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THE WEST ASIA CONFLICT AND ITS IMPACT ON MARITIME AFFAIRS: A PRELIMINARY GEOPOLITICAL AND BLUE ECONOMY ANALYSIS

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Abstract

Ongoing geopolitical tensions in West Asia, particularly in strategic areas such as the Strait of Hormuz, the Suez Canal, and the Red Sea, have sparked major concerns over the stability of global maritime trade. This study aims to analyse the dynamics of conflict in the region and systematically assess its impact on the world's maritime industry. Using qualitative methods through content analysis of industry reports, trade data, and the latest geopolitical literature, the study identified several critical effects. The findings of the study show that such conflicts cause significant disruptions to global supply chains, sharp increases in the cost of ship insurance (war risk premiums), as well as shipping route diversions that increase operating costs and carbon emissions. In addition, threats to maritime security such as drone attacks and pirates at choke points have forced a realignment of international logistics strategies. The study concludes that instability in West Asia not only threatens global energy security, but also demands stronger multilateral cooperation in strengthening the resilience of maritime infrastructure. The implications of this study provide guidance for policymakers and industry players to devise more effective contingency plans in dealing with future geopolitical risks.

Key words: West Asia Conflict, Global Maritime Industry, Maritime Security, World Supply Chain & Shipping Geopolitics

Introduction

The maritime industry is the main lifeblood of the contemporary globalization process, as it handles more than 80% of the world's trade volume and about 70% of the value of global trade (UNCTAD, 2024). The world's dependence on sea transport makes the stability of maritime routes a key prerequisite for the sustainability of the international economy. In this context, West Asia is emerging as a geopolitical region of unparalleled strategic importance due to its geographical position connecting three major continents: Asia, Europe, and Africa (Rodrigue, 2025). The region's importance is focused on the world's three most critical maritime chokepoints, namely the Suez Canal, the Strait of Hormuz, and the Strait of Bab al-Mandab. According to data from the Energy Information Administration, the Strait of Hormuz alone is the route for nearly 21 percent of the world's daily consumption of petroleum liquids, making it the most important artery for global energy security (EIA, 2023). Meanwhile, the Suez Canal and the Bab al-Mandab Strait serve as the main gateway for container trade between manufacturing centres in Asia and the consumer market in Europe.

However, the security landscape in West Asia is often characterized by political instability, armed conflict, and ongoing geopolitical tensions. Any disruption in these chokepoints' areas, whether through physical blockades, drone attacks, or even the threat of asymmetric warfare, not only disrupts regional navigation security but also triggers a "domino effect" on the world economy (Stopford, 2023). For example, the recent security crisis in the Red Sea has proven how the actions of non-state actors can cripple global supply chains, forcing commercial vessels to veer thousands of nautical miles around Africa (World Bank, 2026). This article aims to systematically explore how conflict dynamics in West Asia have a direct and indirect impact on the world's maritime industry. Discussions will focus on three key dimensions: the surge in operating and insurance costs, the drastic shift in international shipping lanes, and the evolution of the global maritime security paradigm in the face of the threat of a new era. Through this analysis, this study is expected to provide a deeper understanding of the vulnerability of maritime trading systems to geopolitical shocks in West Asia.

Research Background

Ongoing geopolitical tensions in West Asia have exposed the systemic fragility of global maritime supply chains that have long been thought to be efficient but are in fact highly vulnerable to unforeseen external shocks. According to Al-Hajri (2025), the transition from conventional conflicts between countries to hybrid warfare involving non-state actors has created a grey zone in international maritime legislation that makes it difficult to protect commercial assets. The main problems faced by the world's maritime industry in facing this crisis start with the issue of increased risk costs and extreme insurance volatility. A fundamental problem facing shipowners is the sharp spike in war risk insurance premiums that are putting a strain on the company's cash flow. When a strategic area such as the Red Sea or the Gulf of Oman is declared a "High Risk Area" by the Joint War Committee, the cost of insurance can increase by up to 0.5% to 1.0% of the total value of the ship per single voyage (Stopford, 2023).

For example, for a modern container ship that costs US$150 million, this means that there is an additional operating cost of US$1.5 million for just one crossing, where this financial burden not only affects the profit margins of shipping companies but also contributes to the inflation of goods prices in the global market through increased logistics costs (World Bank, 2026). In addition, a study by UNCTAD (2024) also pointed out that this premium uncertainty causes instability in the setting of long-term contract fare rates. Subsequently, this conflict at this critical point triggers the problem of operational uncertainty and route dilemma that forces shipping operators to make difficult strategic decisions between safety parameters and economic efficiency. The need to divert ships through the Cape of Good Hope in South Africa to avoid a conflict zone in the Suez Canal has created significant and unprecedented logistical disruptions on a global scale.

According to Rodrigue (2025), this diversion adds a cruising distance of about 3,500 nautical miles, which on average extends transit time between 10 to 14 days each way. The technical impact of this problem not just delays in schedules, but involves an exponential increase in fossil fuel consumption as well as more frequent ship maintenance costs due to longer operating hours on the open seas. More critically, this phenomenon directly contradicts the decarbonization mandate set by the International Maritime Organization (IMO) due to the drastic increase in carbon dioxide (CO2) emissions due to such long-distance travel (IMO, 2024). This situation is exacerbated by the issue of disrupted container availability in major Asian ports due to slower ship turnaround (International Chamber of Shipping, 2024).

Finally, traditional maritime safety issues have now been radically altered by the threat of asymmetry and the evolution of increasingly sophisticated maritime weapons. The use of unmanned aerial drones (UAVs), remote-controlled boats loaded with explosives (USVs), as well as anti-ship ballistic missiles by non-state groups has outperformed the conventional defence systems possessed by most merchant ships (International Chamber of Shipping, 2024). Unlike traditional pirate threats in Somalia aimed at obtaining financial ransom, asymmetric attacks in West Asia are often ideological in nature and aimed at causing total physical damage or widespread navigational disruption as a tool of political pressure. This poses a major problem not only to the structural integrity of the ship but also to the safety of the crew's lives who have to deal with real war situations in commercial waters. Al-Hajri (2025) pointed out that the existing security protocols under the International Ship and Port Facilities Security Code (ISPS Code) are seen as still insufficient to cope with this modern warfare technology, thus leaving a void in a comprehensive maritime risk mitigation strategy. This problem also resulted in a labour crisis in the shipping sector as seafarers began to refuse to work on these high-risk routes (UNCTAD, 2024).

Objectives and Theoretical Framework

The main objective of this study is to in-depth unravel the relationship between dynamic geopolitical instability in West Asia and the performance and sustainability of the global maritime industry through a multidimensional approach that encompasses geostrategic, economic, and operational aspects. To achieve this goal, the first specific objective is focused on critically assessing the strategic importance of chokepoints in West Asia, in particular the Strait of Hormuz, the Suez Canal, and the

Bab al-Mandab, in the context of the increasingly complex global maritime trade ecosystem. According to Rodrigue (2025), the geographical position of West Asia is not just a transit route, but acts as a critical logistical bridge that drastically shortens the trade distance between the main manufacturing centres in East Asia and the giant consumer markets in Europe and the East Coast of the United States. The study aimed to gauge the extent of the world's dependence on this route, given that any form of physical blockade or security threat in the Strait of Hormuz could affect the daily flow of 21 million barrels of crude oil and petroleum products, which represent almost one-fifth of global liquid consumption (EIA, 2023).

By assessing cargo volumes, the variety of commodity types, and the frequency of merchant ship voyages, this objective will prove that the critical point is a strategic asset that directly determines the stability of global energy and commodity prices, thus making it a key target in geopolitical power projections (Al-Hajri, 2025). Next, the second objective of this study is to analyse the bi-dimensional impact, which includes the quantitative and qualitative impacts, of the armed crisis on the entire cost structure of the international shipping industry. From a quantitative point of view, this study aimed to measure the magnitude of the spike in fuel costs (*bunkers*) and war risk insurance premiums that typically increase exponentially once a conflict zone is declared by an international insurance body (Stopford, 2023). The analysis was also expanded to include significant productivity losses due to shipping schedule delays that caused supply chain disruptions to Just-in-Time (JIT) systems in the global manufacturing sector, often leading to costly contract penalties. Qualitatively, this study will assess the profound impact on the human element, especially the welfare of *seafarers*, which includes extreme psychological distress and the risk of life safety faced when forced to sail through an area of active conflict (International Chamber of Shipping, 2024). This holistic analysis is considered critical to understand the mechanisms by which geopolitical uncertainty in a single remote region ultimately translates into the financial burden and rising cost of living borne by end-users globally (World Bank, 2026).

Finally, the third objective of this study is dedicated to reviewing and evaluating the effectiveness of various mitigation strategies that have been adopted by shipping giants as well as international bodies in dealing with the maritime crisis in West Asia. This includes a critical assessment of the drastic move to divert ships to alternative routes, such as through the Cape of Hope, and the extent to which such measures affect the company's competitiveness and market efficiency (UNCTAD, 2024). At the multilateral level, this study will analyse the effectiveness of the role of international maritime task forces in providing security control, armed escort, and patrol in high-risk zones to restore confidence in the international shipping community. In addition, this objective will also explore the potential use of advanced technologies such as high-resolution satellite monitoring systems and the integration of artificial intelligence (AI) in predicting threat patterns in real-time to reduce operational risks (International Maritime Organization, 2024). A thorough assessment of all these strategies is critical to devising a more robust and dynamic resilience model for the maritime industry in the face of an increasingly uncertain future geopolitical landscape.

This study uses a multidimensional theoretical approach to understand the complex phenomenon of West Asian conflicts and their systemic impact on the global maritime industry. The two main theories that are at the core of the analysis are the Neoclassical Realist Theory and the World System Theory, where the combination of these two theories allows the study to analyse not only the strategic actions of the actors involved at the micro and macro levels, but also the effects of the chain on the intrinsically interdependent global economic structure. In the first dimension, the Neoclassical Theory of Realism is used as an analytical lens to explain how state actors and non-state groups in West Asia manipulate their geographical positions as instruments of strategic political and military power. According to Al-Hajri (2025), realism in the maritime context emphasizes that control over *chokepoints* such as the Strait of Hormuz and Bab al-Mandab is not just a technical issue of navigation, but is a critical *power projection* tool to claim regional influence. Within this theoretical framework, countries are seen to act on the basis of pragmatic national interests and the pursuit of relative security in an environment of international anarchy (Mearsheimer, 2018).

When there is a conflict in West Asia, the act of blocking the passage or carrying out attacks on commercial maritime assets is considered an asymmetric warfare strategy aimed at exerting maximum political pressure on the enemy as well as the international community. Rose (1998) in his argument of neoclassical realism asserts that domestic factors, including ideology and leaders' perceptions of external threats, greatly influence the way a country manipulates its maritime advantage as a form of coercive diplomacy. Thus, this theory helps explain why tensions in West Asia are often deliberately designed to undermine maritime stability in order to achieve broader political objectives, thus creating a high-risk environment for global shipping operators. Next, to understand the widespread economic impact beyond the geographical boundaries of conflict, this study applies the World System Theory pioneered by Immanuel Wallerstein. This theory views the world economy as a single, organically interdependent entity, where any disruption to the supply chain in a "*semi-periphery*" region such as West Asia will have a direct and immediate impact on the stability of other regions in the system (Wallerstein, 2004). In the context of the maritime industry, West Asia serves as a critical corridor or heart that connects the "core" countries in Europe with the global manufacturing centres of East Asia. According to Rodrigue (2025), maritime disruption in West Asia challenges the stability of the global capitalist economy because it inhibits the flow of strategic commodities and capital that are the main drivers of world growth. This theory argues that the vulnerability of the maritime industry to regional conflicts is actually a manifestation of the global system's extreme dependence on specialized routes that are highly efficient but have high geopolitical risks.

As a result, any threat in the Red Sea or the Persian Gulf is seen as not just a local crisis, but an existential threat to the efficiency of the global market that has the potential to trigger sharp inflation and economic recession at the international level (World Bank, 2026). In addition, UNCTAD (2024) emphasizes that in the modern world system, maritime disruptions in West Asia accelerate the economic gap between developed and developing countries due to disproportionate logistics costs. The synthesis between Neoclassical Realism and World System Theory ultimately

provides a comprehensive and holistic analytical framework for this study. Realism provides an in-depth explanation of the causes of conflict triggers as well as the strategic behavior of actors on the battlefield, while World Systems Theory explains the transmission mechanism of how such military actions translate into severe global economic disruption (Stopford, 2023). This integrated framework allows the study to conclude that the *future* resilience of the world's maritime industry does not depend solely on the sophistication of ship defence technology alone, but is highly tied to the stability of international political structures as well as the diversity of global supply chains that need to be recalibrated to reduce the risk of centralization at specific critical points (UNCTAD, 2024). Through the combination of these theories, the study was able to see the link between the act of sabotage of ships at the local level and the global cost of living crisis as an interrelated phenomenon in the modern maritime ecosystem.

Literature Review

The literature review in this study provides an in-depth focus on the organic relevance between geopolitical uncertainty and the economic responses that dynamically occur in the global shipping industry. Previous research has empirically proven that the structure of the maritime market does not operate in a vacuum, but rather it is a subject that is highly susceptible to complex and often nonlinear external disturbances. Fundamental research by Stopford (2023) in his authoritative work entitled Maritime Economics, emphasizes that the world shipping market is "hyper-sensitive" to any form of external shocks, whether in the form of an economic, natural disaster, or even an armed conflict that erupts in strategic territories. The main idea highlighted by Stopford is that the maritime market operates in highly volatile cycles, where small disruptions in a narrow geographical area can cause ripple effects resulting in fluctuations in freight rates around the world. He argued that the supply of ships is generally inelastic in the short term because the construction of new ships takes many years; thus, when conflict in West Asia erupts suddenly, the absence of an efficient alternative route causes transportation costs to rise dramatically to accommodate operational risks and sudden lack of space capacity. In line with this, UNCTAD (2024) adds that this sensitivity is exacerbated by the industry's reliance on "just-in-time" logistics models that have no tolerance for navigation delays in West Asia.

In the specific context of West Asia, the literature consistently demonstrates the existence of a close symbiotic relationship between navigation safety at critical points and the stability of global commodity markets. Al-Hajri (2025) through his intensive research entitled *Geopolitics of the Middle East and Maritime Security*, put forward the idea that the Strait of Hormuz serves as the world's most critical energy security "barometer". He proved through the analysis of historical data that every incident of attacks on tankers in the Gulf of Oman or the Strait of Hormuz has a direct and rapid correlation with the surge in the price of Brent crude oil in the international commodity market. The main idea emphasized by Al-Hajri is the emergence of the "geopolitical risk premium" which has now become a permanent and non-negligible component in the world's oil pricing formula, whereby investors and markets will always automatically react negatively to any military rhetoric taking place in the region. In line with this perspective, the World Bank (2026) argues that failure to

guarantee security in these straits not only disrupts the physical flow of energy, but also undermines the stability of the global financial system that relies on stable commodity prices.

The phenomenon of "the economics of diversion" is the main focus of a recent study by Rodrigue (2025) through a book entitled *The Geography of Transport Systems*. He introduced this concept to detail the impact of the Red Sea crisis that has caused the Suez Canal to lose trade traffic by 40% in a very short period of time. Rodrigue presents the insightful idea that the diversion of ships through the Cape of Good Hope is not just a technical issue of increasing geographical distance, but is a systemic shift that leads to severe inflationary effects in Europe and Asia. He argued in detail that the increased transit time of 10 to 14 days results in a "*floating capital*" phenomenon where billions of dollars' worth of goods is tied up at sea longer, thus reducing the liquidity of supply in the market and forcing retailers to raise final selling prices to cover rising inventory costs. This systemic impact was also discussed by the International Chamber of Shipping (2024) which stated that these diversions disrupt the global container cycle, causing the accumulation of empty containers in the wrong locations and exacerbating the supply chain crisis.

Furthermore, the environmental dimension and the effectiveness of international responses have also received attention in the latest literature. The International Maritime Organization (2024) through a special report entitled *Impact of Regional Conflicts on Global Shipping Emissions*, discusses the side effects of conflict on the global maritime sustainability agenda. The report's main idea is that geopolitical disruptions in West Asia have effectively derailed or at least delayed the maritime industry's decarbonization target by 2030. When merchant ships are forced to sail at higher speeds (slow steaming is abandoned) and through greater distances to avoid war zones, carbon dioxide emissions rise drastically beyond projected levels. This shows that geopolitical conflicts not only threaten the world economy, but also challenge international environmental commitments and sustainable development goals. Finally, Al-Hajri (2025) concludes that although satellite technology and artificial intelligence have improved maritime surveillance capabilities, they have not yet been able to replace the need for political stability on land to ensure security at sea, thus highlighting the limits of technology's capabilities in dealing with deep-rooted human crises.

Discussion and Analysis

This analysis comprehensively assesses the geostrategic position of West Asia as a key axis of global maritime trade through an examination of three critical tipping points, the impact of soaring operating costs on shipping industry players, as well as the drastic transformation in international navigation patterns due to geopolitical instability. Through the integration of statistical data and current risk assessments, this study reveals how systematic disruptions in the region are forcing global operators to bear extreme economic burdens and reframe their logistics strategies for the survival of the world's supply chains.

1. Geo-Strategic Analysis of Critical Points in West Asia

The study found that the geographical position of West Asia acts as the absolute control centre for world commodity flows, where the effectiveness of global maritime trade is highly dependent on smooth navigation at three key critical points. As shown in the statistical analysis in Table 1, each critical point has a unique yet organically interconnected strategic role in a fragile global supply chain ecosystem. The Strait of Hormuz has consistently been identified as the most critical point for the world energy market with an estimated daily volume of 21 million barrels of crude oil and liquefied natural gas (LNG). Any physical disruption in these straits, whether through military closures or seizures of ships, is capable of crippled economies of industrialized countries in a short period of time (EIA, 2023). The main risk here involves a military confrontation between countries that directly threatens the safety of tankers, thus creating extreme volatility in energy prices.

Next, the Suez Canal serves as a major artery for container trade between Asia and Europe which handles about 12% of the world's trade volume. Analysis shows that modern risks, specifically drone attacks and accidental route blockades, have a significant systemic impact on the availability of consumer goods (Rodrigue, 2025). The Bab al-Mandab Strait, on the other hand, acts as a strategic "gatekeeper" for access to the Red Sea, which now faces a high threat of asymmetry. Missile attacks by non-state actors in the region have affected the daily flow of 6.2 million barrels of oil, which directly reduces the effectiveness of the Suez Canal as a major route (World Bank, 2026). In conclusion, disruption at any point of this would trigger a cost-escalating "domino effect" across the global value chain, proving that geopolitical instability in West Asia is a systemic threat capable of destabilizing the international economy.

Table 1: Statistics of Key Critical Points in West Asia

CRITICAL POINT	KEY IMPORTANCE	ESTIMATED DAILY VOLUME	KEY RISKS
Strait of Hormuz	Export Petroleum & LNG	21 million barrels of oil	Strait closures, ship seizures
Suez Canal	Asia-Europe Container Trade	12% of World Trade	Traffic blocks, drone attacks
Bab al-Mandab	Access to the Red Sea	6.2 million barrels of oil	12% of World Trade

Source: Modified from U.S. Energy Information Administration (EIA). (2023). *World Oil Transit Chokepoints*. https://www.eia.gov/international/analysis/special-topics/World_Oil_Transit_Chokepoints; Suez Canal Authority (SCA). (2024). *Navigation Statistics: Annual Report 2023*; & UNCTAD. (2023). *Review of Maritime Transport 2023*. United Nations Publications.

2. Economic Impact on Ship Owners and Operators

As the level of geopolitical risk in West Asia increased, shipping giants such as Maersk, MSC, and CMA CGM were forced to implement extreme crisis management protocols to protect their assets and crew lives. This analysis shows that increased security risks automatically translate into unsustainable increased operating costs for most operators. Ship owners are now faced with a "Route Dilemma" that forces them to choose to detour through Cape of Good Hope, South Africa, to avoid active conflict

zones. This diversion adds a travel distance of about 3,500 nautical miles, which according to Stopford (2023), not only increases fuel consumption (*bunker*) by 30% to 40%, but also significantly reduces the frequency of rounds of ship assets in the market. As a result, there is a sharp shortage of empty container supply at major ports, which in turn drives freight *rates* to increase between 150% and 200% to maintain business continuity in the midst of the crisis (UNCTAD, 2024).

3 Analysis of Global Navigation Flow Changes

Analysis of global navigation maps shows a drastic transformation in sea traffic patterns when the Joint War Committee declared a navigation zone in West Asia as a "High Risk Area" (HRA). This declaration acted as a major catalyst for drastic changes in the structure of the world's maritime insurance. Ships that still choose to cross the HRA zone in West Asia are obliged to pay a very high additional war risk premium, while those who choose to avoid the zone cause unusually congestion on safer alternative routes. Real-time navigation data shows that during the height of the conflict, the number of ships passing through the Suez Canal could drop by up to 40%, while traffic density around the African coast increases dramatically (Rodrigue, 2025). These changes not only affect global logistics efficiency, but also permanently alter the geopolitical landscape of international waters, where countries along alternative routes begin to gain new strategic importance in the world's maritime economy (Al-Hajri, 2025). Finally, this analysis reinforces the argument that the stability of the global maritime industry is highly dependent on the ability of the international community to ensure peace in West Asia to ensure that supply chains are not systemically disrupted.

Research Findings

Based on a comprehensive secondary data analysis and an in-depth assessment of the latest global maritime industry reports, the study identifies several key findings that reflect the profound impact of the West Asian conflict on the international maritime landscape. The first and most significant finding is the cost and volatility impact of ship charter rates reaching critical levels during the peak of the crisis. Studies show that conflicts in West Asia, particularly along the Red Sea and Strait of Hormuz corridors, have triggered a dramatic spike in freight rates where fares for strategic Asian routes to Europe have been detected to increase drastically between 150% and 200% in a very short period of time (UNCTAD, 2024). This phenomenon is not just a manifestation of a physical safety risk, but rather an issue of systemic ship capacity scarcity that occurs simultaneously. When a large number of container and tanker ships are forced to divert through the Cape of Good Hope in South Africa, travel times increase on average by 10 to 14 days each way, which has technically "locked" in the existing capacity of ships at sea for a longer period (Stopford, 2023). According to a World Bank analysis (2026), this severe imbalance between the supply of available ships and the market demand that remains high has forced the importer and exporter community to pay much higher logistics costs, where this financial burden ultimately translates into higher prices of goods at the retail level and contributes to global inflationary pressures.

Furthermore, the study also found that ongoing geopolitical tensions in West Asia have very significant negative implications for the international maritime sustainability agenda. This second finding reveals that the massive diversion of ships to the Cape of Good Hope route has resulted in an increase in the use of fossil fuels (bunkers) by about 35% per voyage compared to the original route through the Suez Canal (Rodrigue, 2025). This increase in fuel consumption has directly resulted in a sharp spike in the emission of carbon dioxide (CO2) and other greenhouse gases into the atmosphere, thus undermining the integrity of the IMO 2030 decarbonization goals set by the International Maritime Organization. As critically argued by IMO (2024), the continued disruption to these most efficient trade routes effectively forces the shipping industry back to carbon-intensive navigation patterns and increases cruise speeds to accommodate transit time delays, which directly slows down the transition process to green shipping technologies that is being worked on globally under decarbonization initiatives.

Finally, the findings of the third study reveal a more positive dimension which is related to the level of resilience or resilience of the industry through aggressive technology adaptation. Despite the challenges of heavy costs and environmental constraints, maritime industry players have demonstrated exceptional adaptability through the integration of advanced digital technologies in their risk management protocols. The use of high-resolution satellite technology and remote sensing systems has now become the new standard for real-time threat monitoring in high-risk zones such as the Gulf of Aden and the Red Sea (Al-Hajri, 2025). Additionally, the international shipping giant is now starting to leverage sophisticated artificial intelligence (AI) algorithms to dynamically optimize routes and predict potential points of conflict before an attack occurs. According to the International Chamber of Shipping's report (2024), this shift to fleet management based on big data has not only succeeded in improving the level of crew safety and the integrity of ship assets, but also helps in reducing operational losses through more responsive contingency planning. In conclusion, these findings prove that the crisis in West Asia has acted as a catalyst for digital transformation in the maritime sector, even if it comes with extremely high economic and ecological costs to the international community.

Conclusion

This study concludes that the conflict in West Asia is no longer a temporary distraction, but rather has become a regular variable in modern maritime strategy planning. As outlined in the problem statement, the vulnerability of global supply chains to asymmetric threats and spiked cost risks is real. The findings of the study confirm that rising insurance premiums and operational uncertainty are not just a financial burden, but are systemic threats capable of crippling the efficiency of international trade. The failure to address security issues at critical points such as the Strait of Bab al-Mandab and the Strait of Hormuz has proven that the world's maritime infrastructure is very fragile to the actions of non-state actors using hybrid warfare technologies (Al-Hajri, 2025). In line with the objectives of the study, this analysis has succeeded in assessing the irreplaceable strategic importance of West Asia, as well as measuring the quantitative impact on operational costs that increase by up to 200% during the crisis (UNCTAD, 2024).

From a theoretical framework point of view, the use of Neoclassical Realism Theory proved relevant in explaining how actors in the region used maritime geography as a power projection tool to achieve domestic and international political goals (Mearsheimer, 2018). Whereas, the World System Theory validates that disruptions in the West Asian corridor trigger a domino effect that threatens the stability of the global capitalist economy, proving that extreme dependence on an efficient single route through the Suez Canal carries a high systemic risk to world inflation (Wallerstein, 2004; World Bank, 2026). To meet these challenges, freedom of navigation can only be ensured through the strengthening of international maritime task forces that go beyond physical patrols by involving the sharing of real-time intelligence to break asymmetric attacks before they reach commercial assets (International Chamber of Shipping, 2024).

Industry players are also proposed to no longer rely exclusively on one main route through investments in multimodal transport and the exploration of alternative routes such as the Northern Trade Route or land bridges to build resilience to sudden closures of critical points (Rodrigue, 2025). As threats are now technological, investments in cybersecurity to protect ships' navigation systems from hacking as well as the use of artificial intelligence for predictive risk analysis are critical (International Maritime Organization, 2024). In addition, the industry needs to invest in more efficient green energy vessels to mitigate the environmental impact when they have to go through longer detour routes to meet carbon emission targets (IMO, 2024). In conclusion, the future stability of the world's maritime industry will depend heavily on the ability of the international community to balance between economic efficiency and geopolitical resilience as West Asia will continue to be the centre of gravity of maritime trade that requires a robust backup plan strategy.

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