

Horn of Africa & Red Sea Basin

ISSUES

- The strategic maritime importance of the Suez Canal, Red Sea, Bab el-Mandeb chokepoint, and Gulf of Aden are attracting military bases at ports in the region and security engagement by a growing number of regional and major powers.
- Political conflicts and internal disagreements in the Gulf states and Iran are increasingly impacting countries in northeast Africa, resulting in greater regional instability.
- The Red Sea is rich in recoverable oil, gas, and minerals that have the potential to cause additional conflict if not governed by international agreement and/or agreements among the littoral states.

US INTERESTS

- Political stability and economic development throughout the region.
- Free passage through the Red Sea Basin for U.S. and allied nations' naval vessels and commercial shipping.
- Preventing or at least minimizing the activities of countries or organizations that are hostile to the U.S. in the Red Sea Basin.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

- To emphasize the importance the U.S. attaches to the region and obtain a better understanding of the issues on both sides of the Red Sea, where geographical responsibility crosses jurisdictional lines in the departments of State and Defense, send a team from the regional bureaus of both departments at the deputy assistant secretary level or higher to key capitals in the Gulf states and northeast Africa.
- Include in that team a representative from AFRICOM, CENTCOM, and the Indo-Pacific Command, all of which have an interest in the Red Sea Basin.
- Encourage and support the creation of a Red Sea Basin forum, either free standing or led by the UN, that brings together the littoral and regional countries that have a direct interest in the Red Sea to discuss these issues.
- Support those programs and policies that promote political stability and economic development in the region.

- David Shinn