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Legal and Geopolitical Impacts of Regional and Global Actors on the Security of the Bab al-Mandeb Strait: Assessing Iran's Maritime Diplomacy under the Law of the Sea

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Abstract

Background and Theoretical Foundations: The Bab al-Mandeb Strait constitutes one of the most strategically significant international waterways, serving as a vital maritime corridor linking the Red Sea to the Gulf of Aden and the wider Indian Ocean. Its geopolitical sensitivity arises from the convergence of regional rivalries, global power competition, and the presence of non-state threats, all of which have transformed the Strait into a critical arena for maritime security governance. Under the international law of the sea—particularly the principles governing straits used for international navigation—state behavior in this region carries profound legal and strategic implications. For Iran, whose economy and energy exports rely heavily on secure maritime routes, developments in the Bab al-Mandeb directly affect national interests and influence the direction of its maritime diplomacy.

Methodology: This research adopts a descriptive-analytical approach, drawing upon international legal instruments, geopolitical analyses, security studies, and academic literature published between 2000 and 2024. By examining regional dynamics, the involvement of global naval powers, and the practices of coastal states, the study evaluates how these intertwined legal and geopolitical factors shape the Strait's security environment. The research further analyzes Iran's

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maritime diplomacy and strategic naval deployments within the framework of customary international law and UNCLOS principles.

Findings: The analysis indicates that the Bab al-Mandeb Strait has become increasingly affected by multilayered geopolitical competition, including regional conflicts, great-power rivalry, and the activities of non-state actors. These conditions have amplified the vulnerability of maritime traffic and heightened the need for effective cooperative security mechanisms. Within this context, Iran's maritime diplomacy—centered on legal compliance, anti-piracy operations, and bilateral cooperation with Red Sea littoral states—has contributed to safeguarding its sea lines of communication. Iran's strategic naval presence in the northern Indian Ocean and near the Bab al-Mandeb has enhanced maritime security, strengthened its legal standing as a responsible maritime actor, and supported the stability of international navigation.

Conclusion: The findings demonstrate that the security of the Bab al-Mandeb Strait is deeply influenced by the legal and geopolitical behavior of regional and global actors. Iran's reliance on maritime diplomacy and strategically justified naval presence constitutes an essential component of its broader security and foreign policy. While geopolitical tensions continue to challenge the stability of this critical chokepoint, Iran's legally grounded maritime engagement provides opportunities for strengthening regional cooperation, enhancing navigational safety, and safeguarding national interests. Future research should explore multilateral legal frameworks and confidence-building measures that could reduce tensions and support sustainable security governance in international straits.

Keywords: Bab al-Mandeb Strait; Maritime Security; Geopolitical Actors; International Law of The Sea; Iran; Maritime Diplomacy; Sea Lines of Communication.

1. Introduction

The strategic geography of states has historically played a decisive role in shaping their political, economic, and security orientations. Among the world's critical maritime chokepoints, the Bab al-Mandeb Strait occupies a uniquely important position. Connecting the Red Sea to the Gulf of Aden and, ultimately, to the broader Indian Ocean, it functions as an indispensable transit route for global shipping, including the movement of energy supplies, commercial goods, and naval traffic between Asia, Africa, and Europe



(Guiziou, 2023). Owing to its narrow width and position as the southern gateway to the Red Sea and the northern entrance to the Indian Ocean, any disruption in this Strait would compel vessels to reroute around the Cape of Good Hope—dramatically increasing both time and transportation costs (Anadolu Agency, 2023). Thus, the stability of Bab al-Mandeb is directly linked to global economic resilience, the reliability of energy markets, and uninterrupted international trade flows (iKNiTO Journal of Commercial & Environmental Studies, 2024).

Over the past decades, the security environment surrounding Bab al-Mandeb has become increasingly complex. The ongoing conflict in Yemen, the presence of armed non-state groups, the persistence of maritime terrorism and piracy, and the growing involvement of international naval forces have combined to render this narrow maritime corridor one of the most heavily contested zones worldwide (Guiziou, 2023; Yaghoubi Shahir et al., 2015). These overlapping pressures have introduced significant risks to navigational safety and regional stability, with implications extending well beyond the immediate region (Washington Institute, 2018). For the Islamic Republic of Iran—whose economy and regional connectivity depend heavily on secure sea lines of communication—the evolving conditions in Bab al-Mandeb are of particular relevance. Iran's maritime diplomacy and its strategic naval deployments, when conducted in accordance with applicable legal norms, may serve as tools to safeguard national interests, enhance maritime security, and support the safety of international shipping (Guiziou, 2023; iKNiTO Journal of Commercial & Environmental Studies, 2024). However, such conduct must be evaluated in light of the legal regimes governing straits used for international navigation under UNCLOS and customary international law (Yaghoubi Shahir et al., 2015).

Although considerable scholarship examines the geopolitical competition surrounding this waterway, the interaction between the legal framework of the law of the sea and the geopolitical activities of regional and global actors remains insufficiently explored (Washington Institute, 2018). The lack of integrated research that simultaneously assesses legal principles—such as

navigational rights, state obligations, passage regimes, and maritime sovereignty-and geopolitical drivers-such as conflicts, naval deployments, and non-state threats-constitutes a significant gap in the literature (Guiziou, 2023). Addressing this gap is essential for understanding not only the evolving security environment of Bab al-Mandeb but also the lawful parameters of states' behavior within it.

Accordingly, this article aims to provide a comprehensive dual-perspective analysis that integrates legal and geopolitical dimensions. It examines how the activities of both regional and global actors influence maritime security and navigational regimes in the Bab al-Mandeb Strait, while simultaneously assessing the extent to which Iran's maritime diplomacy and naval presence align with international maritime law (iKNiTO Journal of Commercial & Environmental Studies, 2024; Yaghoubi Shahir et al., 2015). By doing so, the article seeks to illuminate the lawful strategic space available to Iran for contributing to the protection of sea lines of communication and for engaging constructively with regional partners in the Red Sea basin.

In this article, the authors will address the following research questions:

1. What legal and geopolitical impacts do regional and global actors exert on the security and navigational regime of the Bab al-Mandeb Strait (Guiziou, 2023; Washington Institute, 2018)?
2. Under the law of the sea, which regime of passage governs the Bab al-Mandeb Strait—transit passage, innocent passage, or another framework—and how do ongoing security threats affect its practical application (Yaghoubi Shahir et al., 2015)?
3. How do regional conflicts, naval deployments, and the actions of non-state actors align with or challenge international maritime legal norms concerning freedom of navigation and maritime security (iKNiTO Journal of Commercial & Environmental Studies, 2024)?
4. What legal justifications, based on international maritime law, support Iran's maritime diplomacy and its naval activities aimed at protecting shipping and countering maritime threats (Guiziou, 2023)?



5. To what extent can Iran lawfully contribute to enhancing maritime security in Bab al-Mandeb, and what diplomatic mechanisms may facilitate cooperative engagement with Red Sea littoral states (Washington Institute, 2018)?

This integrated approach provides added scholarly value by bridging legal doctrine with geopolitical realities, offering insights into how states—particularly Iran—can navigate the complex interplay of law, security, and diplomacy in one of the world’s most strategically sensitive maritime corridors.

2. Theoretical Foundations and Background of the Research

1.2. Theoretical Foundations

Understanding the security dynamics of the Bab al-Mandeb Strait requires grounding the discussion in key geopolitical, geostrategic, and security theories. Geopolitics, defined by Mir Heidar (1999) as the method of interpreting international politics based on the interplay of geography, power, and political decision-making, provides the overarching conceptual framework. Hafeznia (2012) similarly emphasizes that the triangular interaction of geography, power, and politics shapes the behavioral patterns of organized human groups at the national and regional scales.

Within this context, the concept of the geopolitical region is essential. As Pishgahifard (2008) explains, a geopolitical region emerges when the political, social, and functional characteristics of a geographical area transform under changing regional or international conditions. Geopolitical actors—sovereign nation-states that compete to acquire, project, or preserve power—actively shape these regions (Hafeznia, 2015).

International law also frames the strategic value of the Bab al-Mandeb Strait. According to the International Court of Justice, international straits are narrow waterways connecting two open seas and facilitating global navigation (Golden, 2019; Talaei, 2020). This legal definition has significant

implications for freedom of navigation, security regimes, and maritime competition.

Security studies further contribute to the theoretical foundation. As Ghorbani Sepehr et al. (2018; 2019) argue, security constitutes a foundational pillar for the stability and survival of states. Moradian (2009; 2010) adds that states' foreign policy behavior is driven primarily by ideological and interest-based considerations. Traditional security studies were historically military-focused, but scholars of the Copenhagen School—particularly Barry Buzan—expanded the security agenda to include political, economic, societal, and environmental dimensions (Abdollahkhani, 2010).

Several key geopolitical theories also apply to the Bab al-Mandeb region:

Rimland Theory (Spykman, 1944): Emphasizes the strategic importance of the maritime crescent encircling the Eurasian Heartland and highlights the security functions of coastal regions such as the Red Sea and the Bab al-Mandeb Strait.

Mahan's Naval Power Theory (Ezzati, 2008): Stresses the critical linkage between naval strength, control of sea lanes, and national economic and political power.

Balance of Power Theory (Alavian & Moosavi, 2017): Suggests that states align strategically to counter rival power centers—an analytical lens highly relevant to the Iran–Saudi Arabia rivalry in the Bab al-Mandeb.

Copenhagen School of Security Studies (Abdollahkhani, 2010): Provides a methodological basis for analyzing securitization processes, particularly useful in understanding how regional and global actors frame the Strait as a site of existential threats.

Collectively, these theories form the conceptual foundation for analyzing the security environment of the Bab al-Mandeb Strait and understanding Iran's maritime diplomacy within the framework of contemporary geopolitical competition. The theoretical foundations are explained below:

1.1.2. Geographical and Geopolitical Characteristics of the Bab al-Mandeb Strait



The Bab al-Mandeb Strait, located between 12°35'N and 43°20'E, connects the Red Sea to the Gulf of Aden and the Indian Ocean. Measuring approximately 115 km in length and 30 km in width, it is divided by the island of Perim into two passages: the narrower Bab Iskandar and the deeper Dact al-Mayan (Khaniha, 2010). It borders Yemen, Djibouti, and Eritrea, and sits at the intersection of three continents—Asia, Africa, and Europe (Sayyari & Khanzadi, 2012).

The Strait's islands—including Perim, Socotra, and the Hanish and Dehlak archipelagos—hold strategic value due to their military, navigational, and geopolitical significance.

1.1.1.2. Geoeconomic Importance

The Bab al-Mandeb is a vital component of global energy and trade flows, serving as the shortest maritime route between East Asia, the Indian Ocean, and the Mediterranean. More than 6.2 million barrels of oil per day transit through the Strait (Aguilera Raga, 2020). Its geoeconomic value also stems from its proximity to major shipping lanes and its role as a gateway between Europe, Asia, and Africa.

2.1.1.2. Geostrategic Importance

The presence of global naval powers, military bases in Djibouti and Eritrea, radar systems, and strategic chokepoints highlight the Strait's military significance (Fathi & Jahanbin, 2019). Iran's naval missions, Saudi and Emirati interventions in Yemen, U.S. and Chinese bases in Djibouti, and proxy conflicts further intensify the geostrategic competition.

3.1.1.2. Geocultural Importance

The region's mosaic of ethnicities, religions, and sects—including Zaidi Shiites, Sunnis, and tribal coalitions—creates fertile ground for identity-based conflicts. The Arab Spring, the empowerment of Ansarullah, and the broader Shiite geopolitical sphere (Mosallanezhad, 2014) illustrate how cultural dynamics shape both internal conflicts and external interventions.

4.1.1.2. Strategic Significance

The strategic value of Bab al-Mandeb derives from both economic and military considerations:

1. Economic Significance

It serves as a critical corridor for global energy flows, particularly crude oil from the Persian Gulf to Europe and North America. Approximately 4–5 million barrels of oil per day transit through this strait (Guiziou, 2023). The strait is also crucial for import and export of goods, affecting global shipping costs and trade dynamics (iKNiTO Journal of Commercial & Environmental Studies, 2024).

2. Military and Geostrategic Significance

Control over Bab al-Mandeb allows actors to influence maritime security in the Red Sea, Gulf of Aden, and northern Indian Ocean, thereby affecting both regional and global naval strategies (Washington Institute, 2018).

Its location as the southern gateway to the Red Sea and the Suez Canal makes it a critical point for naval power projection, particularly for European, North American, and Asian states (Anadolu Agency, 2023).

The strait's dual economic and military relevance makes it a hotspot of geopolitical competition. Any threat to its security can have far-reaching consequences, including increased insurance premiums for vessels, higher shipping costs, and disruptions to energy markets.

2.1.2. Geographical, Geostrategic, and Geopolitical Features of Bab al-Mandeb Strait

1.2.1.2. Geographical Overview

The Bab al-Mandeb Strait is a narrow maritime chokepoint connecting the Red Sea to the Gulf of Aden and the northwestern Indian Ocean.

Approximately 20 miles wide at its narrowest point, the strait separates the Arabian Peninsula (Yemen) from the Horn of Africa (Djibouti and Eritrea) (Guiziou, 2023). Its strategic position allows it to serve as a primary transit route for commercial vessels, oil tankers, and naval ships, providing a shorter maritime path between Europe, Africa, and Asia compared to



circumnavigating Africa via the Cape of Good Hope (Anadolu Agency, 2023).

The strait comprises two channels separated by the island of Perim: the eastern channel (Bab Iskender) and the western channel (Dact-el-Mayun). The depth and navigational characteristics of these channels impose natural constraints, requiring precise maritime management and security oversight (iKNiTO Journal of Commercial & Environmental Studies, 2024). Its narrow width, combined with heavy traffic, makes Bab al-Mandeb highly vulnerable to disruption from regional conflicts, piracy, and external military presence (Washington Institute, 2018).

3.1.2. Regional and Global Actors

Numerous actors influence the security and political dynamics of Bab al-Mandeb:

1.3.1.2. Regional Actors

Yemen: The Houthi movement, controlling parts of the western coast, exerts direct influence over strait security and has occasionally threatened maritime navigation (Washington Institute, 2018).

Saudi Arabia and UAE: These states maintain naval presence to protect maritime interests and support allied factions in Yemen (Guiziou, 2023).

2.3.1.2. Global/Trans-regional Actors

United States: Conducts counter-piracy operations and freedom of navigation exercises.

China and Russia: Increasingly projecting naval power in the Gulf of Aden and Red Sea to secure trade routes and strategic influence.

European Union: Operates naval missions (e.g., EU NAVFOR) focused on counter-piracy and securing maritime traffic (iKNiTO Journal of Commercial & Environmental Studies, 2024).

The presence of these actors creates a complex geopolitical landscape, combining cooperation, competition, and occasional confrontation. Regional conflicts and maritime threats amplify the strategic value of the strait while simultaneously complicating navigation and security operations (Guiziou, 2023; Washington Institute, 2018).

2.2. Background of the Research

Bab al-Mandeb has historically been a key trade and military corridor, linking Africa, the Middle East, and Asia. Over the last decades:

Piracy and maritime terrorism in the Gulf of Aden (2008–2015) drew international naval intervention.

Yemeni civil conflict since 2015 intensified instability, making the strait one of the most vulnerable maritime corridors (Anadolu Agency, 2023).

Iranian strategic engagement through naval presence and maritime diplomacy has aimed to safeguard shipping lanes and support allied actors, consistent with international maritime law (iKNiTO Journal of Commercial & Environmental Studies, 2024).

The historical pattern underscores the persistent security risks that require multilateral coordination and the application of both legal frameworks and strategic naval capabilities

Scientific research evolves cumulatively, building on the foundations established by earlier scholars. Reviewing prior studies prevents duplication, enriches methodological rigor, and highlights existing research gaps. Although no comprehensive study in Iran has addressed the combined legal–geopolitical impacts of regional and global actors on the security of the Bab al-Mandeb Strait with a focus on Iran’s strategic navy, several relevant works offer valuable insights.

1. Ghavidel (2011) examined the geoeconomic and communication significance of Middle Eastern and North African straits, noting that oil and gas exports, as well as the import of essential goods, rely heavily on secure maritime transit routes. He emphasized the vulnerability of certain straits to geopolitical threats (Ghavidel, 2012: 116–119).



2. Abdollahkhani (2010), in *Security Theories*, explored global and regional security doctrines, threats, vulnerabilities, and the application of regional security complex theory—an analytical tool central to understanding regional maritime security dynamics.
3. Salmani (2021) highlighted the role of naval power in deterrence, noting that maritime strength historically functioned as a key factor in both colonial expansion and national security, underscoring its relevance for Iran’s strategic navy (Salmani, 2021: 79–92).
4. Aguilera Raga (2020) analyzed the Bab al-Mandeb from a geopolitical perspective, emphasizing its centrality in global trade and the intensifying rivalries among the U.S., China, Iran, and Saudi Arabia as contributing factors to regional instability.
5. Hemmati, Ebrahimi, and Goodarzi (2020) explored Saudi Arabia’s balancing strategy against Iran in Yemen. They argued that Ansarullah’s rise shifted the regional balance in Iran’s favor, heightening Saudi concerns over oil transit security and prompting Riyadh’s aggressive foreign policy shifts (Hemmati et al., 2020: 105–122).

While these studies address valuable dimensions of regional geopolitics and security, none examines the combined interaction of legal frameworks, geopolitical rivalries, and Iran’s maritime diplomacy in the Bab al-Mandeb Strait. The present study fills this gap by integrating international maritime law, regional political dynamics, and strategic naval deployment to assess the Strait’s evolving security architecture.

3. Legal Framework

1.3 International Law of the Sea (UNCLOS)

The United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS, 1982) forms the foundational legal framework governing the rights and responsibilities of states in maritime zones, including territorial seas, contiguous zones, exclusive economic zones (EEZs), and international

straits (United Nations, 1982). Under UNCLOS, straits used for international navigation, such as Bab al-Mandeb, are subject to transit passage, which ensures the right of unimpeded passage for ships and aircraft of all states, whether coastal or non-coastal, provided passage is continuous and expeditious (Rothwell & Stephens, 2016).

Transit passage differs from innocent passage. While innocent passage applies in territorial seas, permitting foreign vessels to navigate without threatening peace, security, or order, transit passage applies specifically to straits connecting two high seas or EEZs used for international navigation (Tanaka, 2019). This distinction is legally crucial for Bab al-Mandeb, which is bordered by Yemen, Djibouti, and Eritrea. Coastal states retain sovereignty over their territorial waters but cannot impede transit passage, even if the passage occurs close to their shores.

Maritime sovereignty allows coastal states to exercise jurisdiction over internal waters, territorial seas, and security measures; however, in international straits, sovereignty is constrained by the obligation to permit transit passage. This ensures a balance between coastal state authority and global navigational rights, a balance that becomes particularly important in Bab al-Mandeb due to its strategic role in energy and commercial shipping.

Additionally, UNCLOS provisions govern the rights of warships, aircraft, and non-commercial vessels. Article 39 allows warships of foreign states to navigate under transit passage without prior notification, but with adherence to safety and environmental regulations (Nordquist et al., 2019). This is critical for states like Iran that deploy strategic naval assets in international waters while observing legal obligations.

2.3 Rights and Duties of Coastal and Non-Coastal States

Coastal states have the right to exercise jurisdiction over environmental protection, port regulations, and maritime law enforcement within their territorial waters. For example, Yemen can regulate ship traffic for safety, environmental protection, and maritime security, but cannot impede or discriminate against vessels transiting Bab al-Mandeb under UNCLOS (Rothwell & Stephens, 2016). Coastal states may impose reasonable safety



and environmental regulations but must ensure they do not constitute an obstruction to lawful transit passage (Tanaka, 2019).

Non-coastal states, including major maritime and energy-exporting countries, enjoy the right of continuous and expeditious passage, which is critical for international shipping and energy security. These states may deploy naval forces for the protection of merchant shipping, provided they respect coastal state sovereignty and do not engage in armed conflicts unless lawful self-defense is invoked (Nordquist et al., 2019).

This legal balance is particularly relevant to Iran, which seeks to protect its maritime interests, ensure uninterrupted oil and goods transit, and maintain strategic influence in the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden while operating within the framework of international law (Yaghoubi Shahir et al., 2015).

3.3 Legal Status of Bab al-Mandeb Strait

1.3.3. UNCLOS:

The Bab al-Mandeb Strait qualifies as an international strait under UNCLOS because it is used for international navigation and connects two high seas/EEZ regions — the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden. Legal implications include:

Articles 37–44 define the rights of ships and aircraft in straits used for international navigation. Coastal states cannot suspend or restrict transit passage (United Nations, 1982). Passage must be continuous, expeditious, and without deviation, even in territorial waters.

2. 3.3. Customary International Law

UNCLOS codifies rights and obligations that are generally accepted as customary law, recognized even by non-parties (Rothwell & Stephens, 2016). This ensures freedom of navigation and overflight while respecting the security of coastal states.

3. 3.3. Navigational Freedoms

These include rights for merchant vessels, warships, naval auxiliaries, and government aircraft, provided they respect coastal state regulations related to safety, environmental protection, and security.

4. 3.3. Legal Obligations in Times of Conflict

Even during armed conflict, international law imposes limitations on interference with transit passage unless necessary for self-defense or to prevent violations of international humanitarian law (Tanaka, 2019). Thus, Bab al-Mandeb demonstrates the complex interplay between sovereignty, international law, and freedom of navigation, making it a critical case study in maritime legal scholarship.

4.3 Non-State Actors and Maritime Security

Non-state actors, including pirates, terrorist groups, and militias, present complex legal and operational challenges. UNCLOS primarily addresses state actors; threats from non-state entities require combined diplomatic, legal, and military strategies.

1. 4.3. Piracy

International naval coalitions, including EU Operation ATALANTA and multinational task forces, reduced piracy but could not fully eliminate the threat.

2. 4.3. Maritime Terrorism

Houthi-affiliated groups in Yemen have used drones, missiles, and small craft to threaten commercial and military shipping (Klein, 2022).

Legal questions arise regarding the use of force in international waters, obligations under UNCLOS, and the right of self-defense under the UN Charter.

3. 4.3. Legal Challenges and Enforcement

Enforcement against non-state actors often requires coordination between coastal and non-coastal states, maritime coalitions, and the International Maritime Organization (IMO). Iran's strategic naval presence, conducted



legally under UNCLOS, enhances maritime security, deters illegal acts, and ensures freedom of navigation (Yaghoubi Shahir et al., 2015).

4. 4.3. Environmental and Humanitarian Considerations

Attacks on commercial vessels can lead to oil spills, environmental damage, and risks to crew safety, adding another legal dimension under both UNCLOS and humanitarian maritime law.

5.3. Iran's Legal and Strategic Position

Iran's naval operations in Bab al-Mandeb and northern Indian Ocean are legally grounded under UNCLOS provisions for transit passage, EEZ operations, and freedom of navigation. These operations serve multiple objectives:

1. Ensuring the security of Iranian maritime trade and energy exports.
2. Supporting diplomatic and strategic relationships with regional states, such as Yemen.
3. Contributing to regional stability and deterring illegal maritime activities.

Through legal compliance, strategic presence, and cooperative engagements, Iran leverages maritime law and naval diplomacy to protect national interests while respecting international norms (Nordquist et al., 2019; Yaghoubi Shahir et al., 2015).

4: Geopolitical Impacts on Security

1.4. Regional Conflicts

The Yemen War (2015–present) is a pivotal conflict with profound geopolitical consequences for the Bab al-Mandeb Strait and surrounding maritime regions. The war primarily involves a coalition of Saudi Arabia and the UAE backing the Yemeni government against the Houthi movement, an armed group from the Shia Zaydi sect that controls much of northern Yemen. The Houthis have been actively supported by Iran, with the latter providing

military, financial, and logistical support. This alignment has led to a significant shift in the balance of power in the region, making the strait a key point of geopolitical contestation.

The Houthi movement's control over key Yemeni ports and its influence over the Bab al-Mandeb Strait provides them strategic leverage, disrupting international trade routes and threatening maritime security. The Houthis have engaged in attacks on Saudi and UAE shipping, further complicating the security landscape in the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden. Their use of missiles, drones, and even sea mines in attacks against coalition forces and commercial vessels in the region represents a growing threat to the freedom of navigation through the strait (Lesch, 2019).

For Iran, supporting the Houthis is part of a broader strategy to increase its influence in the Arabian Peninsula and counterbalance the influence of the United States, Saudi Arabia, and other regional powers. The presence of Iran-aligned forces near key maritime chokepoints like Bab al-Mandeb enhances its strategic depth and provides a means to assert influence over shipping lanes critical for the global oil trade (Kahl, 2019). Iran's support for the Houthis also extends to efforts aimed at challenging the regional dominance of Saudi Arabia and securing a foothold in the Arabian Sea, further complicating the geopolitical and military dynamics in the region (Riedel, 2020).

2.4. Global Naval Presence

The Bab al-Mandeb Strait holds immense strategic importance for global naval powers, who routinely deploy their forces to ensure maritime security and protect trade routes. The presence of United States, European Union, China, and Russia in the region underscores its geopolitical significance and the increasing military competition for influence over this vital maritime corridor.

1.2.4. United States and European Union

The U.S. Navy maintains a significant naval presence in the region, primarily through its Fifth Fleet based in Bahrain, which operates in the Arabian Gulf, the Red Sea, and the Gulf of Aden. The U.S. has also been involved in



counter-piracy operations and anti-terrorism efforts aimed at ensuring the safety of maritime trade and protecting oil exports from the Persian Gulf. The U.S. presence in the region supports its broader security commitments to regional allies, including Saudi Arabia and the UAE, and ensures that the strategic waterways remain open (Bouchat, 2015). The European Union (EU) also plays an active role in maritime security in the region, primarily through its Operation Atalanta, which aims to combat piracy in the Gulf of Aden and the wider Horn of Africa region. EU naval assets, alongside those of NATO, patrol these waters to safeguard international shipping lanes and deter illegal activities such as smuggling and piracy (European Union, 2020).

2.2.4. China

China's involvement in the region is driven by its growing dependence on energy imports from the Middle East, much of which transits through the Bab al-Mandeb Strait. Beijing has significantly expanded its maritime presence in recent years, especially as part of its Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), which aims to secure trade routes and foster closer ties with regional powers. China has also opened its first overseas military base in Djibouti, a key location near the Bab al-Mandeb Strait. This facility enhances China's ability to project naval power in the region and safeguard its maritime trade routes (Schweller, 2018).

3.2.4. Russia

Russia's naval presence in the region is smaller but growing, as Moscow seeks to expand its influence in the Middle East and beyond. Russia has maintained close ties with Syria, Iran, and Yemen, and its strategic interests in the Bab al-Mandeb Strait involve counterbalancing U.S. and NATO influence while supporting its allies in the region. Russia's naval interactions are largely focused on joint military exercises and counter-terrorism operations (Kuzmin, 2020).

The diverse naval presence of these powers underscores the competition for control and influence in the Bab al-Mandeb Strait, highlighting its critical importance in global geopolitics and international maritime security.

3.4 Maritime Security Threats

The security of the Bab al-Mandeb Strait is significantly impacted by both state and non-state actors who pose threats to the safety and stability of the region. These threats range from piracy and terrorism to asymmetrical warfare, all of which undermine the freedom of navigation and global trade through this vital waterway.

1.3.4. Piracy

The Bab al-Mandeb Strait has long been a hotspot for piracy. Somali-based pirates have expanded their operations into the Gulf of Aden, attacking commercial vessels and demanding ransoms. While international efforts, such as the EU's Operation Atalanta and NATO's Operation Ocean Shield, have significantly reduced the frequency of pirate attacks, piracy remains a persistent risk in the region (Murphy, 2009). The use of small boats and advanced technology by pirates requires continuous naval surveillance and counter-piracy operations to ensure the safety of commercial shipping.

2.3.4. Terrorism

Terrorist activities, particularly by groups aligned with Al-Qaeda and the Islamic State (ISIS), have exacerbated the maritime security threat in the region. The Houthi movement in Yemen has also engaged in targeted attacks against shipping vessels using missiles, drones, and naval mines, complicating the legal and military framework for protecting the Bab al-Mandeb Strait (Klein, 2022). These groups threaten both regional and international stability, making maritime security a priority for global powers.

3.3.4. Asymmetrical Warfare

Asymmetrical warfare, involving unconventional tactics employed by weaker actors against stronger state forces, has become an increasing threat in the Bab al-Mandeb Strait. The use of suicide boats, drone attacks, and covert naval operations has highlighted the vulnerability of even the most advanced naval forces. The Houthis have used these tactics effectively, challenging the maritime security infrastructure of the region and



highlighting the challenges of international maritime law in addressing non-state actors (Sullivan, 2020).

These security threats have profound implications for the global economy, as the Bab al-Mandeb Strait is a key shipping route for oil and gas exports, and disruptions can significantly impact energy markets and shipping costs.

4.4. Impact on Iran's Strategic Interests

The Bab al-Mandeb Strait plays a critical role in Iran's strategic interests in the region. As one of the world's largest exporters of oil, Iran is highly dependent on the safety and security of international shipping lanes for its economic prosperity. The strait is vital for Iran's oil exports, which pass through the Gulf of Aden and the Red Sea before reaching global markets. Ensuring the security of this route is central to maintaining Iran's economic stability and its influence in the region.

1.4.4. Oil Exports

Iran relies on the Bab al-Mandeb Strait for its energy exports, particularly to Europe, Asia, and Africa. Disruptions in this vital maritime route could lead to a rise in oil prices and negatively impact global markets. The presence of hostile powers and piracy threats exacerbates the vulnerability of Iran's energy exports, thus elevating the importance of Iran's naval diplomacy in safeguarding the security of the strait.

2.4.4. Trade Security

Beyond oil, the Bab al-Mandeb Strait is a critical transit point for trade goods. Iran's economic interests are deeply intertwined with the security of these trade routes, particularly for imports of goods and exports of manufactured products. Any instability in the region can lead to increased shipping costs, insurance premiums, and disruptions in trade, which would impact Iran's broader economic strategy (Riedel, 2020).

3.4.4. Regional Influence

The strategic location of Bab al-Mandeb provides Iran with the opportunity to assert its regional influence. Through its support of the Houthi movement and its maritime capabilities, Iran strengthens its influence in the Horn of Africa, Red Sea, and the Gulf of Aden. This aligns with Iran's broader goal of counterbalancing Saudi influence and securing its interests in critical maritime chokepoints.

Iran's naval presence in the region, backed by its legal position under UNCLOS, provides a means for projecting power, securing energy exports, and ensuring regional stability, which directly impacts its national security (Yaghoubi Shahir et al., 2015).

5: Iran's Maritime Diplomacy and Strategic Naval Presence

1.5. Legal Justification

Iran's maritime diplomacy and strategic naval presence in the Bab al-Mandeb Strait are anchored in its commitment to international law, specifically the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), which sets the legal framework for the rights of coastal states, navigation freedoms, and the protection of maritime security. As a state party to UNCLOS, Iran enjoys the right to transit passage through international straits such as the Bab al-Mandeb Strait, ensuring the free flow of goods and services while adhering to international maritime regulations (Rothwell & Stephens, 2016).

Under UNCLOS, Iran is authorized to conduct counter-piracy operations and escort missions within its Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) and the surrounding international waters. The legal justification for Iran's naval presence stems from the right to self-defense, outlined in Article 51 of the United Nations Charter, allowing Iran to protect its national security and safeguard its maritime interests (Nordquist et al., 2019).

Furthermore, Iran's naval operations align with the principles of customary international law, which uphold the right of states to defend themselves from threats such as piracy, terrorism, and other security risks in international waters (Klein, 2020). Iran's engagement in regional security initiatives and participation in multilateral maritime frameworks underscore its adherence



to both regional and global norms for maritime safety and freedom of navigation.

In the case of the Bab al-Mandeb Strait, Iran's legal position is reinforced by the necessity to protect its strategic maritime routes, which are critical for its oil exports and economic stability, while ensuring that maritime trade continues uninterrupted in one of the world's most important chokepoints.

2.5. Naval Operations

Iran's naval operations in the Bab al-Mandeb Strait and the broader Gulf of Aden region play a central role in maintaining maritime security. These operations primarily focus on counter-piracy missions, escort duties, and ensuring the protection of commercial shipping, particularly vessels involved in oil exports and other critical trade.

1.2.5. Counter-Piracy Operations

The Bab al-Mandeb Strait, as a crucial maritime passage for global oil shipments and trade, has been a hotspot for pirate activity. Iranian naval forces have been actively involved in counter-piracy operations, which have been part of the broader international maritime efforts to secure vital shipping lanes. According to UNCLOS, coastal states and neighboring powers have the right to deploy naval forces to protect vessels transiting through international straits, including counter-piracy efforts (Murphy, 2009). Iran has regularly dispatched warships to patrol these waters, escorting commercial ships, preventing pirate attacks, and contributing to the overall stabilization of the region. These efforts are critical not only for the protection of Iranian shipping but also for ensuring the safe passage of vessels from other countries reliant on this maritime corridor.

Additionally, Iran's active participation in international counter-piracy operations led by the International Maritime Organization (IMO) underscores its commitment to global maritime security (Yaghoubi Shahir et al., 2015). Iran's naval forces, alongside those of other nations like the U.S., China, and European Union member states, have successfully reduced the

frequency of piracy in the region through coordinated patrols, intelligence-sharing, and the provision of naval escorts.

2.2.5. Escorting Commercial Vessels

In addition to counter-piracy operations, Iran's navy has played a key role in escort operations for commercial vessels, particularly those carrying valuable cargo such as oil, gas, and consumer goods. The Bab al-Mandeb Strait serves as a critical shipping lane, with major international trade routes passing through it. Iran's decision to escort both domestic and international vessels highlights its role as a key player in the security of global maritime trade. Iran's naval forces ensure that oil tankers, particularly those bound for Asian and European markets, face minimal risk from external threats, including piracy and attacks by non-state actors.

Iran has also enhanced its diplomatic standing by offering escort services to vessels from countries such as China, Russia, and others with strategic interests in the region (Riedel, 2020). These escort missions not only provide security but also act as a soft power tool, strengthening Iran's bilateral relationships with countries that rely on secure trade routes through the Bab al-Mandeb Strait. This naval engagement aligns with Iran's broader objective of reinforcing its position as a regional maritime power while simultaneously asserting its influence over critical international waterways.

3.5. Maritime Diplomacy

Iran's maritime diplomacy serves as a critical element of its broader foreign policy strategy, particularly in relation to the Bab al-Mandeb Strait and the Red Sea region. By engaging in bilateral and multilateral maritime cooperation, Iran seeks to secure its national interests, foster regional stability, and project power in the face of regional and global competition.

1.3.5. Bilateral Relations with Yemen and Other Red Sea Countries

1.1.3.5. Relations with Yemen

Through formal diplomatic channels with Yemen, Iran engages on issues related to maritime safety, shipping protection, and the secure operation of maritime routes adjacent to the Bab al-Mandeb Strait. These engagements focus on technical and legal aspects-such as maritime information-sharing



and navigational risk management—rather than Yemen’s internal political dynamics (Riedel, 2020).

Such cooperation aligns with international expectations under UNCLOS that coastal states and contributing maritime states participate in joint efforts to maintain the safety of straits used for international navigation. In addition to Yemen, Iran has pursued bilateral maritime cooperation with other Red Sea states such as Eritrea and Djibouti, seeking to expand its influence in this critical region. These partnerships have allowed Iran to build relationships with key countries along the Red Sea, ensuring that its maritime interests are safeguarded and that it has access to critical maritime trade routes (Kahl, 2019).

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2.1.3.5. Relations with Other Red Sea States

Beyond Yemen, Iran has developed bilateral maritime dialogues with Eritrea, Djibouti, and other Red Sea littoral countries, emphasizing:

- Maritime training and capacity-building
- Hydrographic and navigational cooperation
- Search and rescue (SAR) coordination
- Port-state and shipping-related exchanges

These partnerships strengthen Iran’s ability to operate lawfully and effectively in the region, contribute to maritime stability, and support the

cooperative security framework envisioned under customary international law (Klein, 2020).

2.3.5. Multilateral Cooperation for Maritime Security

Iran's engagement in multilateral maritime security initiatives is also a cornerstone of its maritime diplomacy. The Bab al-Mandeb Strait is not only vital to Iran but to other regional and global actors. Iran participates in multilateral organizations such as the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), which focus on promoting regional cooperation in areas like maritime security, counter-piracy, and trade facilitation. These organizations serve as platforms for dialogue and collaboration with other powers in the region, allowing Iran to align its strategic interests with shared goals for maritime security (Kuzmin, 2020).

Additionally, Iran has taken part in joint naval exercises with countries such as Russia and China, which has bolstered its strategic position in the region and enhanced its naval capabilities. These exercises not only increase interoperability among partner navies but also serve as a demonstration of Iran's growing influence over the maritime security agenda in the Bab al-Mandeb Strait (Schweller, 2018).

4.5 Effectiveness Assessment

The effectiveness of Iran's maritime diplomacy and strategic naval presence in the Bab al-Mandeb Strait can be measured by its contributions to security, regional stability, and national interests.

1.4.5. Contribution to Security

Iran's naval operations have played a pivotal role in enhancing maritime security in the Bab al-Mandeb Strait. By reducing piracy incidents, countering terrorism, and ensuring the safe passage of critical shipping, Iran contributes to regional and global maritime security. Its naval presence serves as a deterrent against piracy and other illegitimate maritime activities in the region, thus ensuring the continuous flow of goods and services across one of the world's busiest maritime routes.

2.4.5. Regional Stability



Iran's maritime diplomacy and naval presence have significantly contributed to the stability of the region. While its support for the Houthis and other non-state actors has created tensions with regional powers such as Saudi Arabia and the UAE, its involvement in counter-piracy operations and escort services has proven beneficial for regional trade and security. By fostering cooperation with countries like Yemen, Djibouti, and Eritrea, Iran positions itself as a central actor in maintaining peace and stability in the Red Sea region.

3.4.5. National Interests

For Iran, the Bab al-Mandeb Strait is of paramount importance to its economic and strategic interests. The secure passage of oil exports through this vital waterway is crucial to Iran's economic stability. Additionally, by strengthening its maritime diplomacy, Iran enhances its geopolitical influence, asserting its presence in a key region for both global trade and regional security. Iran's strategic naval presence in the strait is a critical component of its broader national security strategy and foreign policy goals.

6: Challenges and Opportunities

1.6. Challenges

Iran's maritime strategy in the Bab al-Mandeb Strait, while crucial to its national interests, faces a number of challenges that complicate its ability to fully secure its position and ensure the safety of critical maritime routes. These challenges include legal restrictions, non-state actors, regional tensions, and multilateral coordination difficulties.

1.1.6. Legal Restrictions

One of the key challenges Iran faces is the complex legal framework governing the use of international straits. While Iran has legal rights under UNCLOS for transit passage and innocent passage, its ability to exercise these rights is sometimes restricted by the policies of other states, particularly in straits that are of strategic importance like the Bab al-Mandeb. As a result, Iran must navigate a complex web of international laws and agreements that

can limit its military operations or interfere with its commercial interests. The need to comply with both customary international law and UNCLOS provisions often requires balancing national security concerns with international expectations, creating a tension between the assertion of Iran's maritime sovereignty and the legal framework that governs free passage (Rothwell & Stephens, 2016).

2.1.6. Non-State Actors

The presence of non-state actors, such as pirates, terrorists, and militias, represents another significant challenge. In the Bab al-Mandeb Strait and surrounding waters, the Houthi movement in Yemen and various pirate groups operate with varying degrees of support from local factions or external powers. The involvement of non-state actors complicates efforts to maintain security and stability in the region, as these groups often act outside the bounds of international law, undermining efforts to ensure safe navigation.

3.1.6. Regional Tensions

The geopolitical tensions in the Middle East, particularly between Iran and Saudi Arabia, Israel, and the United States, create a volatile environment in the region that directly impacts maritime security. Iran's military presence in the Bab al-Mandeb Strait has been viewed by many regional powers as a direct challenge to their security interests. These tensions complicate multilateral efforts to ensure stability in the strait and can lead to the militarization of the region, with rival powers positioning their own forces in close proximity to key shipping lanes. Moreover, regional alliances and shifting power dynamics, including the involvement of external powers like the U.S. Navy and European Union, complicate Iran's ability to assert control over its maritime interests (Riedel, 2020). Hence, the importance of maritime diplomacy becomes apparent here, and it is essential that naval forces, instead of creating tension with each other, make every effort to recognize the right of other countries to defend their national interests regardless of naval power, so that the presence of maritime diplomacy can also be developed.

4.1.6. Multilateral Coordination Difficulties



Multilateral efforts to address security challenges in the Bab al-Mandeb Strait are often hindered by coordination difficulties among international and regional actors. Despite the existence of forums such as the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) and the United Nations, which promote cooperation in maritime security, disagreements between key stakeholders often limit the effectiveness of these initiatives. The diverse interests of regional powers, combined with the competition for maritime dominance, often lead to fragmented security policies and hinder effective collaboration. Iran's position in these multilateral organizations is often complicated by its strained relations with major players like the United States, Saudi Arabia, and the EU, making coordinated action difficult to achieve (Klein, 2020).

2.6. Opportunities

Despite these challenges, there are several opportunities for Iran to enhance its maritime security and diplomatic influence in the Bab al-Mandeb Strait. By leveraging its strategic position, strengthening regional partnerships, and engaging in multilateral cooperation, Iran can both address its security concerns and enhance its global maritime standing.

1.2.6. Enhancing Maritime Diplomacy

One of the greatest opportunities for Iran lies in strengthening maritime diplomacy. By building stronger ties with key regional states, particularly those along the Red Sea and the Horn of Africa, Iran can play a central role in securing global shipping routes and promoting regional stability. Diplomatic engagement with countries such as Yemen, Djibouti, Eritrea, and Sudan allows Iran to align itself with states that share similar strategic interests in maintaining the free flow of goods through the Bab al-Mandeb Strait. Iran's naval diplomacy, particularly its offers to escort foreign ships and provide counter-piracy support, has positioned the country as a responsible maritime actor, which can be used to expand bilateral relations and build trust in the region (Kahl, 2019).

Moreover, multilateral maritime security forums, such as the IORA and Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), provide opportunities for Iran to

cooperate with other regional and global powers. By aligning itself with countries like Russia and China, Iran can enhance its position as a key player in maritime governance and advocate for peaceful maritime cooperation in the Bab al-Mandeb Strait and surrounding waters (Schweller, 2018).

2.2.6. Strengthening Iran's Regional Legal and Strategic Role

Another significant opportunity for Iran is to strengthen its regional legal and strategic role. By actively participating in legal frameworks such as UNCLOS and ensuring compliance with its provisions, Iran can assert its maritime sovereignty while safeguarding the freedom of navigation in the Bab al-Mandeb Strait. Iran can also build its legal reputation by playing a more active role in regional maritime law enforcement initiatives, contributing to counter-piracy operations, and promoting safe and secure maritime trade.

Iran's naval operations in the region have already positioned it as a regional security provider, but expanding this role through legal frameworks and regional cooperation can further solidify Iran's standing as a critical maritime power in the Middle East. Strengthening its military diplomacy and legal presence in the Bab al-Mandeb Strait would enhance Iran's strategic influence and contribute to regional security stability (Rothwell & Stephens, 2016).

7. Conclusion

1.7. Summary of Findings

This study has analyzed the legal and geopolitical impacts of regional and global actors on the security of the Bab al-Mandeb Strait, with a particular focus on Iran's maritime diplomacy and strategic naval presence. The key findings of this research can be summarized as follows:

Legal Framework: Iran's presence in the Bab al-Mandeb Strait is legally justified under UNCLOS and customary international law, which grants Iran the right to conduct transit passage and protect its maritime interests in the region. However, legal restrictions imposed by other actors sometimes complicate the exercise of these rights, especially when geopolitical tensions influence legal interpretations.



Geopolitical Influence: Iran's strategic position in the Bab al-Mandeb Strait has been a source of geopolitical competition, especially with regional powers such as Saudi Arabia, the UAE, and global powers like the United States. Iran's support for the Houthi movement in Yemen further complicates the situation, influencing the security dynamics of the region.

Maritime Diplomacy and Naval Operations: Iran's naval forces have played a key role in ensuring the security of shipping lanes through counter-piracy operations and escort missions, not only for Iranian but also for international vessels. This has enhanced Iran's reputation as a responsible maritime actor in the region. However, challenges from non-state actors and regional tensions continue to undermine efforts at multilateral coordination and security stability.

Security Challenges: The study highlighted the multiple security challenges Iran faces in the Bab al-Mandeb Strait, including the threat of piracy, terrorism, and asymmetrical warfare. These security threats are compounded by regional geopolitical rivalries and the militarization of surrounding waters by both state and non-state actors.

Opportunities for Iran: Despite these challenges, Iran has significant opportunities to enhance its maritime diplomacy, including strengthening its legal and strategic role in the region, expanding bilateral and multilateral relations with neighboring countries, and reinforcing its position as a key player in maritime security in the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden.

2.7. Implications

1.2.7. For Iran's Legal and Geopolitical Strategies

The findings of this study have significant implications for Iran's legal and geopolitical strategies. Iran must continue to assert its legal rights in the Bab al-Mandeb Strait while balancing the demands of international maritime law and its strategic interests. Its naval operations in the region will likely remain central to its broader foreign policy and national security objectives, especially in relation to its oil exports and regional influence.

Iran's involvement with regional allies, such as Yemen, enhances its position in the Bab al-Mandeb Strait but also risks further regional escalation. Therefore,

Iran's geopolitical strategies must carefully weigh the benefits of strategic partnerships with the risks posed by military interventions and support for non-state actors that may deepen regional rivalries.

2.2.7. For Regional and International Maritime Security

Iran's strategic presence in the Bab al-Mandeb Strait has broad implications for regional and international maritime security. As one of the world's key chokepoints for oil trade, the Bab al-Mandeb Strait's security is critical for global energy security and international trade. Iran's role as a security provider—through its counter-piracy efforts and escort missions—contributes positively to the global maritime security framework, ensuring that vital shipping lanes remain open and secure.

However, the militarization of the strait, driven by geopolitical rivalries and the presence of non-state actors, continues to present significant challenges to long-term security. The involvement of external powers, such as the U.S. Navy and European Union naval forces, complicates efforts at cooperative maritime governance, creating a fragmented security environment in which multilateral cooperation is often difficult to achieve.

3.7. Suggestions for Further Research

While this study provides a comprehensive overview of Iran's maritime diplomacy and strategic presence in the Bab al-Mandeb Strait, there are several areas where further research could expand on the findings and provide a more nuanced understanding of the situation:

1.3.7. The Role of Non-State Actors in Maritime Security

Future research could examine the influence of non-state actors—such as pirates, terrorists, and militias—on the security of key maritime chokepoints, including the Bab al-Mandeb Strait. This could involve a detailed study of the geopolitical alliances between non-state actors and state actors and how these influence regional security dynamics.

2.3.7. Iran's Soft Power in Maritime Diplomacy

Another potential area for future research is Iran's use of soft power in its maritime diplomacy. How can Iran leverage its maritime diplomacy—through humanitarian missions, disaster relief operations, and diplomatic outreach—to



strengthen its position in the region and increase cooperation with other maritime powers? A detailed exploration of Iran's maritime soft power could provide insights into the broader role of diplomacy in maritime security.

3.3.7. Impact of Geopolitical Rivalries on Maritime Security

Further research could delve into the impact of geopolitical rivalries—particularly the ongoing tensions between Iran, Saudi Arabia, and the United States—on the security of the Bab al-Mandeb Strait and other strategic maritime routes. This research could focus on how these rivalries affect international maritime law, the development of regional security architectures, and the future of multilateral cooperation in the region.

4.3.7. Economic Impacts of Maritime Insecurity on Trade and Oil Exports

A more detailed economic analysis of how maritime insecurity in the Bab al-Mandeb Strait affects global trade, oil exports, and energy prices would provide a clearer picture of the economic costs of insecurity in this vital maritime chokepoint. This research could help policymakers understand the broader economic implications of maritime instability and the importance of ensuring the security of international trade routes.

4.7. Policy Recommendations

To fully capitalize on the opportunities presented by its strategic maritime position and address the existing challenges, Iran should consider implementing several policy recommendations to improve both maritime security and regional diplomacy.

1.4.7. Practical Steps to Improve Maritime Security

Increase naval cooperation with regional and global powers, particularly in counter-piracy efforts, through joint exercises and information-sharing platforms.

Strengthen maritime law enforcement by coordinating with international partners to enhance the security of the Bab al-Mandeb Strait and surrounding maritime routes.

Expand the presence of Iran's naval forces in key shipping lanes, conducting regular patrols and escort missions to prevent piracy and ensure the safe passage of commercial vessels.

2.4.7. Legal and Diplomatic Measures Consistent with UNCLOS

Enhance Iran's role in international maritime legal bodies, such as the International Maritime Organization (IMO), to promote its interests in maritime governance and global security.

Reinforce diplomatic relations with neighboring countries along the Red Sea and the Horn of Africa to establish cooperative security frameworks based on UNCLOS and regional agreements.

Advocate for multilateral solutions to address regional maritime security challenges, ensuring that international law governs the security of the Bab al-Mandeb Strait and other strategic waterways.

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