Competition and Cooperation in the Red Sea Region

Great Decisions
February 20, 2020
Main Issues

1. Red Sea – key shipping route for roughly 10% of all international trade; principal products - crude oil (2.4 million barrels per day), petroleum products (2.6 million barrels per day), liquified natural gas (3.5 billion cubic feet per day) - principal route from Middle East to Europe and the US

2. Red Sea area - “rough neighborhood” of failing States (Yemen, Djibouti, Somalia, etc) that attract outside players (UAE, Qatar, Iran, China, Russia, al Qaeda, Somali pirates). Different groups fighting each other through proxies in this region. Civil War in Yemen; foreign naval bases in Djibouti

3. What’s needed: international control to ensure stability of shipping (with US taking a major but not exclusive role). US cannot retreat because that puts political stability, world trade, and our prosperity in jeopardy.
Questions

1. US under Obama and Trump has aligned with Saudi Arabia and UAE in their war with the Houthis in Yemen. Is this the right approach?
2. Should the US be more engaged in this region? If so, how?
3. How will China’s Belt and Road Initiative impact the Red Sea Region? What should be the US response?
4. What is the threat to the US base in Djibouti?