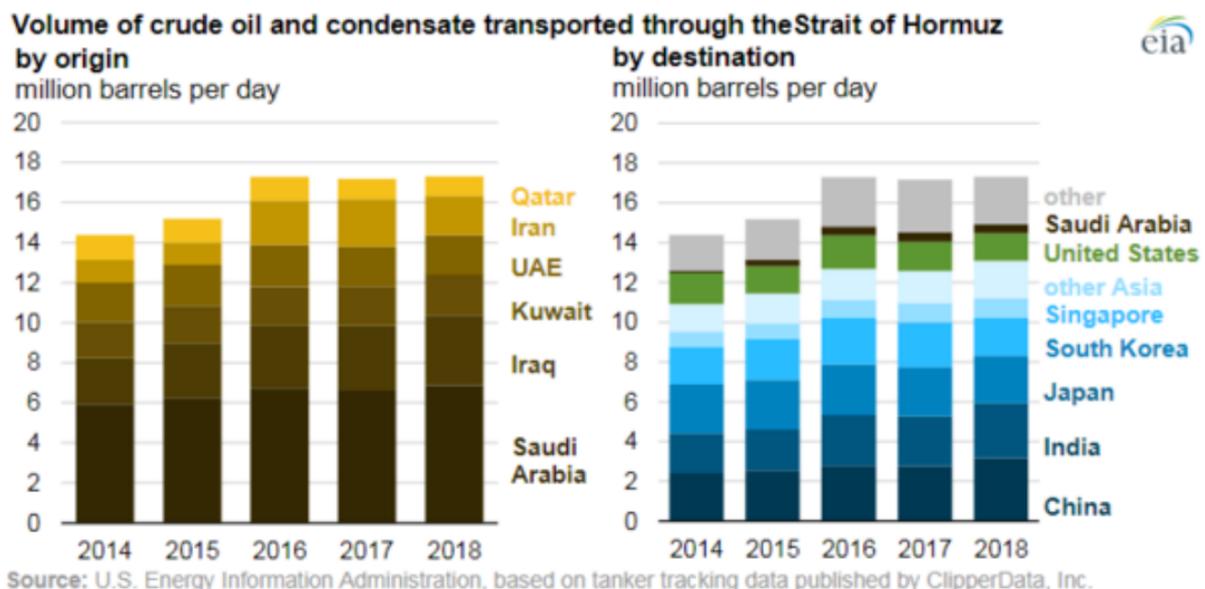




**Introduction:**

The Strait of Hormuz is the world's most important oil chokepoint, largely due to the great volumes of oil it allows to flow through it every day, but additionally owing to its role as a focal point of world geopolitics. It has repeatedly served as a strong source of international concern, and rising tensions between nations holding strategic interests in the strait have only further exacerbated its potential as a foundation for multinational conflict.

Situated between the Persian Gulf and the Gulf of Oman, it serves as the only sea passage from the Persian Gulf to the open sea, therefore benefiting the exports of energy-rich nations such as but not limited to Iran, Iraq, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the UAE. In 2018, its oil flow accounted for about 21% of global petroleum liquids consumption, at an average of 21 million oil barrels passing through the strait each day. This renders an obstruction to passage of oil through the Strait, even temporary, fated to substantially disturb the global economy. In 2018, it was estimated that 76% of all the crude oil and condensate transported through the Strait of Hormuz were delivered to Asian markets, rendering these particularly reliant and therefore vulnerable.



Technically regulated by the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea of 1982 (UNCLOS), in practice the Strait's control has largely been contested, following upon Iran's initial reticence to fully adopt the Treaty, when it agreed to sign without ratifying the convention. This has further allowed it to be used to promulgate international tensions, notably between Tehran and the West. For more than thirty years, Iran has repeatedly menaced to punish other nations by closing the strait to tanker traffic and has previously seized the opportunity to exploit the inadequate security of the area. The Iranian Navy serving as the primary threat in the Strait of Hormuz, the problem posed by worsening disaccords between other nations and Iran is evident.

Although it remains questionable whether nations such as Iran have the sufficient military resources and capability to fully impede passage through the Strait, they could render it impossible to fully ensure safe transit for tankers, therefore encouraging reticence in ship owners to send their assets into the Gulf, harming oil exports and causing damaging ripples through the global economy.

Navigation through the Strait of Hormuz is conducted according to the Traffic Separation Scheme (TSS). The UNCLOS discussed above has largely served as a backbone to this scheme, however since its signing in 1982 both Oman and Iran have asserted claims differing from it. For example, Iran stated that “only states parties to the Law of Sea Convention” would be able to profit from “the right of transit passage through straits used for international navigation”, and has additionally enacted a new law on maritime areas, several areas of which are neither recognised by the UNCLOS nor several nations such as the United States.



## Definition of Key Terms

**United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS):** International treaty, which was adopted and signed in 1982, replacing the four Geneva Conventions of April 1958. It defines the rights and responsibilities of nations with respect to their use of the world's oceans, establishing guidelines for businesses, the environment, and the management of marine natural resources.

**Traffic Separation Scheme (TSS):** A maritime traffic-management route-system ruled by the International Maritime Organization or IMO. The traffic-lanes (or clearways) indicate the general direction of the ships in that zone; ships navigating within a TSS all sail in the same direction or they cross the lane in an angle as close to 90 degrees as possible.

**Strait of Hormuz:** The waterway separating Iran and Oman, linking the Gulf to the Gulf of Oman and Arabian Sea. It is 21 miles (33 km) wide at its narrowest point, but the shipping lane is just two miles (three km) wide in either direction.

## Timeline of Events:

**1984** Tanker War phase of Iran-Iraq war.

**16 April 1988** United States and Iran battle in and around the Strait.

**8 January 2007** Nuclear submarine USS Newport News strikes MV Mogamigawa, a large Japanese flagged crude tanker south of the Strait.

**December 2007- January 2008** United States- Iranian naval dispute, series of naval standoff between Iranian speedboats and US warships in the Strait of Hormuz cause US officials to accuse Iran of harassing their naval vessels, which Iran denied.

**11 August 2008** More than 40 US and Allied troops reportedly en route to the Strait of Hormuz.

**20 March 2009** Two US Navy vessels collide in the Strait.

**27 December 2011** Iranian vice-president threatens to cut off oil supply from the Strait of Hormuz.

**3 January 2012** Iran threatens to take action if US navy moves an aircraft carrier back into the Persian Gulf.

**23 January 2012** Flotilla established by countries opposing Iran's threats to close the Hormuz Strait.

**July 14 2015** Nuclear deal signed between Iran and world powers.

**January 16 2016** Nuclear-related UN sanctions and US sanctions against Iran lifted after Tehran fulfilled its JCPOA obligations.

**May 8 2018** US announces it is withdrawing from the Iran nuclear deal, formally known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan Of Action (JCPOA).

**July 2018** Iran renews threats to close the strait 4 August 7 2018 United States reimposes the first round of sanctions on Iran, originally lifted as part of the nuclear deal. Iran test-fires a ballistic for the first time in 2018 .

**May 2 2019** US ends waivers which had allowed eight countries to continue buying Iranian oil.

**May 12 2019** Four ships, including two Saudi oil tankers, are attacked in the Gulf just outside the Strait of Hormuz, a major oil shipping route. U.S. officials pin the blame on Iran, a charge Tehran denies.

**June 13th 2019** Two tankers are attacked south of the Strait of Hormuz. Washington again blames Iran and Tehran denies any role.

**June 20th 2019** Iran shoots down an unmanned U.S. surveillance drone.

**July 2019** Britain seize Iranian super tanker Grace 1 near Gibraltar on suspicion that it violated a European Union embargo on the sale of oil to Syria, Iran seize a British tanker, US shoots down Iranian drone.

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