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## The Effects of the Strait Hormuz on the Policies of the Great Powers towards the Gulf Region

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# The Effects of the Strait Hormuz on the Policies of the Great Powers towards the Gulf Region

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## The Effects of the Strait Hormuz on the Policies of the Great Powers towards the Gulf Region

### تأثير مضيق هرمز على سياسات القوى العظمى تجاه منطقة الخليج العربي

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#### Abstract

The study aimed to show the impact of the Strait of Hormuz on the policies of international powers towards the Arab Gulf region in light of the great importance of the Strait of Hormuz in international trade as it is a corridor for the Gulf countries' exports of oil and their imports from all countries of the world. To achieve the objectives of the study, the descriptive-analytical method was used. The study concluded that the Strait of Hormuz is gaining importance for the great powers, as it is one of the most important waterways with regard to oil and gas exports from the Arab Gulf states to global markets, which gave it a geostrategic importance in global trade. Therefore, the strait formed the focus of the attention of international powers that depend on Arab oil to meet their needs for energy resources. The Strait represents International and regional conflicts to dominate the Strait a direct threat to the Arab Gulf states.

**Keywords:** The Strait of Hormuz, The policies of the great powers, The Arab Gulf Region.

#### الملخص

هدفت الدراسة إلى بيان تأثير مضيق هرمز على سياسات القوى الدولية تجاه منطقة الخليج العربي في ضوء الأهمية الكبيرة لمضيق هرمز في التجارة الدولية باعتباره ممر لصادرات دول الخليج من البترول و وارداتها من جميع دول العالم ولتحقيق أهداف الدراسة تم استخدام المنهج الوصفي التحليلي، وتوصلت الدراسة إلى أن مضيق هرمز يكتسب أهمية بالنسبة للقوى العظمى كونه من أهم الممرات المائية فيما يتعلق بصادرات النفط والغاز من دول الخليج العربي إلى الأسواق العالمية، مما أكسبه أهمية جيواستراتيجية في التجارة العالمية، لذا شكل المضيق محور اهتمام القوى الدولية التي تعتمد على النفط العربي في تلبية احتياجاتها من موارد الطاقة، ويمثل المضيق والصراعات الدولية والإقليمية للهيمنة على المضيق تهديد مباشر لدول الخليج العربي. كلمات مفتاحية: مضيق هرمز، سياسات القوى العظمى، منطقة الخليج العربي..

## Introduction

The Middle East is an exceptional geographical region. This geographic vitality is incompatible with the aspirations and interests of the major countries. So, these countries seek to deal with a disjointed region that lacks a unified regional strategy and seek to keep the region in political obstructions. The Straits are of the most powerful active elements of Middle East region.

The strategic importance of the Strait of Hormuz lies in its geographical location as a transit point. The strait contains narrow water channels known as choke points. These points are used for transportation. The narrowest point in the strait is 29 nautical miles wide, and the widest point is about 60 miles. With the international community's dependence on oil produced from the Middle East, the equivalent of one million barrels of oil passes through the strait on a daily basis, that is, more than 6 billion barrels of oil pass through each year.

The Strait of Bab al-Mandab was not significant without the opening of the Suez Canal, and the Suez Canal was only that important because of oil coming from the Arabian Gulf, and the Strait of Gibraltar would have decreased its importance to half without the presence of the Suez Canal and the Strait of Bab al-Mandab.

These water gaps remain the life bloods of the developing and developed economies, and each country has a strategy from its own perspective to exploit these outlets, so if we follow the current regional developments, we find that there are strategic maneuvers between the countries bordering these Straits and the countries that use them. The Strait of Hormuz is the narrow waterway that forms the entrance to the Persian Gulf from the Gulf of Oman and ultimately the Arabian Sea. At its narrowest point it is 22 nautical miles wide and falls within Iranian and Omani territorial waters. There are two shipping lanes through the Strait, one in each direction. Each is two miles wide and they are separated by a two-mile buffer

It is the only link between the Gulf and the open water of Arabian Sea and Indian Ocean. On average, there is an oil tanker navigating through the Strait every eight to ten minutes. Four million tons of oil passes by every day. However, even guerillas armed with Soviet-made Katyusha rockets, or any other rockets with a range of eleven hundred yards could hit the tankers. Therefore, the Strait is vulnerable to piracy, military conflicts and terrorist

attacks. It is widely known as one of the choke points in world oil supply chains. Historically, Great powers had always tried to control this Strait. The Portuguese capture of the city of Hormuz in 1515 was followed by nearly a century of its supremacy in the region. Anglo-Dutch and Anglo-French rivalry also played out at this Strait before the British achieved hegemony, which lasted until the beginning of the twentieth century. The US and the Soviet Union (the Soviet) competed during the Cold War. Now at the turn of the twenty-first century, whereas US remains a dominating power, China is becoming increasingly aware of its importance.

## Research Questions

This study aimed to answer the following questions:

- What is the strategic importance of the Strait of Hormuz in the international economy?
- What is the impact of the Strait of Hormuz on the politics of international powers?
- How the conflicts of international powers have affected the security of navigation in the Strait of Hormuz?

## Importance of studying:

The importance of scientific and practical study is highlighted through:

### Scientific importance:

The importance of this study stems from its analysis of the policies of the great powers towards the Strait of Hormuz, which is one of the most important waterways in the world in the volume of global trade that passes through it, in addition to being the main corridor on which the Arab Gulf states depend in exporting oil to global markets.

### Practical importance:

The practical importance of the study highlights the scientific contribution it may add to the field of international relations and the interpretation of the policies of the great powers towards the Strait of Hormuz. Energy security at the regional and international levels.

## Objectives

This research is aiming to study the effects of Explanation of the impact of the Strait of Hormuz on the policies of international powers towards the Arab Gulf region in light of the great importance of the Strait of Hormuz in international trade as it is a corridor for Gulf oil exports and imports from all countries of the world. The Strait of Hormuz is one

of the most important economic passages in the world, and although its narrowest point is (33.8 km) wide, However, it is of great strategic, economic and commercial importance; It is the first eastern exit and the only way to transport oil from the Persian Gulf, Iran and Iraq to all countries, the most important of which are Japan, India and China.

### Significance

Figure (1) presents the geographic position of this Strait which gives it a great importance for Great powers politics and interests.



Figure (1): Strait of Hormuz

### Source:

<https://thenewkhalij.news/index.php/article/38173/>

### Study variables

- **Independent variable:** The Strait of Hormuz.
- **Dependent variable:** Great Powers policies toward the Strait of Hormuz.

### Theoretical framework:

The (modern) realist theory, which Hans Morgenthau is considered one of the most important advocates, focuses on the idea of interest, power, and interest in the concept of this theory is determined within the framework of power that Morgenthau calls the idea of influence or control. In other words, the political power that this theory means is the extent of the relative influence that states exercise in their mutual relations, and thus it cannot be synonymous with violence in its various physical and military forms, but rather it is broader than that. It is between these elements and components that ultimately determines the strength of the state, and according to this size its potential for political influence in the face of other states is determined. Therefore, the realist theory views the international community and international relations as a continuous struggle towards increasing the power of the state and exploiting it in the manner dictated by its interests, regardless of the effects it

leaves on the interests of other countries (Makled, 1987).

The realist school, which is one of the most powerful schools in international relations, focused on a major variable, which is power, and tried to establish a system for international relations. Realists see that states often have conflicting interests to the extent that some of them lead to war, and the capabilities available to the state play an important role in determining the outcome of the international conflict and the state's ability to influence the behavior of others. Provided that it is realized that the capabilities of the state are not limited to the military aspect, for power is a compound of military and non-military parts, and the realists have models for classifying the elements or components of the national strength of the state, and power besides the military dimension includes other variables such as the level of technical development, population, natural resources and factors Geography, form of government, and political and ideological leadership (Dorothy Pallsgrave, 1985:59).

The Arab Gulf region is of economic importance and is of great importance for its distinguished geopolitical location, as well as its abundance of oil wealth and reserves, which made it play a vital and major role in the region, and also made it the focus of the attention of the great powers and a global political focus.

### Literature Review

Many studies have taken the importance of the Straits of Middle East region in concern, the following is a brief about some of them.

**Al-Khaqani & Kareem (2020)** analyzed the future of Omani-Iranian understanding in the Strait of Hormuz, The study found that the Gulf states are keen on freedom of navigation for their economic and commercial interests in it, in light of Iranian threats to close the Strait by conducting military maneuvers from time to time, The study also concluded that the role of the Omani-Iranian understanding in Hormuz stands out from the embodiment of the nature of bilateral relations on the one hand.

**Aljazeera center (2019)** spotted some important information about Hormuz and the surrounding islands such as it is considered the most important global oil corridor, The study found that in parallel with the escalation of tension in the Strait of Hormuz between Iran on one hand and Britain and United states on the other, channels of

communication have been opened between these parties.

**Baleeshaet. (2018)** the study relied on the realistic proposition in the analysis, the results of the study showed that political interactions in the region are subject to the logic of interest and the use of force in its geographical segment to put pressure on competing and threatening parties. The study concluded that in this war of Straits, each alliance seeks to win it in any way.

**Abood et al. (2018).** The study found that international Straits are neutral zones where war operations are not permitted and there are some shortcomings and gaps in the transit system during the international Straits, the most important of which is the lack of distinction between the state of war and the state of peace in transit.

**Ratner (2018)** .The study concluded that the exchanges of threats between members of the governments of Iran and the United States, including the presidents of both countries, have again raised the specter of an interruption of shipping through the Strait of Hormuz which is a key waterway for the transit of oil and natural gas to world markets.

**Shay (2016).**The study showed that Since March 2015, a Saudi-led Arab coalition has fought against the Iran backed Shi'a Houthis in Yemen. The study also concluded that Strait had played vital role in this complicated war.

### Procedural definitions

**The Strait of Hormuz:** It is a strait connecting the Gulf of Oman and the Arabian Gulf. It is of great importance and benefit, especially for the Arab Gulf states. The Strait of Hormuz is located in the Arabian Gulf region, and separates the waters of the Arabian Gulf on the one hand and the waters of the Makran Gulf, the Arabian Sea and the Indian Ocean on the other. It is overlooked from the north by Iran and from the south by the Sultanate of Oman, which oversees the maritime traffic in it, given that the passage of ships comes within its territorial waters (Lakhwand, 1995: 120).

**Great Power:** is a sovereign state that is recognized as having the capacity and competence to exercise its influence on a global scale. Great powers characteristically possess military and economic power, as well as the influence of diplomatic and soft power, which may cause medium or small powers to consider the opinions of the great powers

before taking any action of their own (Bachmann, and Sidaway, 2009: 105).

### Methodology

The descriptive-analytical method was used: this method is concerned with defining and evaluating the parts that make up the whole for any issue. It is a means of obtaining broad and new knowledge, and it is known that the analytical method takes the analysis in different forms and levels depending on the nature of the research topic, and the multiplicity of analysis processes is a condition for providing a more general and comprehensive understanding of the issue under study, as it works on analyzing the subject into simple elements or dividing the thing into its components and units. Which helps to reveal the essence of the phenomenon or the structure of the thing and to determine the relationship of the elements or parts to each other, and how they combine with each other within the general framework of the whole. Determining the function of each of them and the weight and contribution it represents to the general role played by all. This helps the researcher to distinguish between what is primary or secondary, in addition to revealing the multiple stages that the phenomenon goes through in its movement and development, and knowing its causes and real implications for private policy in the state (Abdel Majid, 2000:58). This method was used in this study by analyzing the impact of the Strait of Hormuz on the policies of the great powers in the Arabian Gulf region.

### Limitations

**Time Limitations:** The study is limited to a period of time 2019/2020.

**Places Limitations:** This study will be applied on the Strait countries in addition to number of big powers. It's showed to: The acquisition of the status of a "great power" has depend primarily upon military prestige, military potential, and military achievement.

### Chapter I: A brief history of the history of the Strait of Hormuz and the straits in the Middle East

#### Section I: A historical overview of the history of the Strait of Hormuz

The Strait of Hormuz is one of the most important waterways in the world and the most movement of ships. It is located in the Arabian Gulf

region (Abbas, 2013: 556), separating the waters of the Arabian Gulf on one side and the waters of the Gulf of Oman, the Arabian Sea and the Indian Ocean on the other hand, as it is the only sea port for Iraq, Kuwait, Bahrain and Qatar. It is bordered on the north by Iran (Bandar Abbas Governorate) and on the south by the Sultanate of Oman (Musandam Governorate), which oversees the movement of maritime navigation in it, considering that the corridor of ships comes within its territorial waters (Nasser, 2013:88).

The Strait included a number of small uninhabited islands, the largest of which is the Iranian island of Qeshm, the island of Lark and the island of Hormuz, in addition to the three disputed islands between Iran and the United Arab Emirates (Greater Tunb, Lesser Tunb and Abu Musa). The Strait was called "Hormuz" because of the mediation of the ancient Kingdom of Hormuz, which was known as "the magic door of the East", as it was attributed to "Hormuz", one of the kings of Persia (Knights, 2015).

It facilitates the export of about one-fifth of the world's crude oil. In the International law, the Strait is considered part of the high seas, and all ships have the right and freedom to pass through it as long as it does not harm the safety of coastal states or affect its system or security. On April 30, 1982 AD, the International Convention on the Law of the Sea was adopted by the countries bordering the seas, and the most important thing in this agreement is Article 38 thereof, and it is as follows: Whether these ships or tankers are commercial or military (Henderson,2016).

Due to the strategic location of the strait, it has not been able to escape throughout history the greed and struggle of the major powers to control it. Since the seventh century BC, it has played an important international and regional role that contributed to international trade. It was subjected to the Portuguese occupation and then other European countries, especially Britain, to spread the competing Western companies, and security declines with the invasions of pirates. Britain considered the Strait of Hormuz a strategic crossroads, and a main road to India, so it intervened by direct and indirect means in the affairs of the countries on its shores to secure their necessary transportation, imposing occupation and conflicting with the French and Dutch for many years, in addition to its clash with the Portuguese starting in 1588 after the Battle of Balarmada and the

establishment of the East India Company, thus ensuring Britain's naval control of this area (Najma, 2013).

With the discovery of oil, the strategic importance of the Strait of Hormuz increased due to the large oil reserves in the region. Previous political crises prompted the countries of the region to reduce their dependence on this strait, in earlier periods, and to seek the help of laying oil pipelines. However, these attempts remained of limited impact, especially for importing services, technology and weapons. Straits has remained the subject of a strategic bet between major countries. The former Soviet Union longed to reach the strait to achieve its desired supremacy and gain access to the region's oil, while the United States sought to launch its fleets in the waters of the Indian Ocean and the Arabian Gulf and fortified political, commercial and military ties with the countries of the region to ensure its access to oil sources and to supervise its supply routes from The Strait of Hormuz, which it considers part of its national security, considering that securing freedom of navigation in it is a very important international issue, especially as it is the most important route for global oil supplies (Al-Alawit, 2008).

## **Section II: Introducing the waterways in the Middle East :**

In the Middle East there are several Straits and sea ports, which are considered life lines for the whole world, where they are used to transfer energy from its sources to the rest of the world.

### **1) Strait of Hormuz**

The Strait of Hormuz is located in the entrance of the Arabian Gulf between Oman and Iran, connecting the Arabian Gulf with the Gulf of Oman and the Arabian Sea, Thirty oil tankers with a cargo of about 17 million barrels of oil per day pass through it. That's about 40% of the world oil trade. The Gulf region exports 90% of its oil products through it (Baleeshaet, 2018: 56).

### **2) The Strait of Bab al-Mandab**

The Strait of Bab al-Mandab is a strategic waterway located between Djibouti, Yemen and Eritrea, where the Red Sea connects the Indian Ocean (Alajoulen, 2020: 106).

At its narrowest point, the Strait is only 29 km wide between Yemen on one side and Djibouti and Eritrea on the other.

The Bab al-Mandab Strait is a strategic junction for world trade. Almost all of the trade between the

European Union and Japan, China, India and the rest of Asia passes through the Bab al-Mandab (Gulf Research center, 2010: 5).

Based on its strategic position about 30% of the world's oil, including all of the oil and natural gas from the Persian Gulf heading west passes through the Bab al-Mandab Strait (Shay, 2016).

### 3) Suez Canal

Industrial waterway extends in Egypt from north to south through the Isthmus of Suez to connect the Mediterranean Sea with Red sea (Markus, 2008:14). It separates Asia and Africa and the shortest sea route between Europe and the countries around the Indian Ocean and the Western Pacific.

Modern ships use it because it is the fastest and shortest to pass from the Atlantic to the Indian Ocean (Baleeshaet, 2018).

### 4) Strait of Gibraltar

One of the most important waterways in the world, located between the Iberian Peninsula and north Africa. It separates the continent of Europe and Africa. Also, it separates the Mediterranean Sea from the Atlantic Ocean with a canal up to 58 km long and more than 400 meters deep.

About 250 ships and tankers cross the Strait daily, about one-sixth of world trade and about 5% of world oil trade (Alajoulen, 2020: 109).

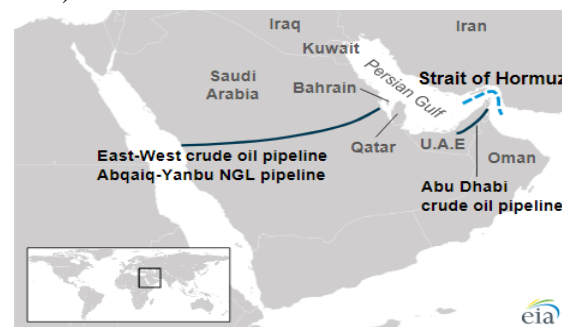
## Chapter II: Political and Economic Strategic Importance of Hormuz Strait.

### Section I: the strategic importance of the Strait of Hormuz in the international economy:

According to the (Fortexa) Oil Analytics Company, about one-fifth of the world's oil production passes through the strait, or about 17.4 million barrels per day, while consumption reached about 100 million barrels per day in 2018, the majority of which went to China, India, Japan and other Southeast Asian countries. And in the event of any disruption in the strait or its surroundings, these countries will be the first affected, led by China, America's economic competitor. Most of the crude exports from Iran, Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Kuwait and Iraq also pass through the strait, in addition to Qatar's production of liquefied natural gas, which is the largest exporter in the world, and 22% of the world's basic commodities pass through the strait. The strait is an international waterway protected by Article 38 of the International Convention on the Law of the Sea adopted on April 30, 1982, which states that "all ships transiting international straits,

including the Strait of Hormuz, have the right of unimpeded passage, whether ships or tankers, commercial or military. This great importance of the strait made any security event near it a direct reflection on the economy of the region and the global economy. Because it connects the largest oil depot with the largest global market. The Strait of Hormuz is the most important maritime choke point in the world, and one of three important choke points for the oil trade around the Arabian Peninsula; Every day, 17-18.5 million barrels of oil transit through it, which is approximately 30-35% of the total seaborne trade of crude oil and other liquids (Staff, 2019).

About 80% of these huge loads of energy go to the Asian markets, with China, Japan, India, South Korea and Singapore taking the largest share. The strait enjoys a very important strategic location between Oman and Iran, and connects the Arabian Gulf, the Gulf of Oman, the Arabian Sea, and the Indian Ocean. Peak-hour traffic may increase to one tanker every six minutes, an average of 30 tankers per day. It is about 21 miles wide at its narrowest point, and although the shipping lane in both directions is only two miles wide, with a two-mile buffer zone, it is deep and wide enough to cross the world's largest oil tankers, so about two-thirds of all oil shipments pass through it. Aboard tankers with a tonnage exceeding 150 thousand tons (Al-Alawit, 2008).



Map of the Strait of Hormuz.

Source: US Energy Information Administration (Al-Alawit, A (2008). Gulf countries are looking at other exits for oil, Al-Wasat Newspaper, Issue 2126 - Tuesday, July 01, 2008).

The Strait of Hormuz is one of the ten most important Straits and most interested by the countries of the world that contain 120 Straits distributed across its waters and oceans, and these ten Straits are: Florida Strait, Dover Strait, Sajdat Strait, Mozambique Strait, Bab Al-Mandab Strait, Gibraltar Strait and Malacca Strait, Lombok Strait, Luzon Strait, Bosphorus Strait, Dardanelles Strait,



and finally the Strait of Hormuz. The most important risks to the Strait are the shallow waters of the Arabian Gulf and the narrow waterways of the Strait of Hormuz itself, which makes it vulnerable and easily to disability and easily by laying mines and the possibility of exposure of oil tankers present in the waters of the Strait to various types of armed offensive operations that may come from inside and outside the Arab Gulf region.

## **Section II: The policies of international powers towards the Strait of Hormuz:**

Germany, Belgium, Denmark, France, Greece, Italy, the Netherlands and Portugal provide political support for the establishment of the European Maritime Monitoring Mission in the Strait of Hormuz. The work of the European Maritime Monitoring Mission in the Strait of Hormuz aims to ensure a safe environment for maritime navigation and to calm current regional tensions, in the context of pursuing other current activities and initiatives in the field of maritime security in the region, in particular the International Maritime Security Alliance. The mission will work in a pragmatic manner to enhance access to and control of the conditions of the seas by providing additional equipment for maritime monitoring in the Gulf and Arabian Sea, according to the official website of the French Foreign Ministry. At the beginning of last year, France announced the launch of a European naval mission in the Strait of Hormuz, with the aim of ensuring freedom of navigation in the Gulf, in addition to strengthening the approach to de-escalation with Iran. France has made efforts for a European security alternative in the Strait of Hormuz after ruling out joining a US-led coalition to protect oil tankers and cargo ships from what Washington described as threats from Iran. The strategic interests of the major European powers (Germany, Britain, France) and the European Union with Iran include achieving regional stability in the Arab Gulf region, especially the security of the Gulf waters and the security of the straits and corridors covered by the Gulf region due to its strategic importance in oil supplies and maritime navigation and the impact of So on prices and economies.

It is possible that European countries, together with the European Union, will continue to implement a “dual strategy” in dealing with Iranian threats to the security of Gulf waters, in contrast to the “hard and strict strategy” adopted by the United States towards Iran. The European dual strategy will

depend on “continuing to impose economic and political sanctions on Iran, but continuing to maintain an acceptable pace of economic cooperation between the two parties.” this is because economic Europe is different from political Europe, and any imbalance in maintaining the balance in the issue of economic cooperation will pose a threat to European energy security. Given that Iran is always trying to spread provocations in the Strait of Hormuz and threatens to block oil tankers that supply Europe with energy resources (European Center for Counter-Terrorism and Intelligence Studies, 2021).

The Strait of Hormuz is a waterway that separates Iran and the Sultanate of Oman, and connects the Gulf with the Gulf of Oman and the Arabian Sea. The width of the strait is 33 kilometers at its narrowest part, but the shipping lane does not exceed three kilometers in width in both directions. The US Energy Information Administration estimated that 18.5 million barrels of seaborne oil per day passed through the strait in 2016. That accounted for about 30 percent of crude and other oil liquids shipped by sea in 2016. Oil Analytics Company Vortexa said that an estimated 17.2 million barrels per day of crude and condensate were transported through the strait in 2017, and about 17.4 million barrels per day in the first half of 2018. With global oil consumption reaching about 100 million barrels per day, this means that nearly One-fifth of that quantity passes through the Strait of Haram. Most crude exports from Saudi Arabia, Iran, the United Arab Emirates, Kuwait and Iraq, all members of the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries, pass through the strait. Almost all of Qatar's LNG production also passes through the strait. Qatar is the world's largest exporter. The tools of Iranian control and military involvement in the strait are formed in a regular way, as the Iranian navy and its special forces are carrying out the tasks and strategic decisions entrusted to them by Tehran. This was evident in the Iranian defenses shooting down of the American drone in June 2019, as well as the Iranian seizure of a British oil tanker in July 2019 (Staff, 2019).

## **The Strait of Hormuz in the Russian initiative for Gulf security**

On July 23, 2019, Russia proposed the establishment of a security system in the Gulf region, based on improving conditions for stability and security, resolving conflicts, and dealing with the post-crisis phase, by presenting nine principles

governing the work of this system, the most important of which focused on the necessity of Work to build a unified coalition to combat terrorism, including all parties concerned with eliminating the hotbeds of extremism and terrorism in the Middle East and ensuring a sustainable political settlement in Syria, Yemen and other countries in the region, Provided that all these activities are carried out under the auspices of the United Nations, emphasizing that the principles of respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity, and the settlement of internal policy issues through national dialogue and within the constitutional framework and without external interference. In order to achieve these principles, the Russian vision included a number of measures, including the parties' reaffirmation of all their legal obligations (particularly the non-use or threat of force in settling disputes, respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the countries of the region, commitment to the settlement of territorial and border disputes through negotiations and peaceful means), and mutual commitment to military transparency (dialogue on military doctrines, subregional meetings of defense ministers, establishment of hotlines exchanging initial notifications about military exercises and flights, exchanging observers, refraining from permanent deployment of foreign forces within the territory of the Gulf states, exchanging information related to the purchase of arms and armed forces), Signing arms control agreements (establishment of demilitarized zones, banning the accumulation of conventional weapons that threaten stability, such as missile capabilities, mutual reduction of armed forces), taking the necessary steps to rid the region of weapons of mass destruction, and concluding agreements on combating cross-border terrorism, arms trade, illegal immigration and trafficking Drugs and Organized Crime (European Center for Counter-Terrorism and Intelligence Studies, 2021).

### **European countries and two initiatives to secure the Strait of Hormuz**

Against the background of the exposure of a British oil tanker to piracy by the Iranian Revolutionary Guards when passing through the Strait of Hormuz, Britain under the leadership of "Theresa May" presented an initiative to form a European naval force with air control support that would enhance its mission in securing navigation in the strait. This initiative received initial support

from France, Italy, the Netherlands and Denmark. In the words of Danish Foreign Minister Jeppe Kofod, "the Danish government is looking positively towards a possible contribution to this initiative." Spain, Sweden, Poland and Germany also supported the proposal, thus becoming a European initiative in the face of the American initiative, so that this force would assume the task of securing the safety of navigation in the Gulf and its corridors to reduce friction with Iran, which is less sensitive to Europe and the policies of its countries compared to the United States after withdrawing from the Iranian nuclear agreement, with Bearing in mind that this initiative was purely security in nature, meaning that it does not have any political cover on the part of NATO or the European Union. However, despite this, this initiative was met from the first moment by the Iranian rejection of the same pretext that rejected the American initiative, which is represented in its rejection of the American and European military presence in the Gulf waters, on the pretext that the security of the Gulf and its corridors are among the tasks of the countries overlooking it (Staff, 2019).

The United States obtains its oil from the Arabian Gulf first and central Asia second. These energy resources go to the United States after arriving from central Asia, the landlocked area in which case they meet with the resources coming from the Gulf in the Arabian Sea to go through the Strait of Hormuz and then the Strait of Bab el-Mandeb through the Suez Canal to the Mediterranean and then influence through Strait of Gibraltar to the Atlantic Ocean. This way is not favored by the United States because of the Iranian pressure and its threat to US energy security. The invasion of Afghanistan in 2001 was enough to avoid central Asian oil from passing through Iranian territory and instead passing it through Pakistani Indian territory to the Indian Ocean and then entering from the Strait of Bab al-Mandab (Abood, 2018: 63).

As for Arabian Gulf Countries, The Strait of Hormuz is the only waterway that connects the Persian Gulf and the Gulf of Oman. It is the main outlet for countries bordering the Arabian Gulf, with the exception of Saudi Arabia, which has ports on the Red Sea likewise, the Sultanate of Oman, which is located on the Gulf of Oman, and finally the United Arab Emirates, which recently modernized and expanded the Khorfakkan port in

anticipation of the declaration of the Strait of Hormuz. Despite the strategic importance of the Strait to all countries bordering the Arabian Gulf, its importance varies from one country to another, and comes primarily to Iraq, Bahrain and Qatar, where the Strait is the major gateway and the main road to international seas. Then Saudi Arabia comes second, then comes Oman and the United Arab Emirates. In order to demonstrate the role of the Strait of Mount Hormuz in fueling international conflicts, the researcher mentions some of the incidents in the strait region.

- On June 13, 2019, two oil tankers were attacked near the Strait of Hormuz while passing through the Gulf of Oman. The attack occurred on the same day that Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe met Ayatollah Khamenei in Iran. A month after the Gulf of Oman incident. Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's visit to Tehran was commissioned by US President Donald Trump on a mediation mission between America and Iran.
- On July 19, 2019, the Iranian Revolutionary Guard announced the seizure of a British oil tanker in the Strait of Hormuz, in retaliation for the Iranian tanker detained in the British colony of Gibraltar. Amid rising tensions between Iran and the United States, the United States and Saudi Arabia blamed Iran for the attacks. Iran denied the accusation and blamed the United States for defaming it and spreading misinformation.
- On May 10, 2021, the US Department of Defense announced that the ships of the Iranian Revolutionary Guards "performed a safe and professional maneuver of a US Army company in the Strait of Hormuz".

### **Section III: alternative lines in the event of closing the Strait of Hormuz**

The importance of the alternative lines has increased the Iranian threats to close the strait, but these lines remain on their own and unable to meet the needs of the GCC countries, along with Iraq, in transporting their oil exports. This prompted these countries to search for new alternatives to transfer these exports, and the proposed ideas and projects, some of which entered into force, came as follows (Al-Luhaidan, 2012):

1. Access to the Arabian Sea through Yemeni territory, by laying pipelines to transport oil from the Shaybah field in the Empty Quarter and other

fields to the Arabian Sea coast through Yemeni territory, or extending that line through the Omani and Emirati lands, provided that those countries benefit in return from The East-West Saudi pipeline, which transports the exports of these petroleum countries to the Red Sea coast.

2. International shipping lines unload their cargoes, of goods and products imported to the Gulf countries, in the Kingdom's ports along the Red Sea, provided that the goods are transported by land or air to the Gulf countries, in addition to providing the ships with the fuel necessary to complete their journeys to the east or west.

### **Strategic alternatives across the UAE**

The "Habshan Al-Fujairah" pipeline, linking the emirates of Abu Dhabi and the port of Fujairah, with a length of 70 km, and will have the capacity to pump between 1.5 and 1.8 million barrels of oil per day, which means that 70% of the UAE's production can be transferred through this line. It will cost about \$3.29 billion and is owned by the International Petroleum Investment Company. The important strategic location of the Fujairah port on the Gulf of Oman and overlooking the Arabian Sea has made the port one of the strategic alternatives for the Gulf countries to transport their oil exports and other materials, as the port can be a route for transporting oil through the new line, and the port's importance increases because the storage facilities in the Emirate Fujairah can absorb about seven million cubic meters of crude oil. The port expansion plan began in early 2011 by adding two new berths 80 meters long and 20 meters deep (Al-Tawati, 2014).

### **Conclusion**

The following results were obtained:

- The economic importance of the Strait of Hormuz focuses on the fact that (40%) of the world's oil supplies pass through this strait, and this is due to the link between the economies of the region's countries with oil, as Saudi Arabia exports through this strait approximately (88%) of its production destined for export. abroad, while Iraq, Kuwait and Qatar depend on exporting (99%) of their oil and gas production for export to world markets on this strait.
- The Strait of Hormuz is the busiest waterway in the world. About 20% of the world's oil and about 30% of liquefied natural gas pass through it annually during its journey to consuming countries, and any closure of this strait will close

the way for all the liquefied natural gas produced in the region is estimated at about (82) million tons in 2017.

- The American military presence in the Gulf represents the focus of conflict between Iran and the Arab Gulf states, as Iran believes that the Arab Gulf states are the ones that opened the door to the American Western presence in the region, and that this presence poses a threat to the security of the Gulf, which is the responsibility of the Gulf states itself in order to maintain the security of the region
- The Strait of Hormuz is of great importance in stabilizing international energy security through the volume of international trade that passes through the strait in the field of energy exports from the production areas in the Gulf Cooperation Council countries to the consuming countries in Europe and Asia, which increased the amount of interest from the great powers America, France, Germany and China. Japan will protect the strait and ensure the safety of traffic for ships and oil tankers.
- The Strait of Hormuz has a great importance in international trade, shipping lines and oil transportation. It is located in the Arabian Gulf region, and is the connecting point that connects the Gulf to the Indian Ocean and from there to the world. Its importance is gained from the presence of the largest oil-exporting countries in the Gulf, through which oil tankers pass and goods are received. Coming from different parts of the world.
- The alliances made by the Gulf countries with the external power that often serve the interests of these powers represented by the United States and the Western countries that have established their military facilities and bases in the Arabian Gulf region in order to control the region and control the sources of oil and its exports.

### Recommendations

**Based on the results of the study, it recommends the following:**

- The countries of the Arab region that benefit from the strait should expand their reliance on preparing their ports on the shores of the Gulf of Oman, the Arabian Sea and the Red Sea to be used as an alternative in the event that the Strait of Hormuz is closed by Iran.

- Working to strengthen the internal front of the Arab Gulf states through achieving social development and achieving justice in a manner that ensures confronting and responding to any penetration or external interference in the affairs of the Arab Gulf states.
- Drafting a national discourse inclusive of the Gulf Cooperation Council countries to confront the divisive ideology and inflame the feelings of sectarian tension fueled by Iran, and direct Gulf media messages to show the inherent dangers of the Iranian sectarian project.

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