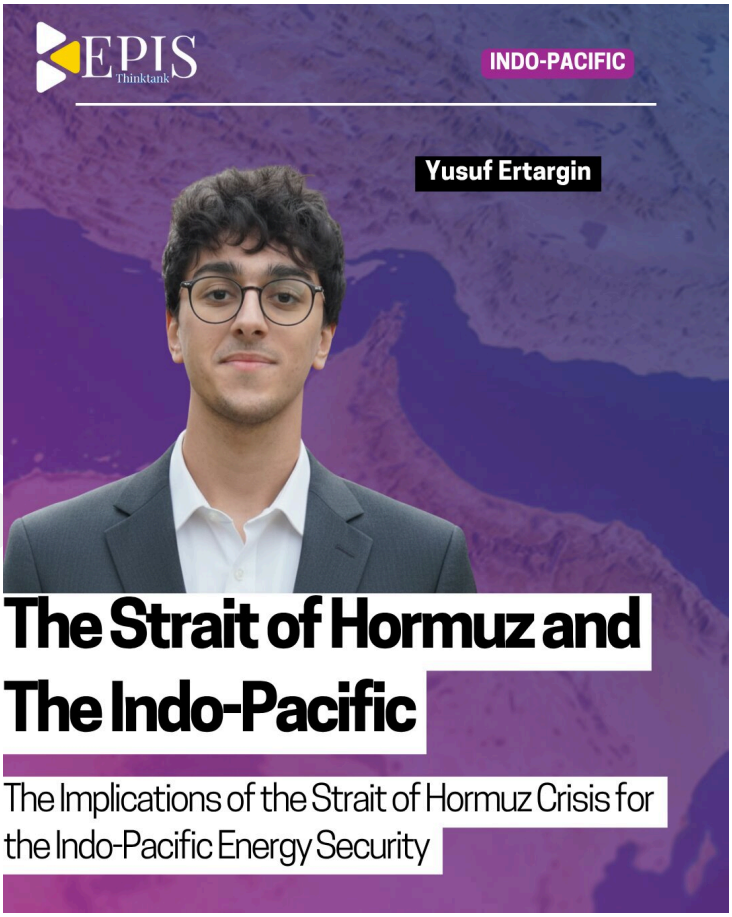
THE STRAIT OF HORMUZ AND THE INDO-PACIFIC

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Following the US-Israeli strikes, Iran announced on 2 March its decision to close the Strait of Hormuz, one of the most important maritime points with wide geopolitical connections. As a chokepoint through which hundreds of oil tankers and vessels pass, Iran's decision to block the Strait deeply concerns the Indo-Pacific region's energy security. After the Strait's blockade, Iran's Ministry of Foreign Affairs Spokesperson Esmaeil Baghaei highlighted that « (...) ships must coordinate with the Iranian Navy when passing through so that maritime security is maintained. » (Reuters, 2026). Nonetheless, only a few selected vessels have been able to transport tankers

to the Indo-Pacific region since the blockade, marking an important energy deficiency in many Asian countries.

Yearly charts show that of all the vessels that pass through the Strait of Hormuz, around 84% percent of crude oil and around 83% percent of the liquified natural gas (LNG) were bound for Asia (Hale, 2026). Constituting 20% of global production, where 14.2 million crude oil barrels are transported each day, the Strait of Hormuz crisis not only disrupted the energy routes, but the base prices too. Before the conflict, the oil prices for Brent crude was at 65 Dollars per barrel. Since the conflict, it has become around 40% higher, amounting to 105 Dollars per barrel (Shamim, 2026).

The Effects on Oil Reserves of the Indo-Pacific Countries

China, while suffering from the crisis intensively as a huge oil importer, will still enjoy a better autonomy with its own domestic production and oil reserves. Additionally, as China relies less on LNG compared to its neighbours, and considering its pipeline imports from Russia and Central Asia, it can highly benefit from the LNG outage (Webster et al., 2026). Comparatively, Japan with its 350 million barrels of crude inventory can hold up for nearly 150 days, making it one of the least affected countries from the blockade in its first phase.

Nonetheless, apart from China, Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan who are more secure in the first exposition to the crisis, other countries in the Indo-Pacific are more at risk. Notably, Vietnam is strained every day by the blockade and has a higher exposure to immediate oil shocks. The country is announced to have only about 20 days of reserves. Similarly, Indonesia is set to hold up for around 23 days if the blockade continues, making the two countries likely to face concerning effects on crude oil prices (Hale,2026).

How Do Indo-Pacific Countries Aim to Solve the Energy Security: Practical Aspects

Faced with unforeseen and ambiguous energy supply shortages, all Indo-Pacific countries are considering precautionary policies to address the issue. While countries that are less severely impacted by the crisis because of their higher rate of domestic oil production and export capacity, such as Malaysia, Brunei, Japan, and China opt for long-term solutions; other countries have announced immediate civil policies to restrict energy usage.

The Associated Press reported how the crisis is handled on a country-by-country basis. For example, the Philippines switched to a four-day workweek and suggests shutting off computers and air conditioners during breaks as a first countermeasure. Similarly in Vietnam, government officials urge citizens to work online and avoid taking the elevators in an attempt to keep a « buffer-zone » against the first phase of the crisis (Saaliq & Delgado, 2026).

Other countries such as Indonesia opted for state subsidies, cash handouts, fuel rationing, and Taiwan and Singapore set limits on fuel prices for uncontrollable price increases. This didn't stop the financial effects on the service industry, however. Many tourist places are seeing a sharp decline in tourism and restaurants are losing customers due to the economic strains of the oil prices (Richter & Kurlantzick, 2026). These bottom-up measures are far from sufficient if the Strait of Hormuz continues to be blocked and the prolonging of the conflict in Iran could push these countries to a more long-term approach since most Asian countries might run out of oil in the following month.

Japan, as a country with high reserves that can hold up against the initial shockwave, is still in a critical condition as the country relies on the Strait of Hormuz for 93% of its oil imports. To maintain the issue at hand, Japan issued private sector oil stockpiles for two weeks and relies on its fairly large oil reserves that can keep the country afloat (Saaliq & Delgado, 2026).

India

India's relationship with Iran has led to a balanced approach by India to secure its LNG imports. The Strait of Hormuz is critical to India, as 60% of its LNG imports pass through it. As of right now, Iran's decision to allow two Indian vessels to pass through has been beneficial for the country's immediate supply crisis. Moreover, Iran's next steps will determine India's new expansion in energy routes since it is involved with the port of Chabahar in southern Iran, a critical chokepoint that will give India access to Central Asia by bypassing Pakistan (Rossi, 2026).

South Korea

To solve the energy shortage, South Korea follows a similar doctrine as India where the government tries not to fragilise diplomatic ties with the United States and Iran. South Korea may follow the steps of India and China to enter talks with Iran for the passage of several vessels through the Strait and create a temporary solution for the issue. However, as South Korea recently completed a successful tariff deal with the US and lowered its tax burden for a 350 billion dollar deal, undermining this partnership may hurt South Korea deeply (Chan-Kyong, 2026). As one of the vulnerable countries to the energy shortage, South Korea must deepen its negotiations with the US and Saudi Arabia to expand its oil capacity through different routes to find a solution for the fertilizer and semiconductor manufacturing industries affected by the crisis.

The energy crisis resulting from the US-Iran conflict has affected China less than other Indo-Pacific countries in the first weeks. This is accomplished by China's high energy production and 1.4 billion barrels of commercial reserves that can last for several months before hitting critical limits. Moreover, China's diverse routes for oil exports, notably

with Russian pipelines help find alternative solutions while avoiding total dependence on the Strait. While Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan suffer from the damages inflicted on the petrochemical industry, China will become a major supplier to the region and increase the profitability of its petrochemical companies (Webster & Burnet, 2026). The US-Iran conflict, however, will continue to create tensions in Chinese domestic markets as global consumption of crude oil is expected to decrease, hitting the Chinese domestic growth and companies (Garcia-Herrero, 2026). Nevertheless, the relation between China and Iran portrays an asymmetric dynamic in which China is more crucial for Iran as it depends heavily on Chinese demand (Rossi, 2026).

WHAT'S NEXT FOR THE REGION? POLITICAL MANEUVERING OF THE INDO-PACIFIC COUNTRIES

As the conflict is nearly finishing its first month, Indo-Pacific countries struggle to find a firm position, employing a variety of approaches concerning the Strait of Hormuz. While the Trump administration calls out for all allies in the Pacific to support their military action against Iran and reopen the Strait quickly, many of them remain indecisive.

A notable example has been Japan, as they have stated that no decision has been made yet against the US's pressure to include them in their operations. Japan's Prime Minister Takaichi said that the government was examining « the legal and operational parameters of any involvement » (Basu, 2026).

When it comes to China, the CCP has, unsurprisingly, no announcement supporting the US government on the matter. Since the start of the conflict, China has positioned itself as a global partner open for dialogue, keeping the channels open for the strategic countries in the Middle East (Panda, 2026).

Conclusion

In conclusion, the energy crisis surrounding the Strait of Hormuz has affected the Indo-Pacific countries greatly. While some of the countries managed to utilize their crude oil production capacity and partnerships to stay afloat for a longer period, other countries have been the center of energy shortage in the region. Countries on East Asia started short-term policies to cut the energy usage in a quick manner, while the largest Asian countries opted out for diplomatic solutions and long-term strategic approaches. Nonetheless, the direction of the conflict and whether the strait of Hormuz will be open in the following weeks is still ambiguous, making assessments regarding the outcome for the Indo-Pacific countries difficult.

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