

Ελληνική Εταιρεία Γεωγραφικών Μελετών «Ο Στράβων»

Περίληψη Συμποσίου με τίτλο:

**«Τα Στενά του Ορμούζ και η σημασία τους – Γεωοικονομικές και
Γεωπολιτικές παράμετροι»
“The Straits of Hormuz and their importance – Geo-economic and Geo-
political parameters”**

Athens, 19 November, 2019

The workshop on the Straits of Hormuz and their geo-economic and geopolitical significance for the world community, hosted by STRABO, Tuesday November 19, 2019 has been a paramount success.

University Professors Gregory Tsaltas, Charalambos Tsardanidis, Vivi Kefala, as well as Mr Vassilios Mouyis, expert in commercial maritime questions, read exposes about the legal, political and economic aspects of the issue.

Speakers reminded that around 25% of the global oil supply pass through these straits connecting the Persian Gulf with the Gulf of Oman (Indian Ocean), as well as one third of world's LNG volume.

Prof Tsaltas, stressed that due to the Straits width, 21 nautical miles (less than 2x12 miles extension of territorial sea of both, Iran and Oman), provisions of “transit passage” do apply as provided for in UNCLOS, part III, article 38.

Professors Tsardanidis and Kefala held that Iran, hard as it might be pressed, will not be venturing to disrupt free navigation through Hormuz. Furthermore, there was agreement among speakers and participants that Iran's hazardous conduct in the area of the Gulf is a reaction to the pressure applied by USA, in particular Washington's recent withdrawal from the nuclear deal, Joint Comprehensive Plan Of Action (2015) and re-imposition of biting sanctions on oil exports by Tehran.

Prof Tsardanidis affirmed that in the course of the last decade the geopolitical interconnection between the Eastern Mediterranean and the Persian Gulf, has become more apparent, mainly due to increase of Iran's influence over Iraq, Syria and Lebanon and its virtual access to the coast of Levante, for the first time since early 7th century. This has prompted Israel, in the face of statements perceived to be existential threats, to turn its eye to the Gulf and to establish sort of entente with Wahhabi Saudi Arabia, historic, cultural and religious rival of the Persians.

Uncertainty in the sea lanes around Hormuz is usually a function of tense relations between the Iranian regime on the one side, the West, Israel and the Saudis on the other.

Admiral (ret.) Athanassios Makris drew attention to the fact that Iran, an indispensable

link in Spykman's concept of "rimland" containing Eurasian "heartland", has emerged as an independent, relatively powerful and influential actor on its own.

Professors Tsardanidis and Kefala, asserted that as USA rapidly becomes a large exporter of oil and gas in particular, and more emphasis is put on renewable energy sources, engagement with and in favour of Saudi Arabia and the other Gulf Cooperation Council member countries might dwindle. The Saudi kingdom will be less indispensable in the foreseeable future and concerns over its security and stability shall become less acute. Participants noted that following the missile attack on the Saudi oil installations, Sept 14 2019, the US exercised restraint.

Mr Mouyis clarified that insurance costs for oil cargos shipped through Hormuz, are in times of tension, as it occurred last September, lower only to those imposed on vessels off the Nigerian coast.

Participants took due note of the special bonds between Qatar and Turkey, the latter aspiring to have a presence in both the Persian Gulf and the Red Sea. Qatar is a dissenting voice among GCC, typically hostile to Tehran.

Greece's interest, as a major seafaring nation, is to advocate freedom, security and safety of navigation in Hormuz. Greek ship-owners, though not risk averse, are longing for tranquillity and predictability in political relations with everything that this implies for sea traffic in the area. Greece's general interests are in principle better served by a lowering of tensions in the arc stretching from the Gulf of Aden to the Persian Gulf.