Weekly Graphic: The Houthis' Advance

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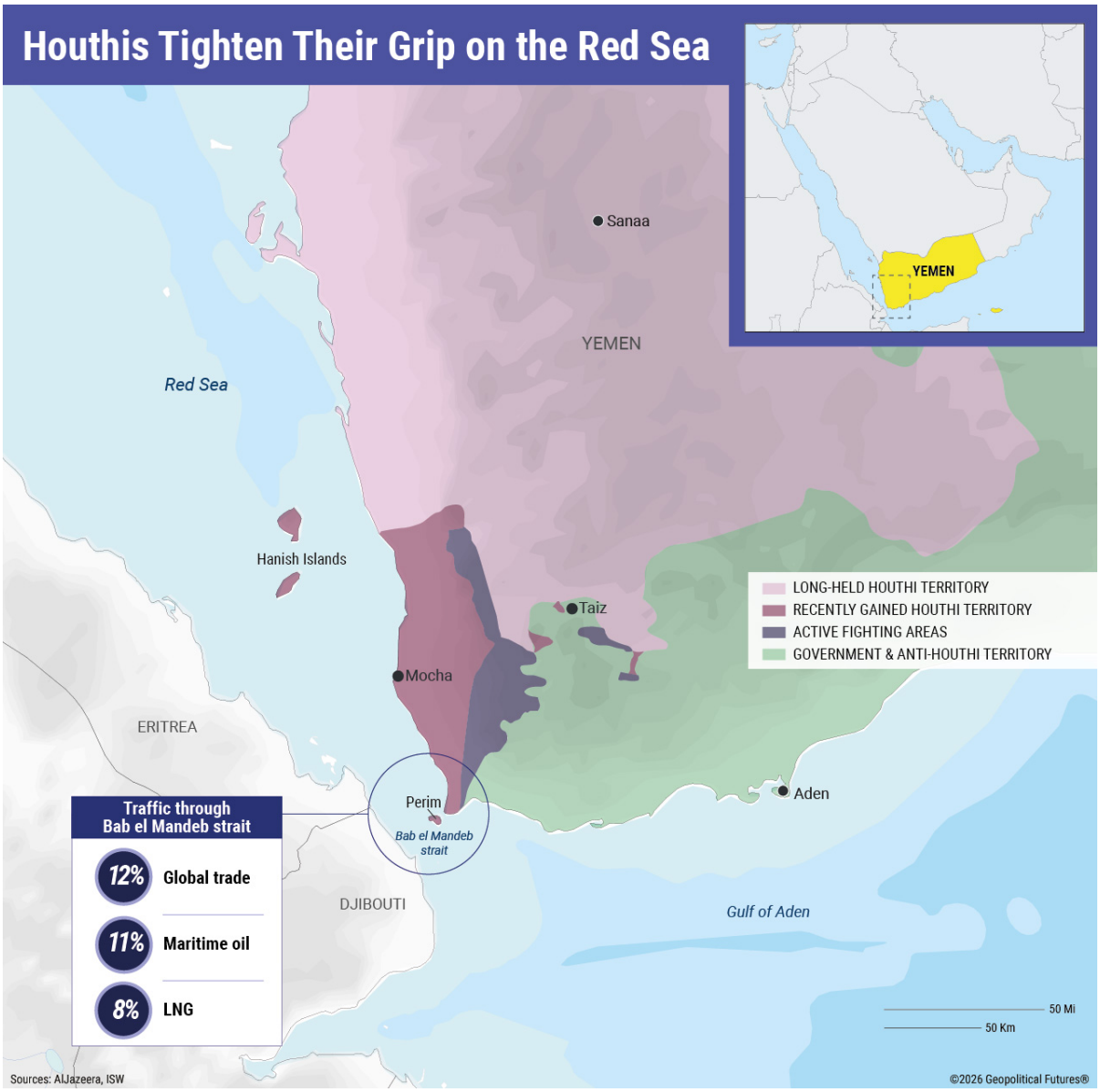

(click to enlarge)

The Houthis are staying out of Iran's war with the United States, using the broader Gulf conflict instead to advance their own strategic objective of consolidating control over Yemen. Their seizure of territory along Yemen's Red Sea coast, including Mocha and positions near the Bab el Mandeb strait,

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gives the group greater leverage over both its domestic rivals and Saudi Arabia. This creates a strategic dilemma for Riyadh, which had viewed its Red Sea infrastructure and East-West pipeline as an alternative export route as the U.S.-Iran conflict disrupted shipping through the Strait of Hormuz. The Houthi advance now threatens to undermine that alternative by giving the Houthis the ability to pressure Saudi energy infrastructure and the maritime corridor through which those exports would flow. Washington, meanwhile, has an interest in keeping the Houthis separate from its war with Iran rather than opening another front in the conflict.

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