

Geopolitics is reshaping global oil routes

Geopolitical developments in recent years have had a significant impact on global seaborne oil transportation. As a result, Danish waters have become a central transit point for oil transport.

Global trade patterns changed markedly following Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2022 and the subsequent EU sanctions on Russian oil. Consequently, a larger share of Russian oil exports has been redirected from European markets to destinations including Asia and Turkey. At the same time, a significant share of these volumes is shipped from Russian ports in the Baltic Sea, increasing traffic through the Danish straits.

This development is reflected in the table below. In the first half of 2025, around 4.9 million barrels of crude oil and oil products per day passed through the Danish straits. This is an increase of 58%. At the same time, oil from countries such as the United States and Norway is increasingly being transported to countries including Poland, Finland and Germany. In 2025, this made Denmark an oil transit point comparable to the Suez Canal and larger than the Bab el-Mandeb Strait.

The development accelerated between 2021 and 2023 following Russia's invasion of Ukraine, which significantly changed global oil trade patterns. From 2023 to 2025, these changes were further reinforced by the aggravated security situation in the Red Sea. Traffic through Bab el-Mandeb fell by around 5.1 million barrels of oil per day (-55%), and through the Suez Canal and SUMED it fell by around 3.9 million barrels per day (-44%), while traffic around the Cape of Good Hope increased by approximately 2.9 million barrels per day (+47%).

Around 21–23 million barrels of oil per day continued to pass through the Strait of Malacca and the Strait of Hormuz in 2025, underlining Asia's central role in global energy markets.

The figures also show how quickly geopolitics can reshape global oil routes and underlines that disruptions at key maritime chokepoints such as the Strait of Hormuz may also affect energy flows in other parts of the world, including through Danish waters.

| | 2021 | 2023 | 2025 | Changes 2021-2025 | |
|--------------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------------|---------|
| | Mio.t./ day | Mio.t./ day | Mio.t./ day | Mio.t./ day | Percent |
| Strait of Malacca | 22,1 | 24 | 23,2 | 1,1 | 5% |
| Strait of Hormuz | 19,7 | 21,8 | 20,9 | 1,2 | 6% |
| Cape of Good Hope | 7,2 | 6,2 | 9,1 | 1,9 | 26% |
| Suez Canal * | 5,2 | 8,8 | 4,9 | -0,3 | -6% |
| Danish Straits | 3,1 | 5 | 4,9 | 1,8 | 58% |
| Bab el-Mandeb | 6 | 9,3 | 4,2 | -1,8 | -30% |
| Turkish Straits** | 3,3 | 3,5 | 3,7 | 0,4 | 12% |
| Panama Canal | 1,8 | 2,2 | 2,3 | 0,5 | 28% |

Source: EIA [World Oil Transit Chokepoints](#). * Including the SUMED pipeline. ** The Dardanelles and the Bosphorus. 2025 figures cover million barrels per day in the first half of the year only.