

A New Era In Global Marine Insurance: Geopolitical Risks

Marine insurance is one of the most critical systems ensuring the continuity of global trade by securing maritime transportation. Since the majority of world trade is carried out by sea, managing risks related to vessels, cargo, and third-party liabilities through insurance is essential not only for industry stakeholders but also for the international economy. Risks such as storms, collisions, machinery breakdowns, piracy, war, environmental pollution, and sanctions have transformed marine insurance beyond a conventional compensation mechanism.



In recent years, the main developments affecting the global marine insurance market have included tensions in the Strait of Hormuz, increasing attacks in the Red Sea, war risks in the Black Sea, the expansion of sanctions regimes, and rising reinsurance costs. These developments have led to higher insurance premiums, narrower coverage scopes, and stricter conditions, particularly in war risk coverage.

The Strait of Hormuz holds strategic importance for global energy transportation. A significant portion of oil, LNG, petrochemical products, ammonia, and fertilizer shipments pass through this route. Therefore, political or military tensions in the region create not only security concerns but also directly impact insurance costs, freight rates, and the global supply chain. Due to tanker attacks, vessel detentions, and military activity, the region is considered a high-risk war zone by many insurers.



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Insurance companies closely monitor not only vessels transiting the region but also ships waiting or anchored nearby. Tankers waiting around the Strait of Hormuz may face risks such as sabotage, missile attacks, or mines. For this reason, many insurers do not want vessels to remain in the region longer than necessary and require masters to proceed to safer routes as quickly as possible. In some cases, insurers may prohibit vessels from waiting in certain coordinates or demand additional premiums if waiting periods are extended.

Within this framework, insurers apply war risk premiums in addition to standard policies, impose limitations on the time vessels may remain in the region, and require additional security measures. These measures may include daily reporting obligations, route notifications, the use of naval corridors, and special security precautions. From the insurers' perspective, the primary objective is to enhance risk controllability and shorten response times in the event of a casualty. However, these additional premiums have in some cases risen to several times the normal insurance costs.

From a claims perspective, such incidents involve a far more complex structure. Alongside physical damage, vessel detention, crew claims, environmental pollution, salvage expenses, cargo delivery disputes, and sanctions compliance issues may all arise within the same case file. Therefore, in claims assessment, not only the extent of the damage but also the classification of the incident under the relevant coverage becomes critical. Whether an event is categorized as a war risk, piracy, terrorism, or an ordinary marine peril directly affects the insurer's liability.

From a legal standpoint, marine insurance has a multi-layered structure. Depending on the governing law selected in the policy, the provisions of the Turkish Commercial Code and the Code of Obligations are evaluated together with Institute Hull Clauses, war risk clauses, P&I club rules, and carriage contracts. Particularly in high-risk regions, notification obligations, seaworthiness, sanctions compliance, and policy exclusions frequently become subjects of dispute. In cases involving environmental pollution or vessel arrest, letters of undertaking, P&I club support, and rapid legal coordination are of great importance.



In conclusion, marine insurance today is no longer merely a type of insurance protecting ships and cargo; it has evolved into a strategic field that simultaneously manages geopolitical risks, legal disputes, and operational crises. Developments in high-risk regions such as the Strait of Hormuz are reshaping the insurance sector's risk analysis and claims management processes. In this environment, effective risk management and the provision of appropriate insurance coverage have become decisive factors for the sustainability of the industry.

