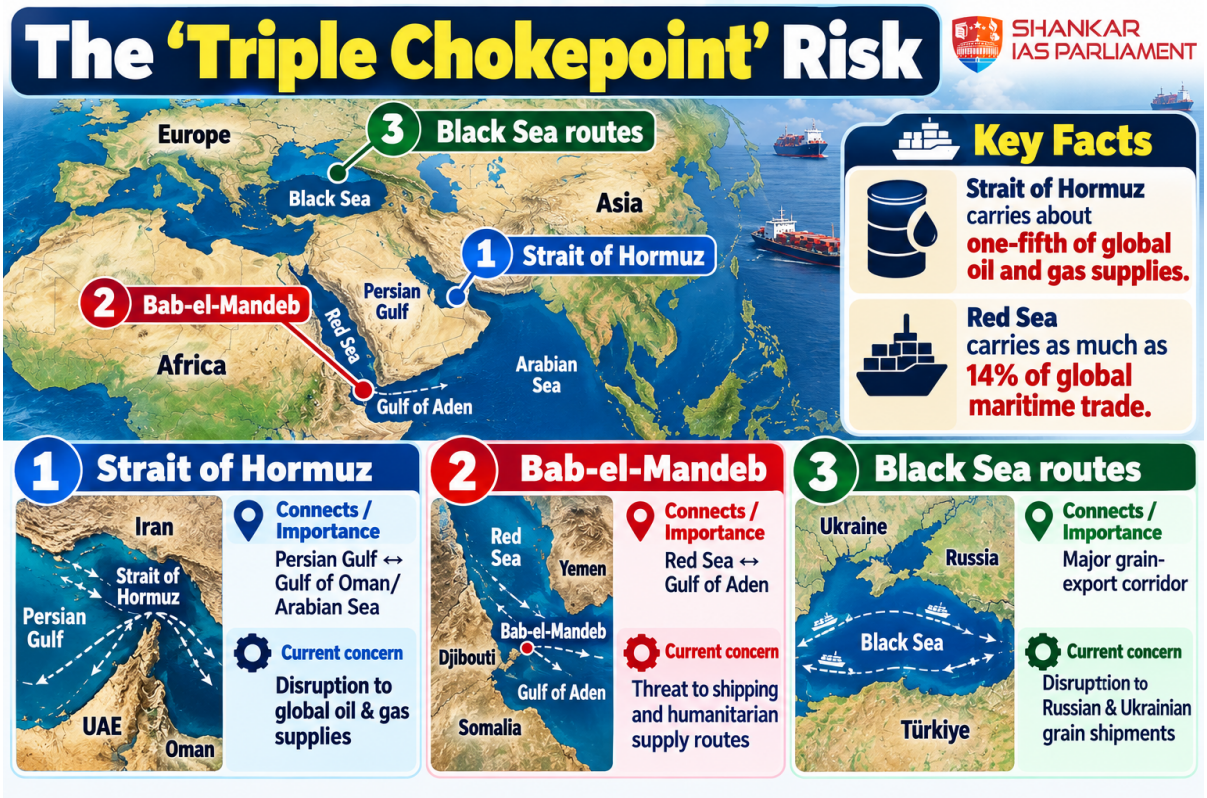
Maritime Chokepoints - Global Food & Fuel Security Risks

Prelims: *Current events of national and international importance | International Relations*

Why in News?

*Simultaneous disruptions in the **Strait of Hormuz, Black Sea, and Bab-el-Mandeb/Red Sea** threaten global oil, grain, and fertilizer flows, increasing risks to food and fuel security.*



Strait of Hormuz

- **Location –** Between Iran and Oman.
- **Connects –** Persian Gulf with Gulf of Oman and Arabian Sea.
- **Importance –** Major global route for oil and gas transportation.
- **Disruption impact**
  - Raises crude oil and fuel prices.
  - Increases shipping and insurance costs.
  - Can contribute to inflation.

Bab-el-Mandeb & Red Sea

- **Location –** Connects the **Red Sea with the Gulf of Aden**.
- **Strategic importance –** Important maritime route between Europe/Mediterranean and Asia through the **Suez Canal-Red Sea corridor**.

- **Security concerns –** Risks around Yemen and **Perim Island**.
- **If disrupted:**
  - Ships may reroute around the **Cape of Good Hope**.
  - Adds around **25–30 days** to voyages.
  - Increases fuel, insurance and freight costs.
  - Delays delivery of food and other commodities.

Black Sea

- **Importance –** Major global corridor for **wheat and other grains**.
- **Russia + Ukraine**
  - Accounted for **27.3% of global wheat exports** in 2025–26.
  - Russia – **48 million tonnes**.
  - Ukraine – **14.1 million tonnes**.
- **Disruption impact**
  - Reduces grain export flows.
  - Puts pressure on global food prices.
  - Particularly affects import-dependent countries.
  - Creates challenges for humanitarian food programmes.

Alternative Trade Routes

- **EU – Solidarity Lanes**
  - Created to facilitate movement of Ukrainian goods through alternative routes.
  - Nearly **230 million tonnes** of Ukrainian goods moved since May 2022.
  - Included around **94 million tonnes** of grain, oilseeds and related products.
  - However, they cannot fully match the scale of Black Sea ports.
- **Russia – Baltic & Arctic Routes**
  - Russia is using alternative terminals in the **Baltic and Arctic regions**.
  - **Ust Luga –** Capacity of around **37 million tonnes**.
  - **Murmansk –** Capacity of up to **24 million tonnes**.
  - Higher transportation costs and limited capacity restrict their ability to completely replace Black Sea routes.

> ***Ust Luga and Murmansk*** *are two of Russia's most critical strategic maritime and energy export hubs located in the Baltic and Arctic regions, respectively.*

Diversification of Grain Sources – Importing countries are actively pursuing alternative suppliers.

- **Examples**
  - **Argentina** – Increased corn exports
  - **Australia** – Alternative wheat supplier
  - **France** – Wheat shipments to Sudan
  - **Bangladesh** – Seeking supplies from Romania and Argentina
  - **Libya –** Using French port of Rouen

- Argentina's corn exports were projected to reach **10 million tonnes in August and September 2026**, compared to the typical 3 million tonnes for this period.

Reference

Down to Earth | Maritime Chokepoints

