East Asian Responses to the Middle East Conflict: Energy Security, Supply Chains, and Strategic Choices for Taiwan, Japan, and South Korea

Chia-Yi Lee

Professor, Department of Diplomacy, National Chengchi University

Abstract

The recent Iran war and the resulting disruptions in the Strait of Hormuz have triggered sharp increases in global energy prices and exposed the vulnerabilities of countries that rely heavily on imported energy and maritime trade routes. This paper shows how energy security has become increasingly intertwined with the semiconductor and AI industries, both of which require stable and reliable electricity supplies. It demonstrates that geopolitical crises not only disrupt global supply chains, but also accelerate the energy transition, supply chain restructuring, and international cooperation. Focusing on Taiwan, Japan, and South Korea, it analyzes how East Asian countries have responded to the crisis through different strategies aimed at strengthening energy resilience and reducing dependence on the Middle East. Taiwan has prioritized short-term supply stability and long-term diversification plans, Japan has emphasized regional cooperation and renewable energy development, and South Korea has adopted more interventionist policies, including price controls, export restrictions, and expanded nuclear energy. The three cases demonstrate that enhancing energy resilience and diversifying energy sources have become essential for maintaining economic stability, technological competitiveness, and national security in an era of growing geopolitical uncertainty.

Keywords: Iran War, Middle East, Energy Security, Supply Chains, East Asia

I. Introduction

On February 28, 2026, the United States and Israel launched joint military operations against Iran. The U.S. government said the objective was to curb Iran's nuclear weapons development and reduce its threat to the Middle East. In response, Iran blocked the Strait of Hormuz (see Figure 1), a move that shook global energy markets, drove up oil prices, and disrupted petrochemical supply chains. The war has not officially ended until now, as negotiations between the two sides are still ongoing. However, it has had a significant impact on the global energy market and supply

Figure 1. The Strait of Hormuz

Source: Gavin Butler, Toby Mann, Patrick Jackson, & BBC Persian, "Why the Strait of Hormuz matters so much in the Iran war," April 8, 2026, *BBC*, <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/c78n6p09pzno>.

chains. In Taiwan, the crisis even triggered events such as the so-called "plastic bag panic."

It is unclear how long the Iran war will last, but some analysts predict that the war could result in the worst energy crisis in history.[1] Recently, the Executive Director of the International Energy Agency (IEA), Fatih Birol, warned that oil markets could enter the "red zone" in the summer as stocks decline and fresh oil exports from the Middle East remain constrained. The IEA chief described the current oil shock as more severe than the crises of 1973, 1979, and the 2022 energy disruption triggered by Russia's invasion of Ukraine, saying that approximately 14 million barrels of oil per day had been removed from the global market due to ongoing supply disruptions.[2]

Energy plays an essential role in every country's economy. Any disruption in international supply chains or sharp fluctuations in energy prices can directly affect industrial development, household electricity consumption, and even overall economic security. Moreover, Taiwan is located in a geopolitically high-risk region, and the rapid growth of the semiconductor and artificial intelligence (AI) industries in recent years has further increased electricity demand, making the issue of energy security even more urgent.

This paper discusses the concept of energy security and the role energy plays in the global supply chains, focusing on the responses of three East Asian countries — Taiwan, Japan, and South Korea. The next section defines energy security and examines the relationship between geopolitics, energy crises, and energy transitions. Section III focuses on how energy is intertwined with global supply chains, using the AI sector as an example. Section IV discusses the responses and strategies adopted by Taiwan, Japan, and South Korea in addressing the recent energy crisis.

---

1. Kevin Morrison, "4 reasons the 'largest energy crisis' on record has been held at bay – and why there's pain to come," May 21, 2026, *The Conversation*, <https://theconversation.com/4-reasons-the-largest-energy-crisis-on-record-has-been-held-at-bay-and-why-theres-pain-to-come-283148>.

2. Patrick Wintour, "Oil markets nearing 'red zone' as Iran crisis continues, warns IEA chief," May 21, 2026, *The Guardian*, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2026/may/21/oil-markets-nearing-red-zone-as-holiday-season-nears-warns-iea-chief>.

II. Energy Security and Geopolitics

Energy is the cornerstone of a country's economic development and an indispensable condition for a society to function smoothly. It is also vital to military operations and thus national security. Consequently, maintaining a stable energy supply to ensure energy security has long been a major policy objective for governments around the world. Energy security is defined as "uninterrupted access to energy" as well as "securing energy supplies at an affordable price."[3] Without sufficient energy security, economic stability may be undermined, industrial production may stop, and everyone's daily life can be disrupted, which will ultimately threaten national security and social stability.

Governments are clearly aware of the importance of energy. However, most countries are unable to achieve complete energy self-sufficiency. Taiwan, as an island country, imports more than 95 percent of its energy from abroad. Any disruption in energy supplies or a sharp rise in energy prices can therefore have severe consequences for industrial production, household electricity use, the overall economy, and even national security. In addition to its heavy dependence on imported energy, Taiwan is also located in a region marked by significant geopolitical risks. In recent years, the rapid development of the AI and semiconductor industries has further increased electricity demand, underscoring the critical importance of energy security.

From a historical perspective, energy and geopolitics have always been closely intertwined. Events such as the 1973 global oil crisis, the 1979 Iranian Revolution, the 1991 Gulf War, and more recent conflicts, including the Russia-Ukraine War in 2022 and the Iran War, all demonstrate how geopolitical events can sharply disrupt international energy prices within a short period of time and, in turn, affect the global economy.

---

3. International Energy Agency, "Energy security in energy transitions," May 25, 2026 accessed, *IEA*, <https://www.iea.org/reports/world-energy-outlook-2022/energy-security-in-energy-transitions>.

The first oil crisis in 1973 serves as a notable example. Its trigger was a geopolitical conflict — the Fourth Arab-Israeli War, commonly known as the Yom Kippur War. The war provoked dissatisfaction among Arab oil-producing countries toward Western countries, leading them to impose an oil embargo on the United States and European countries that supported Israel. At that time, most of the world's oil production was concentrated in the Middle East. This embargo not only caused oil prices to surge dramatically, but also contributed to severe economic downturns across Europe and the United States.

Figure 2. The 1973 Oil Crisis

Source: Jesse Greenspan, "What It Was Like to Live Through the 1970s Energy Crisis," March 18, 2026, *History*, <https://www.history.com/articles/1970s-energy-crisis-effects>.

The 2022 Russia-Ukraine War is another example. Russia is a major global energy producer. According to data from the U.S. Energy Information Administration (EIA), Russia produced an average of 10.75 million barrels of oil per day in 2023, making it the world's third-largest oil producer after the United States and Saudi Arabia and accounting for roughly 11 percent of global production.[4] Russia is also

4. U.S. Energy Information Administration, "What countries are the top producers and consumers of oil?" April 11, 2024, *EIA*, <https://www.eia.gov/tools/faqs/faq.php?id=709&t=6>.

the world's second-largest producer of natural gas and serves as a major supplier to European countries. Following the outbreak of the war, Western countries led by the United States chose not to intervene militarily to defend Ukraine, but instead relied primarily on economic sanctions in an attempt to weaken Russia's fighting capacity. Many Western and pro-American countries announced bans or reductions on energy imports from Russia. Although these measures were theoretically intended to damage the Russian economy, they instead contributed to a sharp increase in global energy prices. Oil prices quickly surged above US$100 per barrel within days, reaching their highest level since September 2014. Many European countries were highly dependent on Russian energy imports, and thus became the primary victims of the resulting energy crisis.

Although the energy market is vulnerable to geopolitical tensions, historical evidence demonstrates that geopolitical events often create opportunities for energy transitions. The 1973 oil crisis prompted developed countries to rethink their energy strategies and adopt various measures to strengthen energy security. The IEA, for example, was established in 1974 in response to the oil crisis. Countries such as the United Kingdom, Norway, the United States, and Mexico also intensified domestic oil exploration after the crisis in order to reduce dependence on Middle Eastern oil. In addition, the use of nuclear energy became far more widespread in the aftermath of the crisis.

More recently, the Russia-Ukraine War has accelerated the European Union's deployment and investment in renewable energy, while also prompting a restructuring of energy supply chains through expanded energy imports from the United States, Norway, and the Middle East. These examples show that energy crises triggered by geopolitical risks often push affected countries to seek alternative energy sources and accelerate the pace of energy transition. Such developments not only help countries reduce vulnerabilities to sudden energy crisis, but also contribute to greenhouse gas reduction and help mitigate the threats posed by climate change to human society.

Figure 3. Signature of the Agreement Establishing the IEA in 1974

Source: IEA, "From oil security to steering the world toward secure and sustainable energy transitions," May 25, 2026 accessed, *IEA*, <https://www.iea.org/about/mission/history-of-the-iea>.

III. Energy and Global Supply Chains

Energy is not only important to domestic economies, but it also plays a key role in the global supply chains. This is because nearly every stage of production, transportation, and distribution of commodities depends on stable and affordable energy supplies. Manufacturing industries require electricity and fuels to operate factories, whereas global shipping, aviation, and trucking rely heavily on oil and natural gas to transport raw materials and finished products across borders. This suggests that fluctuations in energy prices can significantly increase production and transportation costs, leading to delays or even disruptions throughout global supply networks.

Among all energy sources, the prices for fossil fuels, especially oil and natural gas, are particularly unstable. As mentioned in the previous section, geopolitical events can easily trigger price fluctuations. This makes geopolitical risks an important consideration in business decision-making. Some industries, such as semiconductors,

petrochemicals, steel, and AI infrastructure, are energy-intensive, as they depend on stable electricity and petroleum-based materials. So they are particularly susceptible to fluctuations in energy prices.

The AI sector provides a good example. As the world enters the era of an AI-driven society, a stable energy supply has become indispensable. The development of AI depends on massive computing power and infrastructure, including data centers, servers, storage systems, and cooling facilities, all of which rely heavily on energy consumption, particularly electricity. In addition, AI is built upon high-performance chips, and the semiconductor industry responsible for producing these chips is itself highly energy-intensive. For example, in 2024, Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Company (TSMC), the world's leading chip manufacturer, accounted for approximately 9 percent of Taiwan's total electricity consumption. At the same time, the production of advanced AI chips worldwide is almost monopolized by TSMC. This demonstrates that only with long-term energy security can AI continue to operate reliably and contribute to the advancement of human society.

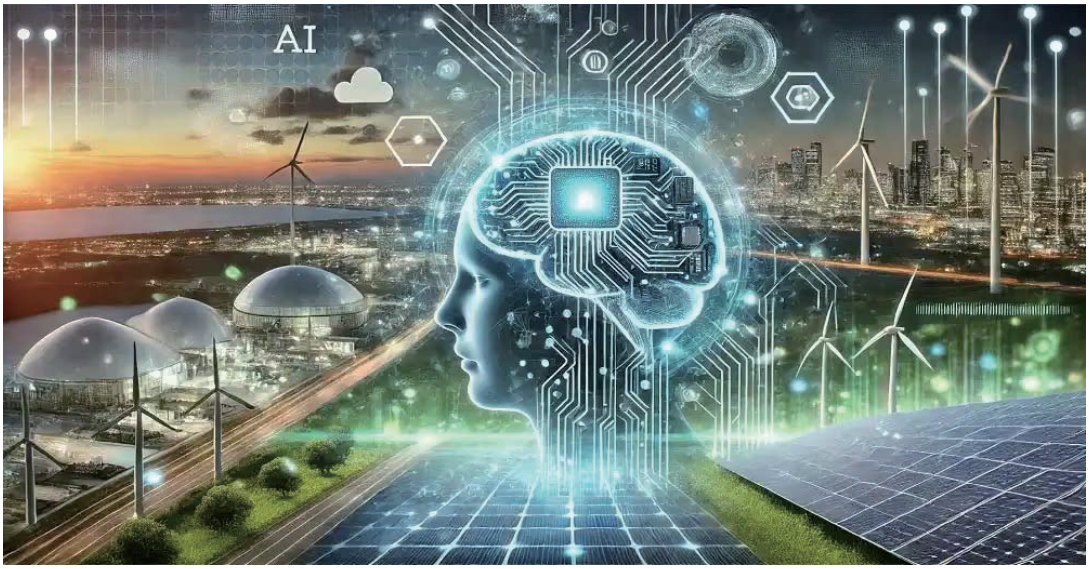

Figure 4. AI and Energy

Source: Knowledge Sourcing Intelligence, "Powering the Future: The Role of AI in Revolutionizing the Energy Sector," December 23, 2024, *KSI*, <https://www.knowledge-sourcing.com/resources/thought-articles/powering-the-future-the-role-of-ai-in-revolutionizing-the-energy-sector>.

Although fossil fuels still account for the majority of energy consumption in most countries, major global AI companies such as Alphabet (Google), Microsoft, Amazon, and Meta have all pledged to use renewable energy as their primary source of electricity in order to achieve net-zero carbon emissions and promote environmental sustainability. Under this trend, other firms within the AI supply chain must also make corresponding adjustments to fulfill corporate social responsibility and sustainability goals. For example, TSMC has joined the international RE100 initiative, which commits companies to using 100 percent renewable energy. Currently, TSMC's overseas subsidiaries have already fully adopted renewable energy, but its production operations in Taiwan have substantial room for improvement.

In short, energy security has become increasingly intertwined with supply chain resilience. In an era characterized by increasing geopolitical uncertainty, energy security is highly influenced by geopolitical events. This has compelled many countries and firms to diversify energy sources, transition to renewable energy, expand strategic reserves, and restructure supply chains to reduce geopolitical risks.

IV. Responses by East Asian Countries

East Asian countries, especially Taiwan, Japan, and South Korea, are among the most vulnerable to energy and supply chain disruptions for three reasons. First, these countries are highly dependent on energy imports, as Taiwan and South Korea import more than 95 percent of their total energy, whereas Japan imports around 90 percent from overseas. Second, the majority of crude oil exported to these three countries is from the Middle East, which is largely shipped through the Strait of Hormuz. Third, in addition to energy, Taiwan, Japan, and South Korea are heavily dependent on stable maritime trade routes to sustain their export-oriented industries.

This section discusses the responses of these three countries to the recent energy crisis, with a focus on their strategies and long-term plans.

1. Taiwan

Taiwan is among the countries most heavily affected by disruptions in the Middle East, given its longstanding dependence on energy imports from the region. Since 2016 when President Tsai Ing-Wen took office, the Taiwanese government has accelerated the development of green energy, especially offshore wind power and solar photovoltaics (PV). At the same time, Taiwan has also increased the share of liquefied natural gas (LNG) in its energy mix in order to reduce coal consumption and lower carbon emissions. As Figure 5 shows, the share of LNG in Taiwan's total electricity generation increased by 10 percentage points from 2016 to 2024, making it the most important energy source in the electricity sector.

Taiwan's top two LNG suppliers are Qatar and Australia, each accounting for around one-third of total LNG imports in 2025. At the same time, Taiwan is also

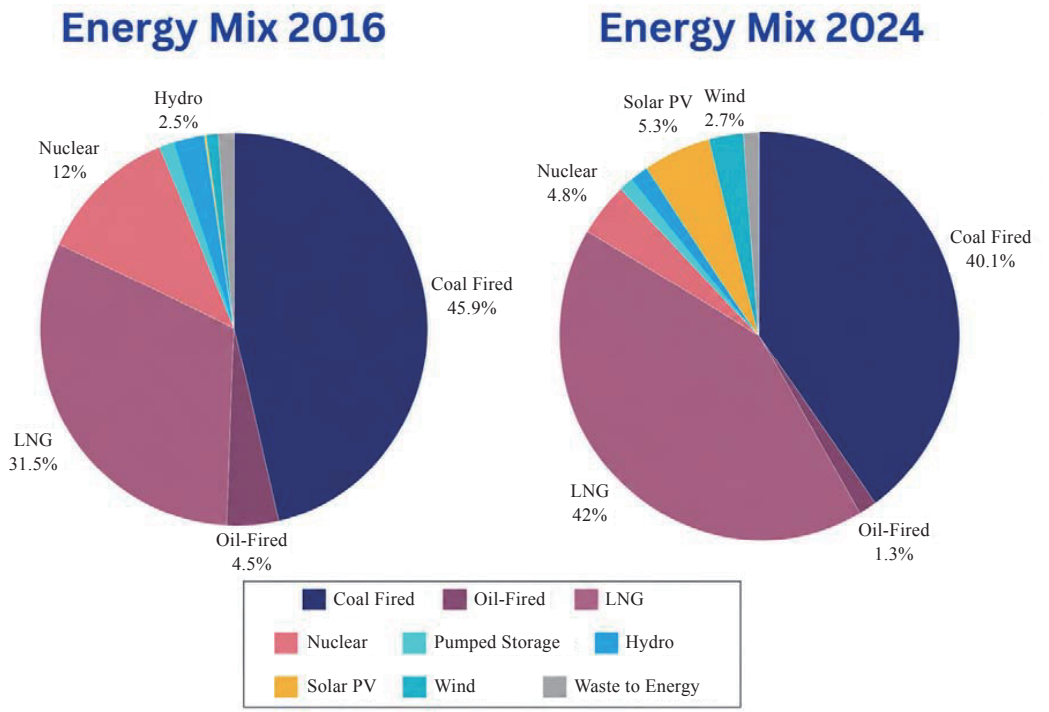

Figure 5. Taiwan's Energy (Electricity) Mix in 2016 and 2024

Source: James McCatherin, Jason Wang, & Wen Huang, "Taiwan's energy transition outlook for 2025," January 20, 2025, *EuroView*, <https://euroview.ecct.com.tw/category-inside.php?id=2247>.

increasing its LNG purchases from the United States. Shipments of LNG from Qatar must pass through the Strait of Hormuz, which has been disrupted significantly due to the war. As a result, experts have raised concerns that Taiwan's energy security could face serious risks if the disruptions persist.[5]

Three days after the outbreak of the Iran War, Taiwan's Ministry of Economic Affairs (MOEA) said that measures have already been taken to diversify energy sources and suppliers, ensuring that short-term supply remains stable. The MOEA added that Taiwan currently requires a minimum natural gas reserve of 11 days, which will be increased to at least 14 days in 2027. This minimum requirement is higher than neighboring countries.[6]

On the other hand, Taiwan's state-owned oil company, CPC Corporation (Taiwan) has long-term plans to be prepared for extreme medium- to long-term scenarios, such as a prolonged Iranian blockade. For example, CPC has signed a contract with Cheniere, the largest LNG exporter in the United States, with deliveries scheduled to begin in June of this year. Starting next year, Taiwan will be able to purchase up to 1.2 million metric tons of LNG annually under the agreement.[7]

CPC has also been preparing a three-stage response plan. The first stage is "advanced cargo adjustment," which involves reallocating LNG supplies from non-Middle Eastern sources such as the United States and Australia. The second stage is "regional cargo coordination," under which Taiwan would seek mutual support

---

5. "Iran war shows Taiwan's vulnerabilities: expert," April 15, 2026, *Taipei Times*, <https://www.taipeitimes.com/News/taiwan/archives/2026/04/15/2003855633>.
6. Energy Administration, Ministry of Economic Affairs, Taiwan, "No Domestic Power or Gas Shortages Since the Middle East Conflict; Natural Gas Dispatches Has Been Well Managed; Foreign Media Allegations of Energy Vulnerabilities are Unfounded," April 15, 2026, *Ministry of Economic Affairs, Taiwan*, <https://www.moea.gov.tw/MNS/english/news/News.aspx?kind=6&menu_id=176&news_id=122394>.
7. 曾智怡,〈因應中東情勢經部擬妥三階段方案　美天然氣 6 月可交貨〉, March 3, 2026, *CNA*, <https://www.cna.com.tw/news/afe/202603030116.aspx>.

arrangements with major LNG buyers in Asia, including Japan and South Korea. The third stage is "spot market procurement," through which additional LNG supplies would be purchased on the spot market to fill potential shortages. Through these measures, the government emphasized that domestic natural gas supply would "absolutely not be interrupted."[8]

For Taiwan's semiconductor industry — the country's flagship sector — the Iran War has not directly reduced production capacity. Instead, its impact has stemmed from both rising energy costs and disruptions to global logistics and supply chains. The closure of airspace in the Persian Gulf region, along with the rerouting of shipping and air transport routes, has disrupted the semiconductor industry's traditional "just-in-time" production model, particularly because Dubai and Doha serve as major regional transshipment hubs. In addition, the semiconductor industry is highly dependent on petroleum by-products, meaning that rising raw material prices are expected to increase downstream production costs.

From an optimistic perspective, demand for AI and advanced semiconductor manufactured products will not disappear because of conflicts in the Middle East. Former Minister of Economic Affairs Kuo Jyh-huei emphasized that Taiwan's irreplaceable role in the semiconductor industry has become one of its greatest strategic assets.[9] As geopolitical conflicts become more intense, the value of supply chain resilience turns out to be greater. Since semiconductors provide Taiwan with a strategic "silicon shield," industry players should seize this moment to demonstrate the resilience and reliability of Taiwan's supply chains and deepen international partnerships with other players, turning the risk into an opportunity.

2. Japan

After the Fukushima nuclear disaster in 2011, Japan significantly adjusted its energy policy and energy mix. The country reduced its reliance on nuclear power and

8. 曾智怡,〈因應中東情勢經部擬妥三階段方案　美天然氣 6 月可交貨〉.
9. 〈中東戰火對台灣的意義 郭智輝：從地緣震懾到結構韌性的戰略重構〉, March 1, 2026, *LTN*, <https://stock.ltn.com.tw/article/94gqhzeczdlu>.

increased imports of LNG, coal, and oil from abroad to maintain a stable electricity supply. At the same time, it also accelerated investment in renewable energy and diversified its energy import sources to enhance energy security and reduce dependence on the Middle East.

Despite these adjustments, Japan's energy sector remains highly reliant on Middle Eastern oil. In 2024, the Middle East accounted for 94 percent of Japan's crude oil imports, with the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia being the top two suppliers. Japan's efforts to diversify LNG imports is more successful, with the share from the Middle East declining from 29 percent in 2013 to nearly 11 percent in 2025. Figure 6

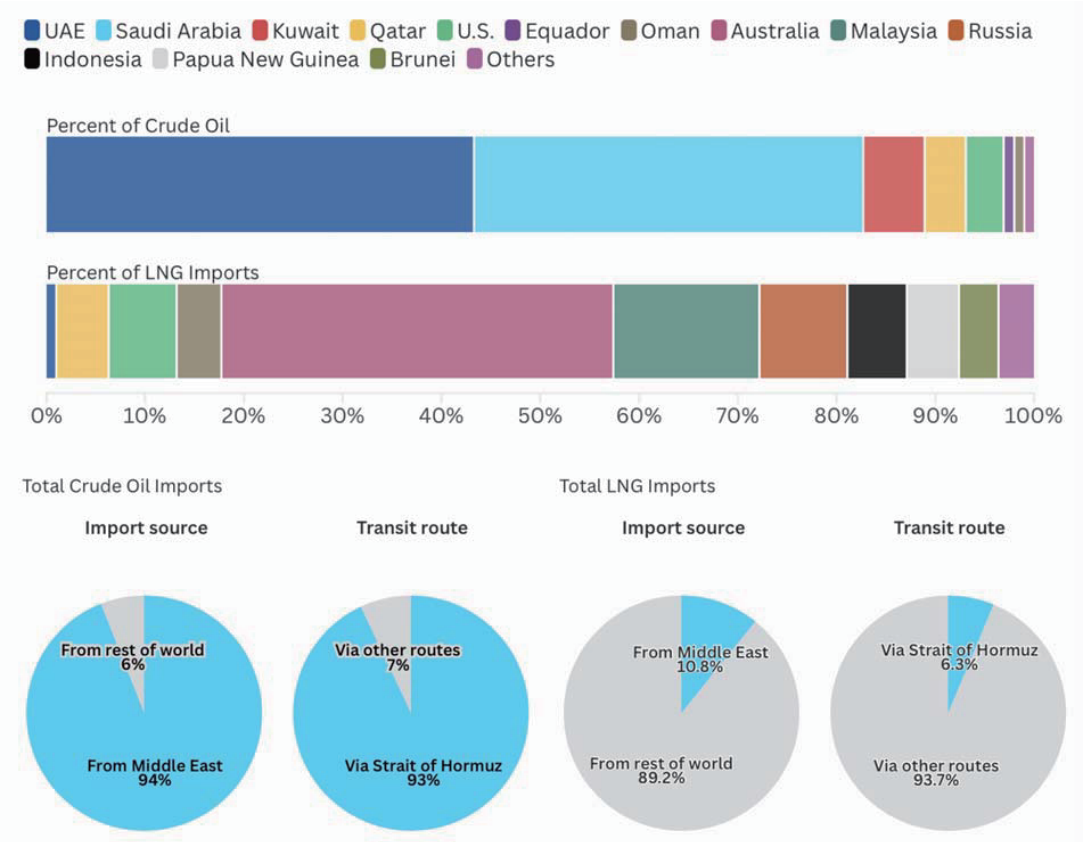

Figure 6. Sources of Japan's Oil and LNG Imports

Source: Kristi Govella & Jane Nakano, "What Are the Implications of the Iran Conflict for Japan?" March 20, 2026, *CSIS*, <https://www.csis.org/analysis/what-are-implications-iran-conflict-japan>.

shows the sources of Japan's crude oil and LNG imports, which indicates its continued dependence on the Middle Eastern oil and the Strait of Hormuz as well as the diversification of LNG origins.

Like Taiwan, the Japanese government has taken a series of measures to stabilize and assess the situation immediately after the Iran War. On March 2, Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi stated that Japan would make every possible diplomatic effort, in coordination with the international community, to ease tensions. She urged Iran to stop attacking neighboring countries and to cease its nuclear weapons development. Later, she also ordered a comprehensive review of the entire oil-related supply chains.[10] In response to the crisis, Japan's Ministry of Economy, Trade, and Industry (METI) established a task force to evaluate the conflict's impact on energy supplies and develop appropriate response measures. In a press conference on March 3, Minister of Economy, Trade and Industry Akazawa Ryosei said that Japan maintains oil stockpiles equivalent to 254 days of consumption across both public and private reserves. Japan also has a mechanism in place for coordinating appropriate response measures with the IEA when necessary. He emphasized that the government will continue to closely monitor developments and take all possible steps to ensure a stable domestic energy supply.[11]

Externally, Japan is expanding and deepening cooperation with other countries, especially those in Southeast Asia, to strengthen energy security and economic resilience. An important step is the Partnership on Wide Energy and Resources Resilience (POWERR) Asia initiative, which is a US$10 billion financial assistance package to support Southeast Asian countries in coping with rising global oil prices and potential supply disruptions. The short-term goal is to help participating countries

10. Yoshiaki Nohara & Akemi Terukina, "Takaichi Orders Review of Entire Supply Chain for Oil Products," March 24, 2026, *Energy Connects*, <https://www.energyconnects.com/news/oil/2026/march/takaichi-orders-review-of-entire-supply-chain-for-oil-products/>.

11. Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry, Japan, "Press Conference by Minister Akazawa (Excerpt)," March 3, 2026, *METI*, <https://www.meti.go.jp/english/speeches/press_conferences/2026/0303001.html>.

secure crude oil supplies and maintain energy stability during emergencies. POWERR Asia's long-term aim is to strengthen regional energy resilience by diversifying energy sources, expanding storage capacity, and enhancing energy self-reliance. Southeast Asian countries such as the Philippines, Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand, Vietnam, and Timor-Leste all welcomed this initiative.[12]

The Asian Development Bank (ADB), led by Japan, also announced the Pan-Asia Power Grid Initiative on May 2. The goal of this initiative is to strengthen regional connectivity across Asia and the Pacific by 2035. It will focus on linking power grids, expanding cross-border electricity trade, and improving broadband access.[13] The initiative builds on existing subregional grids, including the ASEAN Power Grid (see Figure 7), to enhance regional cooperation and to power economy.

Japan's recent diplomatic efforts demonstrate its intention to deepen cooperation with Southeast Asian countries. On May 2, for example, Prime Minister Takaichi met Vietnamese Prime Minister Lê Minh Hưng in Hanoi. During the meeting, both sides agreed to cooperate on securing crude oil and critical minerals, including rare earth elements, in response to the situation in the Middle East.[14]

3. South Korea

South Korea is highly dependent on the Middle East for its energy supplies, with nearly 70 percent of its crude oil imports historically sourced from the region. The

---

12. Mucahithan Avcioglu & Gokhan Ergocun, "Japan launches POWERR Asia, pledges $10B to help region secure oil amid Middle East energy shock," April 15, 2026, *AA*, <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/economy/japan-launches-powerr-asia-pledges-10b-to-help-region-secure-oil-amid-middle-east-energy-shock/3906019>.

13. Robert Davis, "ADB Launches $70 Billion Push to Connect Asia's Power Grids, Digital Networks," May 3, 2026, *ADB*, <https://www.adb.org/news/adb-launches-70-billion-push-connect-asia-power-grids-digital-networks>.

14. "Japan's Takaichi pledges deeper energy cooperation with Vietnam," May 2, 2026, *Al Jazeera*, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2026/5/2/japans-takaichi-pledges-deeper-energy-cooperation-with-vietnam>.

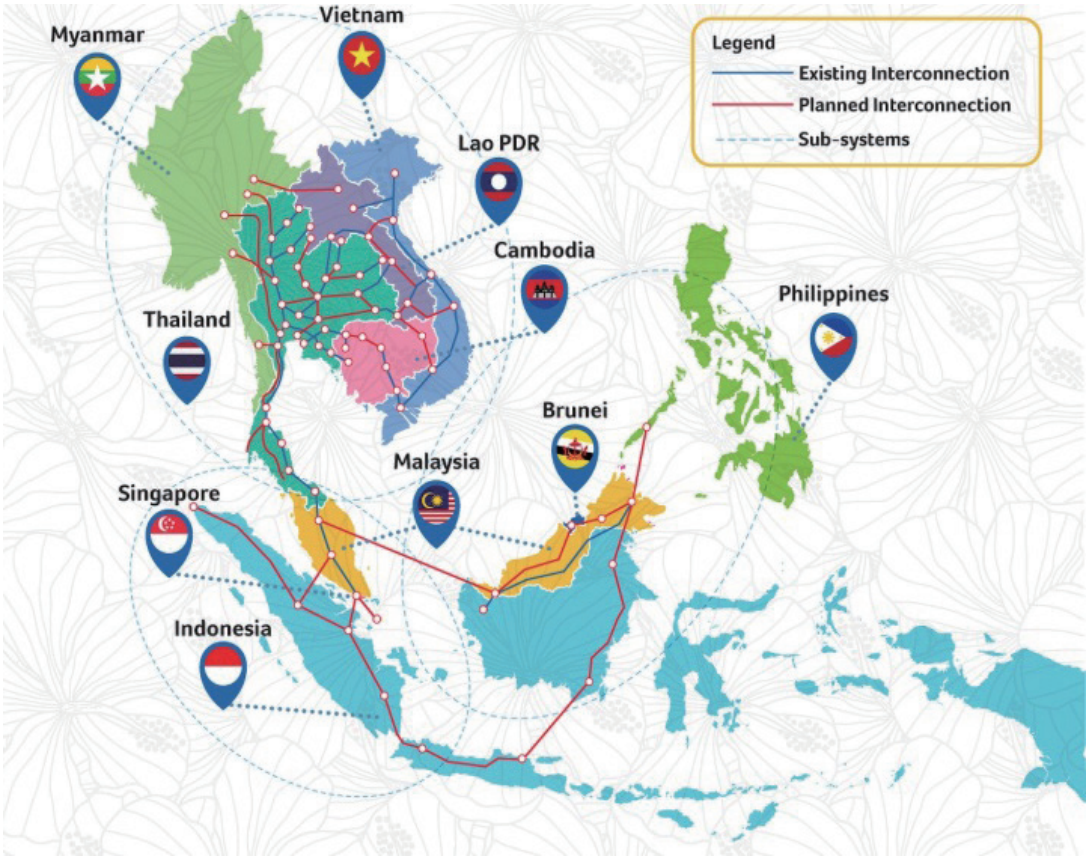

Figure 7. ASEAN Power Grid

Source: ASEAN Energy Business Forum, "ASEAN Power Grid Map," June 24, 2025, *Instagram*, <https://www.instagram.com/p/DLRxjK2yiDH/>.

country's energy demand is also expected to rise because of the AI and semiconductor sectors and widespread electrification. On May 4, the HMM *Namu*, a cargo vessel operated by South Korea's Hyundai Merchant Marine (HMM), was struck in the Strait of Hormuz, although no casualties were reported. This incident made South Korea one of the latest countries to face growing risks to maritime energy security amid escalating tensions in the Middle East.

Compared to Taiwan and Japan, South Korea has taken more active approaches to deal with the energy crisis since the outbreak of the war. Less than a week after the U.S. strikes on Iran, South Korean President Lee Jae-Myung convened an emergency

Cabinet meeting to evaluate the broader regional implications of the crisis. According to a press release issued by South Korea's Ministry of Trade, Industry and Energy (MOTIE) on March 12, a "price cap on petroleum products" would take effect on March 13. The measure was introduced in response to the rise in oil prices and is intended to curb further increases in fuel prices. This is the first time in nearly 30 years that the government has implemented a formal oil price cap mechanism since South Korea liberalized its oil prices in 1997.[15]

On March 27, the MOTIE further announced restrictions on naphtha exports. Naphtha is a liquid hydrocarbon mixture distilled mainly from crude oil (see Figure 8). It is a critical raw material used in industries such as semiconductors and automobiles, playing a key role in the industrial supply chains. Currently, 45 percent of South Korea's domestic naphtha demand depends on imports, of which 77 percent are from

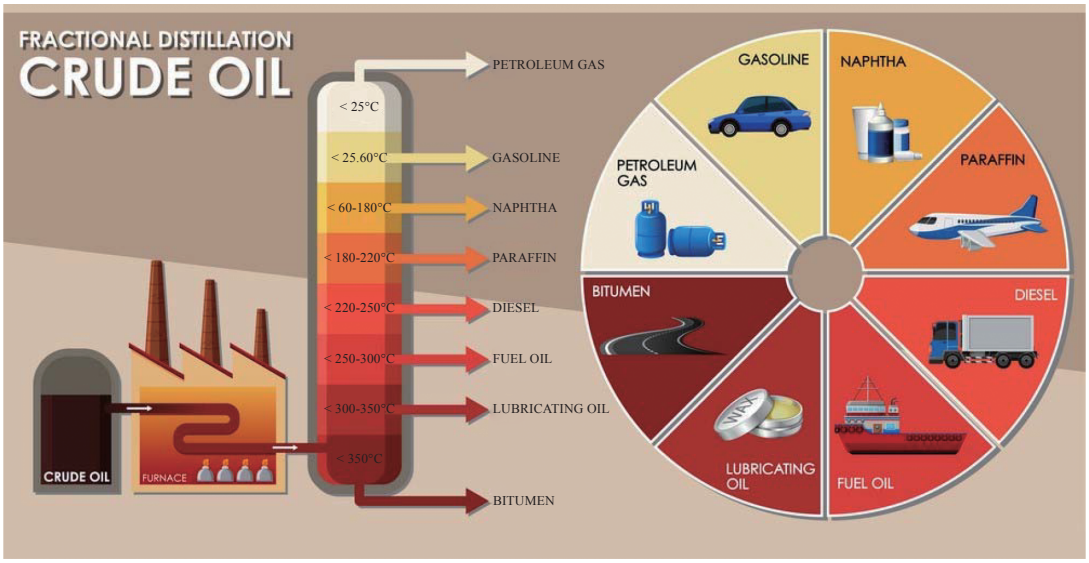

Figure 8. Crude Oil and Petroleum Products (Including Naphtha)

Source: Mahmut MAT, "Crude oil & petroleum products," April 23, 2023, *Geology Science*, <https://geologyscience.com/geology-branches/petroleum-geology/crude-oil-petroleum-products/>.

15. 曾韻霜，〈韓國實施「石油產品價格上限制」全力穩定油價〉, March 13, 2026, *International Trade Administration*, <https://www.trade.gov.tw/Pages/Detail.aspx?nodeid=45&pid=812684>.

the Middle East.[16] As a result, the ongoing conflict in the region has had a significant impact on the supply stability. Following the outbreak of the war, the South Korean government designated naphtha as an economic security item and imposed measures to redirect exports toward domestic demand. The policy, in principle, bans all naphtha exports except for exceptional circumstances approved by the ministry.

The Iran War also prompted South Korea to expand nuclear energy. Currently, South Korea has 26 nuclear reactors, and nuclear power accounts for one-third of the country's electricity generation. According to its 11th Basic Plan for Electricity Supply and Demand, South Korea plans to construct at least two new large-scale nuclear reactors by 2038.[17]

Like Japan, South Korea has turned to Southeast Asia in search of alternative partners for cooperation. On April 22, President Lee Jae-Myung held a bilateral summit with Vietnamese Communist Party General Secretary Tô Lâm in Hanoi. The meeting aimed to strengthen economic ties and supply chain coordination between the two countries, especially in areas such as energy, infrastructure, and technology.[18] Both sides agreed to boost Vietnam's role as an important production hub for South Korean companies, which helps reduce dependence on Chinese supply chains. South Korea also expressed its intention to become Vietnam's most reliable partner in the country's digital and green transition efforts.

Another region with which South Korea has sought to cultivate deeper ties is Africa. To alleviate potential energy shortages, the South Korean government has

---

16. Nurulqman Suratman, "South Korea restricts naphtha exports for five months from 27 Mar," March 27, 2026, *ICIS*, <https://www.icis.com/explore/resources/news/2026/03/27/11192891/south-korea-restricts-naphtha-exports-for-five-months-from-27-mar/>.

17. Kayla Orta, "The Iran Crisis Is Fueling South Korea's Drive for Nuclear Energy," March 12, 2026, *The Diplomat*, <https://thediplomat.com/2026/03/the-iran-crisis-is-fueling-south-koreas-drive-for-nuclear-energy/>.

18. Sebastian Strangio, "Vietnam and South Korea Agree to Boost Cooperation on Supply Chains, Nuclear Energy," April 23, 2026, *The Diplomat*, <https://thediplomat.com/2026/04/vietnam-and-south-korea-agree-to-boost-cooperation-on-supply-chains-nuclear-energy/>.

actively pursued diplomatic efforts to secure alternative oil supplies from African countries, such as Libya and Algeria. Recently, Angola — the third-largest African oil-producing country — also expressed its willingness to supply more crude oil to South Korea.[19] Cooperation with African oil producing countries would help South Korea diversify its energy sources and reduce its reliance on the Strait of Hormuz.

V. Conclusion

The Iran War and the resulting disruptions in the Strait of Hormuz demonstrate how deeply energy security, geopolitics, and global supply chains are interconnected. In today's globalized economy, stable and affordable energy supplies are no longer merely economic concerns. They have become central to national security, industrial competitiveness, and social stability. As shown by past crises such as the 1973 oil shock and the Russia-Ukraine War, geopolitical conflicts can rapidly trigger global energy instability and expose the vulnerabilities of countries that rely primarily on imported energy.

For East Asian countries such as Taiwan, Japan, and South Korea, these challenges are especially severe due to their dependence on imported fossil fuels and maritime trade routes. Each country has adopted slightly different strategies in response to the crisis: Taiwan has focused primarily on ensuring short-term supply stability, while also preparing long-term plans; Japan has relied more on regional cooperation initiatives such as POWERR Asia, combined with increasing efforts to diversify its energy import sources and expand renewable energy; South Korea has taken the most interventionist approach, implementing direct market controls such as oil price caps and export restrictions on key petrochemical materials, while simultaneously expanding nuclear energy and seeking alternative energy partnerships in Southeast Asia and Africa. Despite these differences, all three countries share a common objective: reducing high dependence on the Middle East and strengthening long-term energy security. The recent crisis has highlighted not only the fragility of

19. Oh Seok-min, "(Yonhap Interview) Angola to prioritize crude oil supply to S. Korea amid Middle East crisis: envoy," May 20, 2026, *YNA*, <https://en.yna.co.kr/view/AEN20260519012600315>.

existing energy supply chains, but also the importance of building resilience through diversification, strategic reserves, renewable energy development, and international cooperation.

At the same time, the crisis also reveals a broader global trend. As key industries such as semiconductors and AI continue to expand, energy security has become increasingly tied to technological development and supply chain resilience. Countries that can maintain stable energy supplies while accelerating energy transition will be better equipped to compete in the future global economy. In this sense, geopolitical crises, despite disruptive, may also serve as catalysts for energy transformation, supply chain restructuring, and deeper international cooperation.

In conclusion, the current energy crisis highlights the need for governments and industries to prepare for a world characterized by greater geopolitical uncertainty. Enhancing energy resilience, diversifying supply sources, investing in renewable energy, and strengthening regional partnerships will be essential not only for economic stability, but also for safeguarding national security and sustaining long-term development. This is especially crucial for East Asian countries such as Taiwan, Japan, and South Korea that depend on imported energy to power the economy and the emerging AI sector.