIMARIO II: Critical Maritime Routes Indo-Pacific Project”. FactS Sheet: https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/crimario-ii-critical-maritime-routes-indo-pacific-project_en
- European Comission*. (2022, May). Retrieved from Joint communication to the European Parliment and the Council: https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/joint-communication-%E2%80%9Cstrategic-partnership-gulf%E2%80%9D_en#top
- European Union External Action service*. (2021, October). Retrieved from The EU launches its Coordinated Maritime Presences concept in the Gulf of Guinea: https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/eu-launches-its-coordinated-maritime-presences-concept-gulf-guinea_und_en. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00908320.2022.2071783>
- Fechner, I., Luman, R., & Patterson, w. (18 Aprail 2024). Geopolitical conflict threatens yet another shipping choke point. *ING Think*.
- Frantzman, S. J. (2021, september). *US Central Command absorbs Israel into its area of responsibility*. Retrieved from Defence News: <https://www.defensenews.com/global/mideast-africa/2021/09/07/us-central-command-absorbs-israel-into-its-area-of-responsibility/>. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429032981>
- Gaub, F. (2012). Against All Odds: Relations between NATO and the Mena Region. *USAWC Press*, 52. <https://doi.org/10.23943/princeton/9780691169217.001.0001>
- Gordon, M. R., Seligman, L., & Keller-Lynn, C. (2023). Israel Expands Operations Against Iranian Nuclear, Military Assets. *The Wall Street Journal*.
- Hinz, F. (2021, May). *Iran Transfers Rockets to Palestinian Groups*. Retrieved from Wilson Center: <https://www.wilsoncenter.org/article/irans-rockets-palestinian-groups>
- Huang, D., Wang, S., Loughney, S., & Wang, J. (2022). Evolutionary Game Model of Strategic Maritime Transport Passages: A Case of the Strait of Hormuz. *Journal of Marine Science and Engineering*, 18. <https://doi.org/10.3390/jmse10030346>
- Ikenberry, G. J. (2001). *After Victory: Institutions, Strategic Restraint, and the Rebuilding of Order after Major Wars*. Princeton University Press. <https://doi.org/10.23943/princeton/9780691169217.001.0001>
- Lesser, L. O., & Tellis, A. J. (1996). Strategic Exposure: Proliferation around the Mediterranean. *RAND Coporation*, 128.
- Levesque, E. (8 oct 2024). Fears for Strait of Hormuz oil gateway in Iran-Israel face-off. *Arabian Gulf Business Insight*.
- Mheidat, S. A. (2021). The Effects of the Strait of Hormuz on the policies of the great powers towards the gulf region. *Journal of the Association of Arab Universities for Research in Higher Education*, 14.
- Rifat, R. U., & Naz, D. U. (2024). Europe’s energy security amid Russo-Ukraine war: Navigating the future by employing modified scenario building technique”. *Pakistan Journal of International Affairs*, 22. <https://doi.org/10.52337/pjia.v7i3.1110>

- Samaan, J.-L. (2024). Securing european interests from the mediterranean the the Persian Gulf: Rethinking Eu strategic autonomy at sea. *Euromesco*, 28.
- Samaan, J.-L. C. (2020, April). Missiles, Drones, and the Houthis in Yemen. *Adapting to adaptive adversaries*, 14. Retrieved from <https://agsiw.org/coronavirus-naval-forces-and-maritime-security-in-the-strait-of-hormuz/>
- Sarkhanov, T., & Muradzada, I. (2023). The Place of Gulf Basin Energy Resources in EU Energy Security. *Research Gate*, 8. <https://doi.org/10.32479/ijeep.14327>
- Sayin, Y., & Kilic, F. (2020). The Strait of hormuz and iran's international relations. *Eurasian Research Journal*, 31.
- United Nation Higher Commissioner for Refugees. (2023, june). Retrieved from European situation:Data and Trends: <https://data.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/103073>
- Vahdat, A., & Batrawy, A. (2019, july). *UAE and Iran hold rare talks in Tehran on maritime security*. Retrieved from AP News: <https://apnews.com/article/49c6da1c33fd45bbaf1b14836ee5e2ec>.