



KING'S ACADEMY MODEL UNITED NATIONS 2026

# The Security Council

## PRESIDENT RESEARCH PACKET

President: Ali Lahham

### Preventing the Militarization of the Red Sea and Bab El-Mandeb Strait



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## President's Letter:

Dear Delegates of The Security Council,

It is my utmost pleasure to welcome you to KAMUN'26. In the Security Council, delegates will face the unique challenge of debating under pressure while adapting to rapidly shifting situations. What makes the SC so special is its AD-HOC debate style, which encourages quick thinking, open exchange, and a dynamic atmosphere that mirrors real world diplomacy.

I am Ali Lahham, an eleventh grader at King's Academy, and I am honored to serve as this year's President of the Security Council. My passion for MUN was inspired by my aunt, who co-founded the Amman Model United Nations (AMMUN), Jordan's first ever MUN conference and only THIMUN affiliated conference. Her example showed me the power of youth in shaping dialogue, and it has motivated me to grow as a delegate and now as a chair.

The Security Council has always stood out to me because of its intensity and unpredictability. Unlike other committees, where debate is often structured and steady, SC forces delegates to think on their feet, adapt to new crises, and make decisions that can change the course of discussion within minutes. It is where diplomacy meets strategy, and it gathers some of the sharpest minds in MUN, making every session both a challenge and a thrill.

This year, we will be addressing two urgent topics: *"Preventing the Militarization of the Red Sea and Bab El-Mandeb Strait"* and *"Combating the Use of Cyber Mercenaries in International Conflicts."* Both issues highlight how modern conflicts threaten global peace on both physical and digital fronts, and I look forward to seeing how you approach these challenges.

As you prepare for this committee, I leave you with a quote that captures the essence of leadership in difficult times: *"Success is not final, failure is not fatal: it is the courage to continue that counts."* – **Winston Churchill**. I cannot wait to see the solutions you will create when faced with catastrophe.

Best regards,

Ali Lahham

President of The Security Council

## Introduction:

The Red Sea and Bab El Mandeb Strait have very quickly risen to become the talk of the geopolitical scene and have risen to show signs of high concern because of their geostrategic importance and extremely high vulnerability to militarization.

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Located between the Arabian Peninsula and the Horn of Africa this narrow passage connects the Red Sea to the Gulf of Aden and the Indian Ocean, serving as one of the worlds most vital, sensitive and crucial maritime chokepoints. Around a staggering 10% of global trade, including oil and liquefied natural gas shipments, passes through this strait, making it not only a regional concern but a multinational one. The very large abundance of trade routes, proximity to conflict ridden regions, and strategic location near the Suez Canal which is located In Egypt have drawn the attention of regional and international powerhouses such as Yemen, Saudi Arabia, Djibouti, and Eritrea, alongside the heavy involvement of external powers like the United States, China, and European nations.

The main threat in the Red Sea and Bab El Mandeb is the quick militarization of the region which is powered by historical rivalries, civil conflict, and high amounts of external intervention. The continues and ongoing war in Yemen has allowed non state actors, in specifically the Houthi rebels, to launch attacks on all shipping and threaten freedom of navigation, which keeps not only the narrow straight unstable, but regional trade and also global markets. At the instance, several regional countries have tried to create lasting naval dominance over parts of the Red Sea by expanding their military presence. Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates have funded and adopted bases along the coastline of the strip, while nations like Turkey and Qatar have also attempted to exert influence by securing agreements with states in the Horn of Africa. Major world powers, including the United States, France, and China, have developed big military installations in Djibouti, making the small country one of the most militarized zones in the globe. These claims and deployments have turned the prized Red Sea into an arena of geopolitical competition, where local disputes can quickly escalate into larger conflicts that affect international security and commerce.

Newley, developments have shed light and highlighted the importance of preventing the full scale militarization and of the Red Sea and the El Mandeb strip. In the last decade, problems have drastically increased, going from Houthi missile and drone strikes on Saudi tankers to piracy threats originating from Somali waters, and even confrontations between naval vessels of foreign powers. The quick increasing presence of competing military strengths has made the risk of accidental clashes, blockades, or deliberate attempts to control the passage skyrocket, which would undoubtably disrupt global supply chains. Reports of new base construction, such as the UAEs activities on Perim Island, underscore how the Red Sea is shifting from being a commercial space to a highly hunted military corridor. Also the involvement of outside powers like the United States and China is not limited to defensive measures but exceeds to securing influence, which is making the possibility of militarization even more real. These developments show that without strong multinational cooperation and frameworks to ensure de-escalation, the Red Sea and Bab El Mandeb Strait risk becoming the site of a long term proxy struggle.

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## Definition of Key Terms:

### **Militarization:**

“The process of building up military bases, weapons, and armed forces in a specific region, often transforming it from a civilian or commercial area into a military-controlled or contested zone.”

### **Red Sea:**

“A seawater inlet of the Indian Ocean, lying between northeast Africa and the Arabian Peninsula, connecting to the Mediterranean Sea through the Suez Canal and to the Indian Ocean through the Bab El-Mandeb Strait. It is one of the world’s most important trade routes”

### **Bab El-Mandeb Strait:**

“A narrow chokepoint located between Djibouti and Eritrea in Africa and Yemen in the Arabian Peninsula, linking the Red Sea to the Gulf of Aden. It is vital for international shipping, as millions of barrels of oil and large amounts of trade goods pass through daily.”

### **Checkpoint:**

“A narrow passage, such as a strait or canal, that is strategically important for global shipping and trade because large volumes of goods and energy supplies must pass through it. Control or disruption of a chokepoint can have major global consequences.”

### **Freedom Of Navigation:**

“A principle under international law, particularly the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), which ensures that ships of all states have the right to navigate through international waters, including straits used for global trade”

### **Proxy Conflict:**

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“A conflict where major powers indirectly compete by supporting local or regional actors with weapons, funding, or military presence, rather than fighting each other directly. The Red Sea risks becoming a proxy battleground due to rivalries between regional and global powers.”

## Major Parties Involved:

### Yamen:

Yemen controls the eastern side of the Bab-el-Mandeb Strait, one of the world's most critical maritime chokepoints linking the Red Sea to the Gulf of Aden. This narrow passage is essential for global trade and oil shipments between Europe, Asia, and the Middle East. However, Yemen's ongoing civil war and the presence of the Houthi rebel movement have made the region extremely unstable. The conflict between the internationally recognized Yemeni government and the Iran-backed Houthis has led to repeated attacks on commercial vessels, creating major threats to international shipping and trade routes. The Houthis have also used the area to assert control and pressure regional powers such as Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, further complicating the security landscape. As a result, the Bab-el-Mandeb Strait has become a flashpoint for regional and global tensions, drawing involvement from countries like the United States and members of the Gulf Cooperation Council who seek to protect freedom of navigation and ensure the safety of vital maritime routes.

### The People's Republic of China (PRC):

China established its first overseas military base in Djibouti in 2017, marking a major step in its global expansion strategy. The base supports Chinese naval operations in the Red Sea and Indian Ocean, offering logistical and security support for its growing trade and infrastructure projects under the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). By

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maintaining a military foothold near the Bab-el-Mandeb Strait, China seeks to protect its commercial shipping, secure access to vital maritime routes, and increase its geopolitical influence in East Africa and the Middle East. This move also signals China's long-term goal of becoming a dominant maritime power capable of projecting strength far beyond its borders.

## **The United States Of America:**

The United States maintains a significant military presence in the Bab-el-Mandeb region through Camp Lemonnier in Djibouti, its largest permanent base in Africa. This base allows the U.S. to monitor maritime traffic, counter terrorism, and protect the strategic shipping lanes connecting the Red Sea to the Gulf of Aden. The U.S. uses its presence to ensure freedom of navigation, support anti-piracy operations, and respond quickly to crises in the Horn of Africa and the Arabian Peninsula. Through its naval and intelligence activities, the U.S. aims to safeguard global trade routes and strengthen alliances with regional partners to limit the influence of rival powers.

## **Saudi Arabia:**

The nation relies heavily on the El Mandeb strait for oil exports and imports. It has also underwent military operations in Yemen and seeks to secure its maritime trade routes.

## **United Arab Emirates (UAE):**

Maintains very strong military presence in nearby islands (like Socotra) and in Eritrea's Assab base, aiming to influence shipping and trade.

## **Egypt:**

Egypt are the guardians of the Suez Canal, which connects the Red Sea to the Mediterranean and is crucial for its economy and global trade. Ensuring Bab el Mandeb remains open is a strategic priority.

## **Timeline:**

**1967:**

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Egypt's defeat by the occupied state of Israel led to the Suez Canal closing until 1975 making El Mandeb strait even more important to the global economy.

## **1973:**

For a short period of time, Egypt blockaded the El Mandeb strait with Yemen's support to stop Israeli trade which expressed the strait's importance in regional conflicts.

## **1990's :**

Piracy in the Gulf of Aden and near the Mandeb strait prompted international naval patrols and increased foreign interest in securing the route.

## **2000: USS Cole Bombing in Aden, Yemen**

Al Qaeda's ( which is a pan-Islamist militant organization led by Sunni jihadists) attack on a US naval vessel underscored the tensions and vulnerability of international forces and shipping near Bab el-Mandeb.

## **2015:**

Houthi rebels have taken over significant territory in Yemen, including coastal areas near Bab el-Mandeb. Saudi Arabia and the UAE launched military interventions, turning the strait into a flashpoint.

## **2017:**

China opens its first military base in Djibouti to secure Belt and Road trade routes and protect energy shipments.

## **2018:**

The UAE established control of Eritrea's Assab naval base and deployed forces to Yemen's Socotra Island, which showed its influence over the Red Sea.

## **2019:**

Suspected Houthi and Iranian backed operations were targeting all oil and energy transportation vessels across the strip which made global energy supplies very unstable.

## **2023-2024:**

Missiles and drones were launched at many commercial vessels which were traveling along the strip which heavily disrupted regional and more importantly global trade, which forced many companies to reroute around Africa to avoid troubles and damages to their vessels, the re-ignited global fears of complete militarization and all out war on the strait.

## **Implications:**

The Red Sea and Bab el-Mandeb conflict has been attracting global interest and attention. Middle powers like the United States and China are anxious that unbridled militarization would put regional powers like Saudi Arabia and the UAE in a position

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of excessive control of one of the globe's most strategic shipping lanes. The economic factor of the conflict is still one of the highest ones because almost 10% of global trade in the form of oil and liquefied natural gas shipments goes through the strait. Any disruption has the potential to ignite long-term volatility in the energy market, raise shipping rates, and slow the entire world economy.

In addition, the conflict raises grave concerns about the safety of sailors, commercial crews, and civilians in the region. Attacks on commercial ships and fishing boats have already put lives at risk, and recent examples using Houthi missiles and drones only illustrate the very tangible human toll of this militarized seascape. Hence, the world community is apprehensive that continued escalation would lead to the direct loss of human lives and spark a humanitarian crisis in the coastlines of Yemen, Djibouti, and Eritrea where vulnerable states cannot contain the fallout of constricted trade and war.

Furthermore, the ongoing exploration and exploitation of natural resources in and around the Red Sea evoke regional and global concerns. In the event that adequate oil or natural gas deposits are found along the coastlines, concerns of immediate provocation from regional powers for control of exploitation locations, ports, and export corridors exist. Such a development has the ability to transform the world economic situation through the transfer of control of sources of energy, the creation of economic antagonisms with the redrawing of alliances. The competition for control has the potential to result in forceful military posturing in the Red Sea through conflicts similar to the ones witnessed in other marine areas like the South China Sea.

Military tensions continue to be a prominent cause of concern because previous conflicts in the region, for instance naval blockades in the Yemeni Civil War and Bab el-Mandeb closure by Egypt in the 1973 Yom Kippur War illustrate that the strait has been weaponized before. Any reoccurrence of the incidences has the potential of causing wide-scale disruption of world trade and spinning into a regional war. With various foreign bases in Djibouti and rising deployments by Saudi Arabia, the UAE, and Egypt, the chances of a minor scuffle spinning into a far greater conflict are always present. Lastly, the most dreaded escalation is the increased involvement of great world powers, such as Russia, the United Kingdom, and European countries, that would utilize naval forces to protect their trade concerns in the Red Sea. If this is done, the strait could become a busy stage of rival navies and convert a critical commercial artery into a battle scene. Such instability would not only jeopardize freedom of navigation but also raise the threat of proxy conflicts in one of the globe's most strategic maritime chokepoints and render international cooperation imperative in order to avert the Red Sea from plunging into extended militarism and conflict.

## Proposed Solutions:

1. Regional and International Partnership Strengthening;

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## a. Developing a Multilateral Security Framework,

i. Forming a joint Red Sea Maritime Security Council of regional nations (Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Djibouti, Eritrea, Egypt) with observer status of the world nations (U.S., China, EU),

ii. That the Council is in operation in accordance with the principles of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea ( UNCLOS), to ensure freedom of navigation,

## b. Halting and Tracing Militarization,

i. Sending a UN mandate-bound international naval observation mission to monitor the unauthorized military build-up,

1. Intelligence sharing among members to spot suspicious naval activity,

2. Cooperative patrols in neutral waters to avert piracy and attacks,

ii. Requiring all member states to publicly declare new military installations in the region to avoid secret buildup,

## c. Advancing Economic and Humanitarian Stability,

i. Create a UN-run fund to support coastal countries (Yemen, Djibouti, Eritrea, Somalia) in the development of ports for trade and not military actions,

ii. Coordinating relief convoys to the Yemen and the Horn of Africa in an effort to minimize dependence on military-secured relief corridors,

## “Food for Thought”:

- Could there be future interest for more countries in the Red Sea, noting that exploitation is permitted in high seas by international law?
- Is it possible for the international community to balance the right of states to defend their interests in the Red Sea with the need to keep the strait demilitarized and open for all?
- Should the Red Sea and Bab El Mandeb be declared an international neutral zone?

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- To what extent do external powers (U.S., China, EU) contribute to stability in the region, and to what extent do they fuel militarization?
- Can sensitive countries like Yemen, Eritrea, and Djibouti realistically resist foreign influences when they depend on external funding and security guarantees?
- How can continues and prolonged ilitarization of Bab el Mandeb affect global energy prices and the economies of importing nations?
- Could piracy and terrorism groups re appear bigger and stronger f global powers are distracted by competing against each other militarily in the region?
- Would creating a UN-led Red Sea Maritime Security Mission reduce tensions, or would it simply add another layer of foreign involvement?
- Is the Red Sea conflict primarily about regional rivalries (Saudi Arabia vs. Iran, UAE vs. Turkey), or has it become part of a larger global power struggle (U.S. vs. China)?

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## Appendix:

### Appendix A

#### **“Geopolitical Map of the Red Sea and Bab el-Mandeb Strait.”**

United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), 1982.

Exhibits the strategic geography of the Red Sea region, including Yemen, Djibouti, Eritrea, Somalia, the Suez Canal, and major commercial maritime routes passing through the Bab el-Mandeb.



## Appendix B

### **“Foreign Military Installations Surrounding the Red Sea.”**

Atlantic Council, “Djibouti: The Next Arena for U.S.–China Competition,” 2025.

Exhibits the distribution of naval and military bases established by the U.S., China, France, UAE, Saudi Arabia, and other states around the Red Sea, highlighting the region’s rapid militarization.

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