

Mapping the Red Sea Houthi Menace's risks

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The Trouble in the 'Narrow sea'?

Red Sea is a narrow strip of water extending southeastward from Suez, Egypt, for about 1,200 miles (1,930 km) to the Bab el-Mandeb Strait, which connects with the Gulf of Aden and thence with the Arabian Sea.

The sea separates the coasts of Egypt, Sudan, and Eritrea to the west from those of Saudi Arabia and Yemen to the east. Its maximum width is 190 miles, its greatest depth 9,974 feet (3,040 metres), and its area approximately 174,000 square miles (450,000 square km).

With its connection to the Mediterranean Sea via the Suez Canal, it is one of the most heavily traveled waterways in the world, carrying maritime traffic between Europe and Asia.

Navigation in the Red Sea is difficult. The unindented shorelines of the sea's northern half provide few natural harbours, and in the southern half the growth of coral reefs has restricted the navigable channel and blocked some harbour facilities.

At Bab el-Mandeb Strait, the channel is kept open to shipping by blasting and dredging. Atmospheric distortion (heat shimmer), sandstorms, and highly irregular water currents add to the navigational hazards.

Encyclopaedia Britannica



A`Menace` on the Red Sea

Houthi rebel movement is an Islamic fundamentalist movement in northern Yemen and one of the main actors in the Yemeni Civil War (2014–).

The network grew out of a revivalist movement among Zaydī Muslims, who belong to a small sect of Shiʿī Islam centered in northern Yemen, that opposed foreign influence on the Yemeni government.

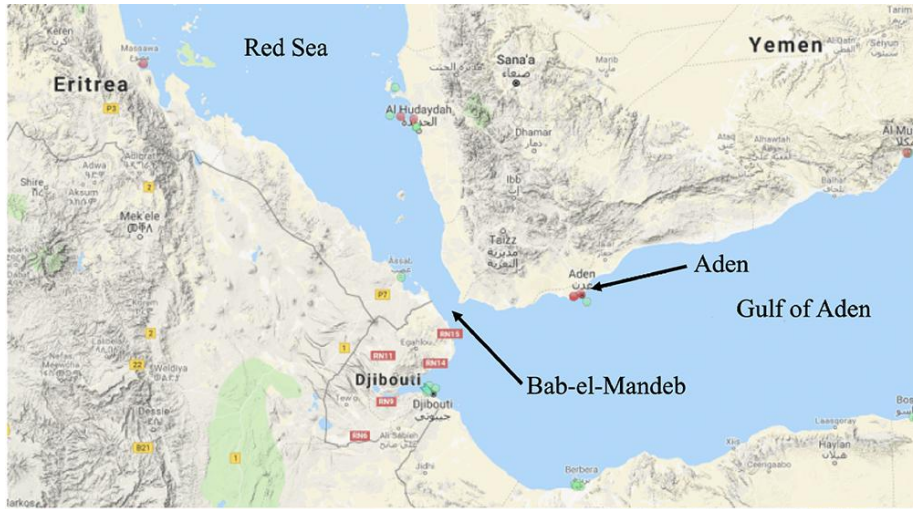
Crackdowns against the movement in the early 21st century led it to take up arms, and, with aid from Iran during the civil war, it became a powerful military force.

By 2020 Houthi fighters appeared to have the upper hand in the conflict.

In 2023 the global consequences of the Houthi movement's ascendance moved to centre stage when, in response to the Israel-Hamas War, it launched missiles and drones toward Israel and disrupted global trade by attacking commercial ships in the Red Sea.

The Houthi movement calls itself Anṣār Allāh ("Defenders of God"). The more popular term, Houthi, refers to its founding figure, a politician and Zaydī activist named Hussein Badr al-Din al-Houthi.

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A New Frontier?

Bab el-Mandeb is a 32 km wide strait connecting the Red Sea to the Gulf of Aden (between Yemen and Somalia); Eritrea and Djibouti (for the African coastal side) and Yemen (for the Arabian Peninsula's part) – controlling even the small Perim Island (5,6 kilometres long and 800 metres wide) in the strait – overlook its water.

– Island of Perim divides the strait, creating the two channels: The eastern channel is called Alexander's Strait (Bab Iskender) and is 2 miles (3.2 km) wide. The western channel, Dact-el-Mayun, is 16 miles wide (25.6 km). It is the western channel which is used by all but small coastal vessels. . . the main shipping lines lying between two miles northbound, and six miles southbound, from island of Perim.

The strait's Arabic name means "the gate of tears," so called from the dangers that formerly attended its navigation.

Encyclopaedia Britannica/IARI, Roma.

New militarisation on the horizon?



Somali woman mourns more than 37 victims of Al Shabaab's (the Al-Qaeda-affiliated group) suicide bombing and gun attack on the popular Lido beach in Mogadishu, late on 02 August 2024.

Source: EPA EU

The Sudan has a 530-mile (853 km) coastline bordering the Red Sea. In May 2024, Lt Gen Yasir El Atta, deputy commander-in-chief of the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF), stated in an interview with Al Hadath News that SAF Commander-in-Chief Lt Gen Abdelfattah El Burhan, signed agreements with Russia for a naval base. Sudan and Iran are also strengthening bilateral cooperation following resumed diplomatic relations. On August 17th The United States on Friday called on Sudan's military to join talks aimed at calming the country's grinding conflict. The military has boycotted the negotiations in Geneva, Switzerland, now in their third day, despite international pleas that it take part in the talks. Sudan's military is battling the powerful paramilitary, known as Rapid Support Forces.

Sources: Sudan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs/Al Hadath News/ AP.



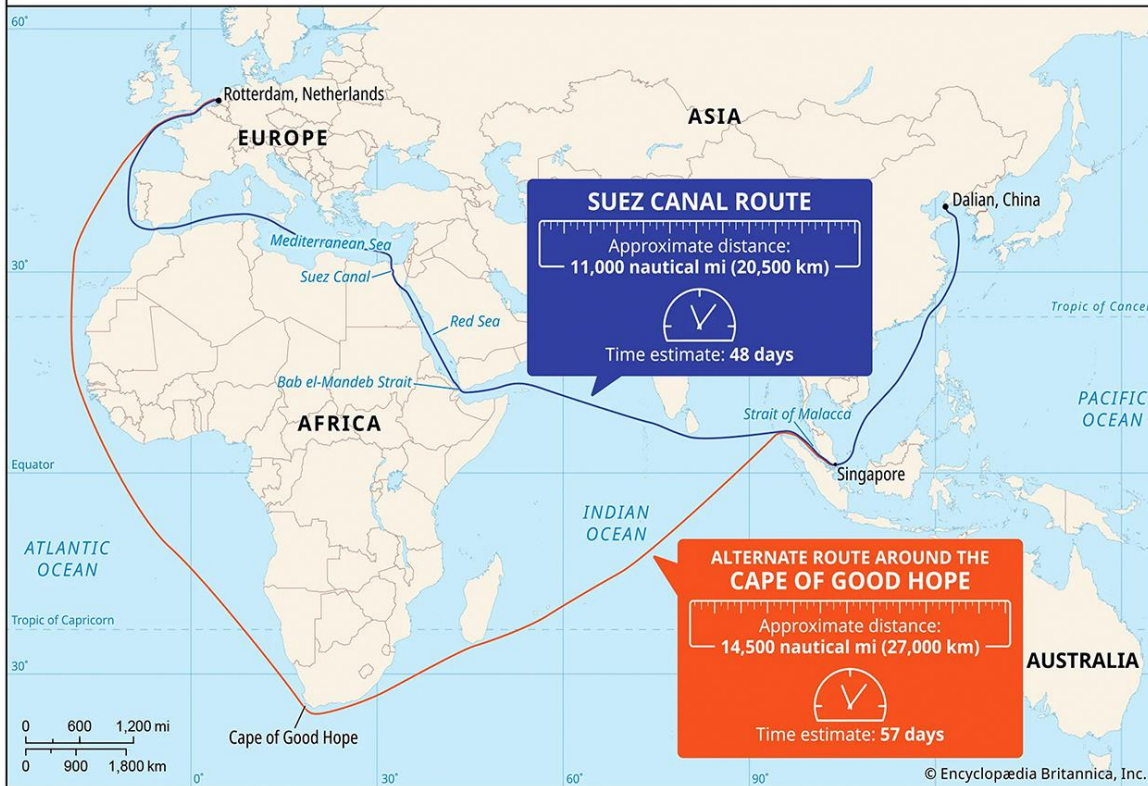
Eritrea occupies a key strategic position on the eastern side of the Red Sea, with an extensive sea area including approximately 355 islands. The length of its coastline is approximately 2,234 km in total, comprising 1,151 km of coast on the mainland and an additional 1,083 km of coastline to its Red Sea Islands.

On August 15th a merchant vessel reported being approached with the use of small arms fire in waters 92 nautical miles north-east of Eritrea's Massawa port in Red Sea waters adjacent to Yemen's coast, British maritime security firm, Ambrey, said on Thursday, Reuters reports.

Sources: Eritrea's Ministry of Foreign Affairs Eritrea/Reuters.

A new “cocktail of risks” on Africa’s South Atlantic

GLOBAL SHIPPING ROUTE THROUGH THE SUEZ CANAL: DALIAN, CHINA, TO ROTTERDAM, NETHERLANDS



Source: Encyclopædia Britannica



The Roaring Forties and Furious Fifties are intense westerly winds that blow across the southern hemisphere, between the latitudes of 40 and 50 degrees. These winds are known for their strength and consistency: they can reach speeds in excess of 100 km/h and are known to cause large waves and rough seas. Also, they can be unpredictable and dangerous, and sailors must be well-prepared and experienced in order to tackle them safely. Strong winds and heavy seas can cause damage to vessels: sailors should also be familiar with prevailing weather patterns and seasonal presence of floating ice.

In the Southern Ocean, which is the location of the Roaring Forties and Furious Fifties, the water temperature can range from around 5 to 10 degrees Celsius in the summer months. This is significantly cooler than the water temperature in tropical or subtropical regions and can present challenges for sailors who are not properly prepared for the cold.

Source: <https://www.sail-world.com/news/261372/Roaring-Forties-and-Furious-Fifties>

New risks, new opportunities



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The Dakhla Atlantic Port, Morocco's largest infrastructure project (on this photo), initiated in 2012 as part of the National Port's Strategy, aims to become a regional and international logistic and trade hub. Morocco attaches great importance to the development of its Atlantic coast: existing seaports, such as Casablanca and Agadir, have been upgraded or are in the process of being upgraded, while a \$1.2 billion megaproject, called the "Atlantic Port of Dakhla," is currently half-built and expected to be completed in 2028. year. The 1,650-hectare complex, which is particularly important for opening up other parts of the African continent to global trade, will include a commercial port with an oil terminal, a fishing port and a shipyard.

Source: Morocco's Ministry of Foreign Affairs.