

The Strait of Hormuz in the Iran–Israel War: A Comparative Analysis of the Israeli and United States Involvement and Implications for Global Security

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ABSTRACT

The Strait of Hormuz remains one of the most strategically significant maritime chokepoints in the contemporary international system. Situated between Iran and Oman, the strait serves as the principal gateway for a substantial proportion of global oil and liquefied natural gas exports. The escalation of hostilities between Iran and Israel has transformed the Strait of Hormuz into a focal point of geopolitical competition, maritime security concerns, and global economic vulnerability. With the use of Secondary sources of data, the study examines the strategic significance of the Strait of Hormuz within the context of the Iran–Israel conflict through a comparative analysis of Israeli and United States involvement. Employing a qualitative research methodology and relying on secondary sources, the study investigates the strategic objectives, military postures, diplomatic calculations, and geopolitical implications of Israeli and American activities in the region. The study is anchored on Neorealist theory and Geopolitical theory, which emphasizes power competition, security dilemmas, balance-of-power politics, and maritime routes and strategic waterways as critical determinants of national/global influence. Findings reveal that while Israel's involvement is primarily motivated by security concerns regarding Iran's regional influence and nuclear ambitions, the United States' involvement extends beyond regional security to include the preservation of global energy security, freedom of navigation, and maintenance of its hegemonic position in the Middle East. The study concludes that the Strait of Hormuz has evolved into a strategic arena where regional conflicts intersect with global power politics.

Keywords: Strait of Hormuz, Iran, Israel, United States, maritime security, geopolitics, energy security.

INTRODUCTION

The contemporary Middle East remains one of the most volatile geopolitical regions in the world. Among the numerous strategic locations within the region, the Strait of Hormuz occupies a unique position because of its importance to global energy transportation and maritime commerce. The strait links the Persian Gulf with the Gulf of Oman and the Arabian Sea and serves as the primary route through which oil exports from Gulf States reach international markets. Approximately one-fifth of the world's petroleum trade passes through the Strait of Hormuz, making it one of the most critical energy chokepoints globally (Encyclopedia Britannica, 2026)

The increasing hostility between Iran and Israel has elevated the strategic importance of the strait. Although Israel does not border the Strait of Hormuz, its security calculations are directly affected by Iranian influence in the Persian Gulf. Israel perceives Iran's military expansion, ballistic missile capabilities, and nuclear ambitions as existential threats. Consequently, Israeli policymakers have supported measures aimed at limiting Iranian strategic leverage.

The United States has historically maintained a significant military presence in the Persian Gulf. Since the late twentieth century, Washington has regarded freedom of navigation through the Strait of Hormuz as a vital national interest. The presence of the U.S. Fifth Fleet in Bahrain reflects America's commitment to protecting maritime commerce and maintaining regional stability (Encyclopedia Britannica, 2026).

Recent military confrontations involving Iran, Israel, and the United States have reinforced the strategic centrality of the Strait of Hormuz. Any disruption to shipping activities in the strait could generate severe consequences for global energy markets and international economic stability (International Energy Agency, 2026).

Statement of the Problem

The intensification of the Iran–Israel conflict has transformed the Strait of Hormuz into a potential flashpoint for regional and global confrontation. While considerable scholarly attention has been devoted to Iran's capacity to threaten maritime traffic, less emphasis has been placed on comparing the strategic roles played by Israel and the United States in shaping developments surrounding the strait.

Existing studies often examine Israeli security concerns and American maritime operations separately. Consequently, there remains a gap in understanding how both actors pursue distinct yet interconnected objectives within the broader context of the Iran–Israel conflict. This gap limits scholarly comprehension of the geopolitical dynamics influencing security and stability in the Strait of Hormuz.

The study therefore seeks to analyze and compare Israeli and United States involvement in the Strait of Hormuz and assess the implications for regional security and global energy governance.

Objectives of the Study

The study seeks to:

1. Examine the strategic importance of the Strait of Hormuz in the Iran–Israel conflict.
2. Analyze Israeli involvement in the Strait of Hormuz crisis.
3. Assess the role of the United States in safeguarding maritime security in the Strait of Hormuz.
4. Compare the strategic objectives of Israel and the United States in relation to the Strait of Hormuz.
5. Evaluate the implications of their involvement for regional and global security.

Research Questions

1. Why is the Strait of Hormuz strategically important in the Iran–Israel conflict?
2. What role does Israel play in the evolving dynamics of the Strait of Hormuz?
3. How has the United States responded to security challenges in the strait?
4. What similarities and differences exist between Israeli and American strategic objectives?
5. What are the broader implications of these interventions for global peace and security?

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS

Neorealism and Geopolitical Theory

The study adopts two theories: the theory of Neorealism developed by Kenneth Waltz and Geopolitical Theory propounded by Mahan (1890) and Mackinder, (1904).

Neorealism argues that the international system is anarchic and characterized by the absence of a central authority capable of enforcing rules among sovereign states. Under such conditions, states prioritize survival, security, and power accumulation (Waltz, 1979).

According to Neorealists:

- i. States act rationally to maximize security.
- ii Military power remains a primary instrument of state survival.
- iii Strategic competition is inevitable in an anarchic international system.
- iv Alliances are formed to balance against perceived threats.

The Strait of Hormuz provides an ideal case for Neorealist analysis. Iran seeks to leverage its geographical position to deter adversaries and increase strategic influence. Israel attempts to counter Iranian power projection and perceived nuclear threats. The United States aims to preserve regional balance and maintain freedom of navigation while safeguarding its strategic interests.

Neorealism explains why each actor views control or influence over the Strait of Hormuz as essential to national security.

Geopolitical Theory

The geopolitical perspective is employed to examine how geographical factors influence state behavior and strategic decisions. The theory argues that control of strategic locations, maritime routes, and resources shapes international power relations. In the context of the Strait of Hormuz, the theory explains why Iran, Israel, and the United States perceive the waterway as a critical strategic asset affecting regional and global security. The Strait functions as a strategic chokepoint whose disruption can significantly affect global energy markets and maritime trade (www.ijhess.com).

Classical geopolitical theorists on the other hand, emphasize the significance of geographical location in shaping state power. Mahan (1890) argued that maritime routes and strategic waterways are critical determinants of national influence. Iran's location along the Strait of Hormuz supports this argument by providing Tehran with strategic leverage disproportionate to its economic capabilities.

Literature Gap

Despite the extensive body of literature on the strategic importance of the Strait of Hormuz, significant gaps remain in the existing scholarship. Most studies focus primarily on the economic consequences of disruptions in the strait, particularly regarding global oil markets and maritime trade (Lott & Kawagishi, 2022). Other scholars have concentrated on Iran's military capabilities and its ability to threaten freedom of navigation within the Persian Gulf (Divsallar, 2022).

Similarly, a substantial number of studies analyze United States naval operations and security policies in the Gulf region, emphasizing Washington's role as a guarantor of maritime security and regional stability (Cordesman, 2021). Research on Israel, however, has largely concentrated on Iran's nuclear program, regional proxy networks, and missile threats rather than Israel's strategic interests in the Strait of Hormuz itself (Inbar, 2021).

A critical review of the literature reveals that very few studies undertake a comparative analysis of Israeli and United States involvement in the Strait of Hormuz within the context of the Iran–Israel conflict. Existing research tends to examine each actor separately, thereby neglecting the interaction between their strategic objectives, security calculations, and geopolitical interests.

Furthermore, recent developments arising from the direct military confrontations between Iran and Israel have altered the strategic environment of the Middle East. Yet, scholarly literature has not sufficiently addressed how these developments influence the security dynamics of the Strait of Hormuz and the evolving roles of Israel and the United States.

This study fills this gap by comparatively examining Israeli and United States involvement in the Strait of Hormuz during the Iran–Israel conflict. It contributes to existing knowledge by highlighting areas of convergence and divergence in the strategic objectives of both actors and assessing the implications for regional and global security.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study adopts a qualitative research design based on a comparative case study approach to examine the strategic importance of the Strait of Hormuz in the Iran–Israel conflict and the comparative involvement of Israel and the United States. The qualitative design is appropriate because it enables an in-depth analysis of geopolitical behavior, military strategies, security calculations, and foreign policy decisions surrounding the Strait of Hormuz. The study relies on the assumptions of Geopolitical Theory and Neorealist Theory to explain the actions of state actors within the regional security environment. The Strait of Hormuz is widely regarded as one of the world's most critical maritime chokepoints, through which a substantial portion of global oil and gas supplies transit, making it a focal point of geopolitical competition and strategic rivalry.

Sources of Data

The study relies exclusively on secondary sources of data. Primary Secondary Sources Include Peer-reviewed journal articles on: Strait of Hormuz security, Iran–Israel conflict, United States Middle East policy, Maritime geopolitics, Energy security. Books and scholarly publications on: Geopolitical theory, Neorealism, International security studies. Reports from international organizations such as: United Nations International Energy Agency, UNCTAD, International Maritime Organization. Government publications and policy documents from: United States, Iran, Israel. Think-tank reports from institutions such as: Brookings Institution, RAND Corporation, Center for Strategic and International Studies. Current news reports and security analyses concerning developments in the Strait of Hormuz and regional military activities. Recent analyses indicate that disruptions in the Strait continue to affect global shipping, energy supplies, and international security calculations.

Method of Data Collection

The study employs the documentary method of data collection. Relevant documents, academic publications, official reports, government statements, policy papers, and security assessments are systematically reviewed and analyzed. The documentary method is suitable because it allows the researcher to gather extensive information regarding:

- Iranian strategic calculations in the Strait of Hormuz
- Israeli security concerns and military posture
- United States military and diplomatic involvement
- Implications for global energy security
- Effects on international peace and security

Method of Data Analysis

The study adopts Qualitative Content Analysis (QCA) and Comparative Analysis.

Qualitative Content Analysis

Content analysis is used to identify recurring themes, patterns, and strategic narratives from the collected documents. The analysis focuses on: Strategic importance of the Strait of Hormuz, Iranian geopolitical leverage,

Israeli security perceptions, United States military involvement, Regional balance of power, Global energy security implications, and Maritime security challenges.

Comparative Analysis

Comparative analysis is employed to compare variables: Israel, Iran, United States, Strategic Objectives, Protection against Iranian threats, Protection of global energy routes and allies, Military Involvement, Intelligence, surveillance, and strategic support, Naval deployments and security operations, Security Interests, National and regional security, Regional stability and global economic security, Geopolitical Motivation, Countering Iran's influence, Maintaining international order and freedom of navigation, etc. This comparative approach highlights similarities and differences in the strategic behavior of both actors.

Unit of Analysis

The unit of analysis comprises: State actors (Iran, Israel, and the United States), Strategic military actions in the Strait of Hormuz, Security policies and geopolitical strategies, Regional and global security outcomes.

Reliability and Validity

Reliability

Reliability is ensured through: Use of reputable academic sources, cross-verification of information from multiple sources and consistent application of geopolitical and neorealist analytical frameworks.

Validity

Validity is achieved through: Triangulation of data from journals, official reports, and policy documents, application of established international relations theories, use of contemporary evidence on maritime security and energy geopolitics. Current studies and reports consistently identify the Strait of Hormuz as a critical maritime chokepoint with major implications for global trade and security.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Conceptualizing the Strait of Hormuz

The Strait of Hormuz is a narrow maritime corridor connecting the Persian Gulf to the Arabian Sea. Due to its geographical position, it serves as a critical transit route for oil exports from Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Kuwait, Qatar, the UAE, and Iran. More than 20 percent of global oil and liquefied natural gas exports pass through the strait (Encyclopedia Britannica, 2026).

According to the U.S. Energy Information Administration, the Strait of Hormuz is the world's most important oil transit chokepoint because of the enormous volume of energy resources transported through it (U.S. Energy Information Administration, 2023).

Concept of Energy Security

Energy security refers to the uninterrupted availability of energy resources at affordable prices (Yergin, 2011).

The Strait of Hormuz is central to global energy security because a significant proportion of international oil and liquefied natural gas exports transit through the waterway. Consequently, any threat to maritime traffic within the strait creates uncertainty in international energy markets.

Yergin (2011) argues that energy security has become an essential component of national security policies, particularly for major powers dependent on imported energy resources.

Concept of Maritime Security

Maritime security refers to the protection of maritime domains from threats that may undermine economic prosperity, national security, and international stability (Till, 2018).

In the context of the Strait of Hormuz, maritime security encompasses:

- i. Protection of commercial shipping.
- ii. Prevention of piracy and maritime terrorism.
- iii. Safeguarding energy transportation routes.
- iv. Ensuring freedom of navigation.
- v. Preventing interstate military confrontations.

The increasing militarization of the Strait of Hormuz has elevated maritime security concerns among regional and extra-regional actors.

Strategic Chokepoint Concept

Strategic chokepoints are narrow geographical passages through which substantial volumes of global trade and energy resources transit. Their disruption can significantly affect international economic and political stability (Klare, 2008). Their importance derives from the fact that disruption at these locations can produce far-reaching economic and security consequences (Klare, 2019).

The Strait of Hormuz constitutes one of the world's most important strategic chokepoints because it serves as the principal maritime corridor connecting the oil-rich Persian Gulf with international markets. Control or disruption of such chokepoints provides states with considerable strategic leverage in international politics.

According to Klare (2019), strategic chokepoints have become increasingly important in contemporary geopolitics because of growing global dependence on maritime trade and energy transportation.

Context of Iran–Israel Conflict

The Iran–Israel conflict is a longstanding geopolitical rivalry characterized by proxy wars, cyber operations, ideological antagonism, and military confrontations (Buzan & Wæver, 2003; Sick, 2008).

Concept of Balance of Power

The balance of power refers to the distribution of capabilities among states in a manner that prevents any single state from dominating the international system (Morgenthau, 1948).

Within the Persian Gulf region, the balance of power is influenced by the strategic interactions among Iran, Israel, Saudi Arabia, and the United States. The Strait of Hormuz serves as a critical arena where these competing interests intersect.

The balance-of-power concept helps explain why both Israel and the United States seek to constrain Iranian influence in the region.

Iran and the Strait of Hormuz

The Strait of Hormuz is one of the most strategically significant waterways in the international system. Located between Iran and Oman, it connects the Persian Gulf to the Gulf of Oman and the Arabian Sea. The strait serves as a critical maritime route through which a substantial portion of global oil and liquefied natural gas (LNG)

exports are transported. According to the U.S. Energy Information Administration (2023), approximately one-fifth of the world's petroleum consumption passes through the Strait of Hormuz, making it a vital artery of global energy security.

Iran's geographical position along the northern coastline of the strait provides it with considerable geopolitical leverage. Consequently, scholars have examined the Strait of Hormuz not merely as a maritime passage but as a strategic instrument through which Iran influences regional security, international trade, and global energy markets (Cordesman, 2007).

Iran however, has historically regarded the Strait of Hormuz as a strategic asset. Iranian leaders frequently emphasize the country's ability to influence maritime traffic within the strait. Through naval forces, anti-ship missile systems, and asymmetric warfare capabilities, Iran maintains the capacity to disrupt shipping activities.

Scholars argue that Iran's strategy reflects a broader doctrine of deterrence designed to offset conventional military disadvantages relative to the United States and Israel.

Energy Security and the Global Economy

The significance of the Strait of Hormuz is closely linked to global energy security. The uninterrupted flow of oil through the strait is essential for maintaining stability in international energy markets. According to the U.S. Energy Information Administration (2023), approximately 21 million barrels of oil transit through the waterway daily.

Scholars have argued that disruptions in strategic chokepoints can produce widespread economic consequences. Yergin (2020) notes that global energy markets remain highly sensitive to geopolitical tensions in the Persian Gulf because uncertainty regarding oil supply often leads to price volatility. Such volatility can generate inflationary pressures, disrupt supply chains, and slow economic growth worldwide.

Furthermore, the increasing economic interdependence of states has amplified the global consequences of instability in the Strait of Hormuz. Keohane and Nye (2012) argue that complex interdependence creates mutual vulnerabilities among states, particularly in sectors such as energy and trade. Consequently, any prolonged disruption of shipping through the strait would affect not only Gulf States but also major industrial economies.

Strategic Importance of the Strait of Hormuz

The strategic significance of the Strait derives from its role as the world's most important energy transit route. Any disruption to maritime traffic through the Strait can generate immediate consequences for global energy markets and international trade (Yergin, 2020; Chiale, (2026).

Iran considers the Strait a vital component of its national security strategy and a means of deterring external pressure. The United States, meanwhile, regards freedom of navigation through the Strait as essential to maintaining global economic stability and preserving international maritime order (Kraska & Pedrozo, 2019).

The strategic value of the strait derives from three principal factors:

Energy Security

The global economy remains heavily dependent on energy resources transported through the Persian Gulf. Consequently, any disruption to maritime traffic in the Strait of Hormuz has immediate implications for international energy markets. Historical experiences demonstrate that even threats of closure can generate substantial increases in oil prices and shipping insurance costs (Lott & Kawagishi, 2022).

Military Significance

The narrow geography of the strait creates opportunities for asymmetric warfare. Iran's military strategy relies on exploiting this geographic advantage to offset the superior conventional capabilities of the United States and

its allies. The deployment of naval mines, missile batteries, and unmanned systems allows Iran to threaten maritime traffic without engaging in direct large-scale naval warfare (Divsallar, 2022).

Geopolitical Influence

Control over strategic waterways enhances a state's bargaining power in international relations. For Iran, the Strait of Hormuz functions as a strategic asset capable of influencing diplomatic negotiations, sanctions disputes, and regional security arrangements. Recent analyses describe the strait as one of Tehran's most valuable geopolitical instruments (Seraji & Mahmoudi, 2018).

Geopolitical Significance of the Strait of Hormuz

The strategic importance of the Strait of Hormuz derives from its role as a chokepoint in the international energy system. Geopolitical theorists argue that states occupying strategic locations often acquire disproportionate influence over regional and global affairs. In this regard, Iran's position enables it to affect the movement of oil exports from major Gulf producers such as Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Kuwait, Qatar, and the United Arab Emirates (Mahan, 1890).

Cordesman (2007) contends that the Strait of Hormuz constitutes one of the world's most sensitive strategic regions because any disruption to maritime traffic could trigger economic instability and military confrontation. Similarly, Seraji and Mahmoudi (2018) argue that Iran's proximity to the strait enhances its geopolitical relevance by allowing it to shape security dynamics within the Persian Gulf.

The strategic value of the strait extends beyond regional politics. Major energy-importing countries such as China, India, Japan, and South Korea depend heavily on Gulf oil supplies. Consequently, the security of the Strait of Hormuz has become a matter of global concern rather than a purely regional issue (Klare, 2012).

Neorealism and the Strategic Politics of the Strait of Hormuz (Neorealists perspectives)

This study adopts Neorealism (Structural Realism) as its theoretical framework. Neorealism, developed by Kenneth Waltz, argues that the anarchic nature of the international system compels states to prioritize survival, security, and power accumulation (Waltz, 1979). Since no supranational authority exists to guarantee state security, states rely on military capabilities, strategic alliances, and deterrence mechanisms to protect their interests.

The Strait of Hormuz represents a classic illustration of neorealist assumptions. Iran perceives American military deployments and Israeli strategic cooperation with Gulf states as direct threats to its security. Consequently, Tehran has invested heavily in anti-access and area-denial capabilities, including missile systems, naval mines, drones, and fast-attack craft, to deter potential adversaries and increase the costs of military intervention (Divsallar, 2022).

Also, Israel's posture toward Iran, is shaped by security concerns regarding Iran's nuclear programme, ballistic missile capabilities, and support for regional proxy organizations. Therefore, taking from a neorealist perspective, Israel's actions reflect balancing behavior intended to prevent Iran from achieving regional hegemony.

The United States also operates within a neorealist framework. American military presence in the Persian Gulf is designed to maintain the balance of power, guarantee freedom of navigation, and prevent any single actor from dominating the region's strategic waterways. Thus, the Strait of Hormuz serves as a geopolitical arena where competing security interests converge.

Historical Background of the Conflict

The roots of the conflict can be traced to the 1979 Iranian Revolution, which transformed Iran from a close U.S. ally into one of Washington's principal adversaries in the Middle East. Since then, disputes over Iran's nuclear program, economic sanctions, military deployments, and regional influence have contributed to recurring tensions in the Strait of Hormuz (Takeyh, 2020).

According to Gause (2014), the Persian Gulf has become a central arena for strategic competition between Iran and the United States, with the Strait of Hormuz serving as a critical instrument through which both states pursue their geopolitical objectives.

Sources of the Conflict

Economic Sanctions

One major source of tension is the extensive sanctions regime imposed by the United States on Iran. Following the U.S. withdrawal from the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) in 2018, sanctions were intensified under the "maximum pressure" campaign. Iran frequently responded by threatening to disrupt maritime traffic in the Strait of Hormuz (Maloney, 2020).

Military Confrontation

The United States maintains a substantial naval presence in the Persian Gulf through the Fifth Fleet, headquartered in Bahrain. Iran has viewed this presence as a threat to its sovereignty and regional interests. Several incidents involving the seizure of commercial vessels, attacks on oil tankers, and encounters between Iranian and U.S. naval forces have heightened tensions over the years (Cordesman, 2019).

Nuclear Dispute

The Iranian nuclear program remains a central source of disagreement. The United States and its regional allies have expressed concerns that Iran could develop nuclear weapons capabilities, while Iran maintains that its nuclear activities are intended for peaceful purposes. These disputes frequently intersect with security dynamics in the Strait of Hormuz (Waltz, 2012).

Iran's Strategic Leverage

Iran regards the Strait of Hormuz as a crucial component of its national security architecture. The country has developed an asymmetric military doctrine that relies on naval capabilities, missile systems, fast attack craft, and coastal defense mechanisms to deter external threats (Cordesman, 2007).

Realist scholars argue that Iran's behavior reflects the fundamental objective of states to maximize security and preserve sovereignty within an anarchic international system (Waltz, 1979). From this perspective, Iran's strategic use of the Strait of Hormuz represents an effort to counterbalance the military superiority of external powers, particularly the United States.

Mearsheimer (2001) maintains that states seek to maximize their relative power whenever opportunities arise. Iran's ability to threaten the closure of the Strait of Hormuz during periods of heightened tension exemplifies this logic, providing Tehran with a bargaining tool against economic sanctions and military pressure.

Iran–United States Rivalry in the Strait of Hormuz

The Strait of Hormuz has become a focal point in the strategic rivalry between Iran and the United States. Since the Iran-Iraq War and the Tanker War of the 1980s, both countries have viewed the waterway as central to their security interests (Cordesman, 2007).

The United States maintains a significant naval presence in the Persian Gulf to ensure freedom of navigation and protect international commerce. American policymakers consider unrestricted access to the Strait of Hormuz essential for global economic stability (Posen, 2003).

Iran, however, often interprets the presence of foreign military forces in the Gulf as a challenge to its sovereignty and regional influence. According to Ehteshami and Zweiri (2007), Iranian leaders perceive American military deployments as part of a broader strategy of containment. This perception has contributed to recurring episodes of tension involving naval encounters, sanctions, and threats to maritime traffic. On the whole, the U.S.–Iran

conflict in the Strait of Hormuz constitutes one of the most enduring geopolitical rivalries in the contemporary international system. The Strait of Hormuz is a strategically vital maritime chokepoint through which approximately 20 percent of the world's oil and a substantial share of global liquefied natural gas (LNG) exports are transported. Consequently, tensions between the United States and Iran in this region have significant implications for international peace, security, and economic stability (Yergin, 2020). Besides, actions taken by one actor to enhance security often provoke countermeasures from rivals, thereby increasing regional tensions.

Using realist perspective, the study provides a useful framework for understanding Iran's behavior in the Strait of Hormuz. Waltz (1979) argues that states operate in a self-help system where survival is the primary objective. Iran's efforts to strengthen its position in the strait can therefore be interpreted as rational attempts to enhance national security and deter external threats.

Israeli Involvement in the Strait of Hormuz Crisis

Although Israel is geographically distant from the Strait of Hormuz, its security interests are closely linked to developments within the Persian Gulf. Israeli policymakers view Iran as the principal threat to national security due to Tehran's nuclear ambitions, missile programs, and support for groups such as Hezbollah and Hamas.

Israel's involvement in the Strait of Hormuz can be understood through three dimensions:

Strategic Containment

Israel seeks to limit Iran's ability to leverage the Strait of Hormuz as a coercive instrument. If Iran were able to exert sustained control over the strait, it would gain considerable economic and political leverage against regional and international adversaries.

Intelligence Cooperation

Israeli intelligence agencies cooperate extensively with the United States and several Gulf states to monitor Iranian naval activities. Intelligence sharing has become increasingly important as Iran expands its maritime capabilities.

Regional Partnerships

The normalization agreements established under the Abraham Accords strengthened Israel's strategic relationships with Gulf States. These partnerships have enhanced Israeli access to regional security networks and increased cooperation in maritime surveillance and defense.

From a neorealist perspective, these actions represent balancing strategies aimed at preventing Iran from becoming the dominant regional power.

United States Involvement in the Strait of Hormuz

The United States has maintained a significant military presence in the Persian Gulf since the late twentieth century. Unlike Israel, whose involvement is primarily indirect, American engagement is direct and multidimensional. United States involvement is to bring about:

Preservation of Freedom of Navigation

The United States views unrestricted access to maritime trade routes as a vital national interest. American naval operations are therefore designed to ensure the continuous flow of commercial shipping through the Strait of Hormuz.

Protection of Global Energy Markets

Washington recognizes that disruptions in the Strait of Hormuz would generate worldwide economic consequences. The protection of energy supply chains remains a central objective of U.S. foreign policy in the

Gulf region (Damayanti *et al.*, 2022).

Maintenance of Regional Hegemony

Neorealist scholars argue that great powers seek to prevent the emergence of regional challengers. The U.S. military presence in the Persian Gulf reflects efforts to maintain strategic dominance and deter adversaries from altering the regional balance of power (Mearsheimer, 2001).

Recent assessments indicate that U.S. strategy has increasingly focused on preventing Iranian maritime coercion while preserving broader regional stability (Center for Strategic and International Studies, 2026).

Israel's Strategic Concerns

Israel views Iran as its principal regional adversary. Concerns regarding Iran's nuclear program, support for proxy groups, and ballistic missile development have shaped Israeli strategic thinking.

Israeli policymakers recognize that Iranian control over the Strait of Hormuz could enhance Tehran's economic and geopolitical leverage. Consequently, Israel supports international initiatives aimed at constraining Iranian maritime influence and maintaining open sea lanes.

Contemporary Dynamics (2025–2026)

Recent developments have demonstrated the continuing strategic relevance of the Strait. Rising tensions associated with Iran's regional policies, disputes over maritime security, and military exchanges involving the United States and its allies have increased concerns about the possibility of disruptions to shipping routes.

According to the International Energy Agency (IEA, 2025), instability in the Strait of Hormuz remains one of the most significant risks to global energy security. Similarly, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD, 2025) notes that disruptions in the Strait could have far-reaching consequences for global trade, inflation, and economic growth.

Empirical Review

Several studies emphasize the connection between maritime chokepoints and international security. Research conducted by the Council on Foreign Relations identifies the Strait of Hormuz as a major flashpoint in U.S.–Iran relations and highlights its importance for global energy markets (Council on Foreign Relations, 2026).

Recent analyses indicate that disruptions in the Strait of Hormuz have significant effects on shipping, insurance costs, and international energy prices (International Energy Agency, 2026).

Divsallar (2022) examined Iran's evolving strategic doctrine and its use of the Strait of Hormuz as a deterrence mechanism. The study found that Iran increasingly relies on asymmetric naval capabilities to compensate for conventional military limitations. The author concluded that the Strait of Hormuz remains a central component of Iran's national security strategy.

The relevance of this study lies in its explanation of Iran's military posture within the Gulf region. However, it does not adequately address Israeli strategic interests in the Strait of Hormuz.

Damayanti, Meresin, and Karyoprawiro (2022), investigated U.S.–Iran relations and their implications for the stability of the Strait of Hormuz. Their findings indicate that although the United States and Iran frequently engage in strategic competition, both countries share an interest in preventing prolonged disruptions to maritime commerce.

While the study provides useful insights into American policy, it does not undertake a comparative analysis involving Israel.

Conversely, Ariffin and Zulkifli (2023), examined conflicts in the Strait of Hormuz and their implications for Oman and Iran. The study found that recurring tensions within the strait pose serious challenges to regional stability and maritime security.

The study contributes to understanding regional security dynamics but neglects the roles played by Israel and the United States.

Cordesman (2021) also analyzed U.S. military strategy in the Gulf region and highlighted the importance of naval power in maintaining maritime security. The study concluded that American military presence remains essential for preserving freedom of navigation.

However, the study focuses primarily on American policy and does not compare U.S. objectives with those of Israel.

Inbar (2021) explored Israeli perceptions of Iran's regional ambitions and nuclear capabilities. The study found that Israel considers Iran its primary strategic threat and supports policies aimed at containing Iranian influence.

Although relevant to Israeli security concerns, the study does not specifically address the strategic significance of the Strait of Hormuz.

The literature on the whole, demonstrates that maritime security challenges in the Strait of Hormuz extend beyond regional actors and increasingly involve global powers.

Comparative Analysis of Israeli and United States Involvement

Israeli Involvement

Israel's involvement is primarily indirect but strategically significant.

Security Objectives

Israel seeks to:

- i. Prevent Iranian nuclear proliferation.
- ii. Reduce Iranian regional influence.
- iii. Disrupt Iranian military logistics.
- iv. Strengthen strategic partnerships with Gulf States.

Israeli policymakers perceive Iranian control over maritime routes as enhancing Tehran's capacity to fund regional activities hostile to Israeli interests.

Military Dimension

Israel's intelligence-sharing arrangements and defense cooperation with regional allies have contributed to monitoring Iranian maritime activities.

Diplomatic Dimension

Israel has increasingly aligned with Gulf states under frameworks such as the Abraham Accords to counter Iranian influence.

United States Involvement

Unlike Israel, the United States maintains a direct military presence in the Persian Gulf.

Strategic Objectives

The United States seeks to:

- i. Maintain freedom of navigation.
- ii. Protect global energy supplies.
- iii. Prevent regional instability.
- iv. Preserve American influence in the Middle East.

Military Presence

The U.S. Fifth Fleet remains central to maritime security operations in the region. American naval forces routinely conduct patrols and escort missions to ensure safe passage through the Strait of Hormuz (Encyclopedia Britannica, 2026).

Economic Interests

Given the strategic importance of Gulf energy exports, American policymakers view disruptions in the Strait of Hormuz as threats to international economic stability. Recent tensions have demonstrated the vulnerability of global energy markets to instability in the region.

Again, although Israel and the United States share concerns regarding Iranian influence, their motivations differ substantially. Below, shows how they differ:

Dimension

Israel

Primary Interest

Global stability and strategic leadership

Indirect and intelligence-based

United States

National survival and security

Nature of Involvement

Direct Military deployment

Policy Instruments

Naval power, alliances, diplomacy, economic sanctions Intelligence operations, diplomacy, strategic partnerships

Main Concern

Iranian nuclear and missile capabilities Freedom of navigation and energy security

Strategic Objective

Containment of Iran Maintenance of regional order

Regional Objective

Maintenance of regional order and stability National security and deterrence against Iran

Economic Interest

Protection of global energy markets Prevention of regional instability affecting strategic interests

Scope

Regional Global

Source: Authors Conceptualization

The comparison demonstrates that Israel's involvement is primarily threat-driven, whereas American involvement combines security, economic, and geopolitical considerations.

Areas of Strategic Convergence

Both Israel and the United States share several strategic interests in the Strait of Hormuz:

- i. Opposition to Iranian threats to close the Strait.
- ii. Support for freedom of navigation.
- iii. Protection of regional allies.
- iv. Maintenance of regional stability.
- v. Prevention of disruptions to global energy markets (Eisenstadt, 2019; Gause, 2014).

These shared interests have strengthened U.S.–Israeli strategic cooperation, particularly regarding intelligence sharing, military planning, and diplomatic coordination aimed at countering Iranian influence.

Areas of Strategic Divergence

Despite close cooperation, important differences remain. The United States prioritizes the stability of the international economic system and the uninterrupted flow of energy resources. Israel, on the other hand, views the Strait primarily through the lens of its security competition with Iran. Consequently, Israeli policymakers often advocate more robust measures against Iran, whereas U.S. administrations may balance deterrence with diplomatic engagement and crisis management (Walt, 2018).

On the whole, the strategic involvement of Israel and the United States in relation to the Strait of Hormuz demonstrates both convergence and divergence in their regional objectives. While the United States seeks to preserve global energy security and maintain maritime order, Israel focuses primarily on preventing Iran from expanding its regional influence. Nevertheless, both states regard the security of the Strait as essential to regional stability and have developed a close strategic partnership aimed at countering threats emanating from Iran.

Implications for International Security

The U.S.–Iran conflict in the Strait of Hormuz has several broader implications:

- i. Energy Security: Disruptions could significantly affect global oil and gas supplies (IEA, 2025).
- ii. Regional Stability: Escalation could draw neighboring Gulf States into broader conflict (Gause, 2014).
- iii. Great-Power Competition: Instability creates opportunities for external actors' such as China and Russia to expand their regional influence (Allison, 2017).
- iv. International Trade: Maritime insecurity threatens critical shipping routes and global supply chains (UNCTAD, 2025).
- v. Nuclear Proliferation Risks: Continued tensions complicate diplomatic efforts aimed at preventing nuclear proliferation in the Middle East (Maloney, 2020).

Implications for Global Security

The militarization of the Strait of Hormuz has several important implications.

First, it increases the likelihood of accidental escalation between major military actors. The concentration of naval forces in a confined maritime space creates opportunities for miscalculation and confrontation.

Second, instability within the strait threatens global energy security. Recent analyses suggest that prolonged disruptions could contribute to inflationary pressures, supply chain disruptions, and economic instability across both developed and developing economies (Parsi, 2024).

Third, the Strait of Hormuz illustrates how regional conflicts increasingly acquire global dimensions. Competition among Iran, Israel, and the United States attracts the involvement of external powers such as China and Russia, thereby transforming regional disputes into broader geopolitical contests.

Implication for Global Peace

The strategic involvement of Israel and the United States in the Strait of Hormuz has significant implications for global peace and even security. As one of the world's most critical maritime chokepoints, any military activity, strategic competition, or geopolitical confrontation in the Strait, extends beyond the Middle East and affects international stability, energy security, and the global economy. The positive/negative implications are as follows:

Enhancement of Maritime Security and Freedom of Navigation

One positive implication of U.S. and Israeli involvement is the protection of international shipping routes and the preservation of freedom of navigation. The United States, through its naval presence and multinational maritime security initiatives, seeks to deter piracy, terrorism, and state-sponsored disruptions that could threaten commercial shipping. These efforts contribute to stability in international trade and reduce the likelihood of economic shocks resulting from interruptions in oil transportation (Cordesman, 2019).

By supporting these efforts diplomatically and strategically, Israel contributes to a broader security architecture aimed at maintaining an open and secure maritime environment (Inbar, 2016).

Intensification of Regional Militarization

Conversely, increased involvement by the United States and Israel may contribute to the militarization of the Persian Gulf region. Iran often interprets such interventions as threats to its sovereignty and national security, leading to military buildups, naval exercises, missile deployments, and the strengthening of proxy networks across the Middle East (Gause, 2014).

This security dilemma creates a cycle in which one state's defensive measures are perceived as offensive threats by another, thereby increasing the risk of conflict escalation (Jervis, 1978).

Increased Risk of Interstate Conflict

The presence of competing military forces in and around the Strait increases the possibility of miscalculation, accidental confrontation, or deliberate escalation. Historical incidents involving attacks on oil tankers, the seizure of commercial vessels, and confrontations between Iranian and U.S. naval forces demonstrate the vulnerability of the region to crises (Takeyh, 2020).

Should tensions escalate into direct military conflict involving Iran, Israel, and the United States, the consequences could destabilize the broader Middle East and potentially draw in external powers such as Russia and China, thereby increasing threats to international peace and security.

Impact on Global Energy Security

The Strait of Hormuz is responsible for transporting a substantial proportion of the world's oil exports. Any disruption resulting from military confrontation could lead to sharp increases in global energy prices, inflationary pressures, and economic instability. Developing countries that depend heavily on imported energy would be particularly vulnerable (Yergin, 2020).

Therefore, interventions aimed at securing the Strait have implications not only for regional stability but also for the functioning of the global economy.

Strengthening Strategic Alliances and Security Cooperation

The shared concerns of Israel, the United States, and several Gulf Arab states regarding Iranian influence have encouraged new forms of regional cooperation. The normalization agreements between Israel and some Arab states have facilitated intelligence sharing, military coordination, and collective security arrangements that may contribute to regional deterrence and stability (Miller, 2022).

Such partnerships have the potential to create a more structured regional security framework capable of responding to common threats.

Challenges to International Law and Sovereignty

Military interventions and security operations in the Strait often generate debates concerning international law, freedom of navigation, territorial waters, and state sovereignty. Disputes over the legal status of maritime passages and the legitimacy of military deployments may complicate diplomatic efforts and undermine confidence-building measures among regional actors (Kraska & Pedrozo, 2019).

The management of these legal issues is crucial for preventing tensions from escalating into broader conflicts.

Implications for Global Power Competition

The Strait of Hormuz has increasingly become a theater of great-power competition (Institute for National Security Studies, 2026). While the United States seeks to maintain its strategic influence, emerging powers such as China have significant economic interests in the uninterrupted flow of Gulf energy resources. Consequently, regional crises involving Israel, Iran, and the United States can have wider implications for international power relations and the evolving global order (Allison, 2017).

From a realist perspective, competition over strategic waterways such as the Strait of Hormuz reflects broader struggles for influence within the international system.

Discussion of the Maritime Legal Framework Governing the Strait of Hormuz

The Strait of Hormuz is one of the world's most strategically important maritime chokepoints, connecting the Persian Gulf with the Gulf of Oman and the Arabian Sea. It serves as a critical route for international trade and global energy transportation, with a substantial proportion of the world's oil exports passing through the strait. Its strategic significance has made the legal regime governing navigation through the strait a major subject of international maritime law (United Nations, 1982; Kraska, 2014).

The Strait of Hormuz as an International Strait

Under Article 37 of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), the Strait of Hormuz qualifies as an international strait because it is used for international navigation between one part of the high seas or Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) and another (United Nations, 1982). The territorial seas of Iran and Oman overlap across much of the strait, bringing it within the scope of the special legal regime established under Part III of UNCLOS (United Nations, 1982).

Transit Passage Regime

The principal legal framework governing navigation through the Strait of Hormuz is the regime of transit passage contained in Articles 37–44 of UNCLOS. Article 38 provides that all ships and aircraft enjoy the right of transit passage, which shall not be impeded by states bordering the strait (United Nations, 1982). Transit passage allows continuous and expeditious movement through the strait and applies to both commercial and military vessels as well as aircraft (Kraska, 2014).

Unlike innocent passage, transit passage cannot be suspended by coastal states. Article 44 specifically obligates states bordering international straits not to hamper or suspend transit passage, thereby ensuring uninterrupted navigation through the Strait of Hormuz (United Nations, 1982).

Rights and Responsibilities of Coastal States

While Iran and Oman retain sovereignty over their territorial seas, their powers are constrained by the transit passage regime. Under Article 42 of UNCLOS, coastal states may adopt laws relating to navigation safety, environmental protection, customs, immigration, and sanitary regulations. However, such regulations must not discriminate against foreign vessels or impede the exercise of transit passage rights (United Nations, 1982).

The Iran–United States Legal Controversy

A major legal issue concerning the Strait of Hormuz is that neither Iran nor the United States has ratified UNCLOS. Iran argues that the transit passage regime applies only to states that are parties to the Convention. In contrast, the United States maintains that transit passage has become a rule of customary international law and is therefore binding on all states irrespective of treaty ratification (Kraska, 2014).

Kraska (2014) notes that this disagreement has created legal ambiguity regarding navigational rights in the Strait of Hormuz and remains a source of tension between Iran and the United States.

Restrictions on Closure of the Strait

International maritime law generally prohibits the closure of international straits used for navigation. The transit passage regime under UNCLOS requires that navigation remain open and unobstructed. Recent legal debates concerning potential tolls or restrictions on passage through the Strait of Hormuz have been criticized as inconsistent with the principle of transit passage and freedom of navigation (Reuters, 2026).

Maritime Security and Armed Conflict

During armed conflict, the legal framework governing the Strait of Hormuz extends beyond UNCLOS to include international humanitarian law and the law of naval warfare. Belligerent states must comply with principles of necessity, proportionality, and distinction while respecting the rights of neutral shipping. Even in wartime, interference with international navigation remains subject to strict legal scrutiny (Kraska, 2014).

On the whole, the maritime legal framework governing the Strait of Hormuz is principally founded on UNCLOS and customary international law. The regime of transit passage guarantees freedom of navigation through this vital international waterway while balancing the sovereign rights of coastal states. Although legal disagreements persist regarding the applicability of UNCLOS to non-signatory states, the prevailing view among scholars is that transit passage constitutes a customary norm of international law that supports the continued openness of the Strait of Hormuz for global commerce and maritime security (Kraska, 2014; United Nations, 1982).

Final Analysis: The Strait of Hormuz in the Iran–Israel War and Comparative Analysis of Israeli and U.S. Involvement

The Strait of Hormuz emerged as one of the most strategically significant theatres in the Iran–Israel conflict because of its central role in global energy transportation. As the world's most important oil chokepoint, approximately one-fifth of globally traded petroleum passes through the Strait, making it indispensable to

international energy security (International Energy Agency [IEA], 2024; Cordesman, 2019). Consequently, any disruption to maritime navigation in the area has immediate repercussions for global energy markets, international trade, and geopolitical stability.

The conflict demonstrated how regional wars can rapidly assume global dimensions. Iran has historically viewed the Strait as a strategic leverage point and has repeatedly threatened restrictions on maritime traffic in response to external pressure (Eisenstadt, 2019). During periods of heightened confrontation with Israel and its allies, concerns over potential disruptions increased shipping costs, insurance premiums, and volatility in international oil markets (UNCTAD, 2025). The Strait therefore functioned not merely as a geographic passage but as a strategic instrument of coercive diplomacy.

Comparative Analysis of Israeli and U.S. Involvement

Israeli Involvement

Israel's involvement was primarily driven by national security concerns. Israeli policymakers have consistently viewed Iran's nuclear programme, ballistic missile development, and support for regional proxy organizations as existential threats to Israeli security (Maloney, 2020). Consequently, Israeli actions focused on degrading Iran's military capabilities, limiting its strategic influence, and preventing the consolidation of Iranian power across the Middle East. From a strategic perspective, Israel's objective was deterrence and the preservation of its national security environment.

United States Involvement

The United States pursued broader strategic objectives. While supporting Israel politically and militarily, Washington's involvement extended beyond bilateral security commitments. The United States sought to maintain freedom of navigation in the Strait of Hormuz, ensure uninterrupted global energy supplies, reassure Gulf allies, and preserve regional stability (Posen, 2014). U.S. naval deployments and maritime security initiatives reflected its long-standing role as the principal guarantor of security in the Persian Gulf.

Key Differences in Strategic Orientation

- ▶ Dimensions: Israel, Iran, United States
- ▶ Primary Objective: Neutralization of Iranian threats, Protection of regional and global stability
- ▶ Strategic Focus: National security and deterrence: Maritime security and international order
- ▶ Geographic Scope: Primarily Middle East, Middle East and global system
- ▶ Major Concern: Nuclear and missile threats, Energy security and freedom of navigation
- ▶ Policy Goal: Strategic survival, Maintenance of balance of power

Implications for Global Security

Energy Security Risks

The conflict highlighted the vulnerability of global energy supply chains. Any disruption in the Strait threatens oil exports from major Gulf producers, creating supply shocks and price volatility in international markets (IEA, 2024).

Militarization of Strategic Waterways

The crisis reinforced the growing militarization of maritime chokepoints. Strategic waterways such as the Strait of Hormuz increasingly serve as arenas for geopolitical competition and coercive diplomacy (Kaplan, 2018).

Intensification of Great-Power Competition

The conflict attracted the attention of major powers including the United States, China, and Russia. This underscores how regional conflicts intersect with broader patterns of great-power competition and strategic rivalry (Mearsheimer, 2014).

Economic and Trade Disruptions

Rising shipping costs, increased maritime insurance rates, and fluctuating oil prices generated significant economic uncertainty. Developing economies that depend heavily on imported energy were particularly vulnerable to these disruptions (UNCTAD, 2025).

Challenges to International Security Governance

The crisis exposed limitations in existing international mechanisms for conflict prevention and maritime security management. It demonstrated the need for stronger multilateral frameworks capable of managing tensions in critical international waterways (United Nations, 2024).

Concluding Assessment

In conclusion, the Strait of Hormuz served as both a strategic battleground and a geopolitical pressure point during the Iran–Israel conflict. While Israel's involvement was largely motivated by immediate security concerns regarding Iran's military capabilities and regional influence, U.S. involvement reflected broader objectives related to maritime security, energy stability, and the preservation of the international order. The conflict demonstrated how a regional confrontation can generate far-reaching consequences for global trade, energy markets, and international peace and security. Ultimately, the Strait of Hormuz remains a critical determinant of Middle Eastern geopolitics and a vital component of the contemporary global security architecture.

CONCLUSION

The Strait of Hormuz remains one of the most strategically important maritime corridors in the international system. The Iran–Israel conflict has intensified competition over this critical waterway and elevated its significance within contemporary geopolitics.

The interventions of Israel and the United States in relation to the Strait of Hormuz have complex consequences for global peace and security. On one hand, they contribute to maritime security, freedom of navigation, and the protection of international trade. On the other hand, they risk intensifying regional militarization, provoking interstate conflict, and exacerbating great-power rivalries. The challenge for policymakers is to balance deterrence and security objectives with diplomatic engagement and conflict management mechanisms that promote long-term regional stability and international peace.

The study however, demonstrates that Israel and the United States share concerns regarding Iranian influence but pursue different strategic objectives. Israel focuses primarily on preventing Iranian military and nuclear expansion, while the United States seeks to preserve global energy security, freedom of navigation, and regional stability.

Applying Neorealist theory and Geopolitical theory reveals that the behavior of all actors is driven by security concerns and power calculations. Consequently, the Strait of Hormuz is likely to remain a central arena of geopolitical competition in the foreseeable future.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are made:

1. Diplomatic engagement between regional actors should be strengthened to reduce tensions.

2. International maritime security cooperation should be expanded.
3. Confidence-building measures should be promoted among Gulf States.
4. Alternative energy transportation routes should be developed.

International organizations should play a greater role in conflict prevention and crisis management.

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