

Red Sea Under Siege: Navigating Houthi Havoc and Strategic Responses

Dr Marieke BRANDT

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(Belgian Navy)

Dear Madam, Sir,

We are pleased to invite you to an **evening conference** organised on **Thursday 17 April 2025** from **17:00 until 18:30** by the **Centre for Security and Defence Studies** of the **Royal Higher Institute for Defence**.

The Red Sea has long been a focal point of geopolitical interest due to its strategic location connecting the Mediterranean Sea to the Indian Ocean via the Suez Canal and the Bab el-Mandeb Strait. In recent years, the region has witnessed escalating tensions and conflicts, particularly due to the activities of Yemen's Houthis. These rebels – who are known to be backed by Iran – have launched hundreds of attacks on civilian and military vessels transiting the Red Sea, significantly disrupting maritime security and international sea lanes of communication. The Houthis' strategic use of missiles and drones has posed a persistent threat, prompting international responses to safeguard this crucial passage.

To counter these attacks, various naval military operations have been deployed in the region. The European Union's Operation EUNAVFOR Aspides and the US-led Operation Prosperity Guardian are notable examples of international efforts to enhance maritime security and ensure the free flow of seaborne trade. These operations aim to deter hostile actions and protect vessels navigating through the Red Sea against attacks, highlighting the global importance of maintaining stability in this region.

This conference will delve into these intricate matters to discuss the comprehensive ideological framework of the Houthis, the ramifications of their attacks and the strategic responses in the Red Sea. Examining these topics will contribute to fostering a deeper understanding of the geopolitical landscape and to exploring potential strategies for ensuring long-term stability in this vital maritime corridor.

To address these critical issues, we will be pleased to welcome Dr Marieke Brandt, Senior Researcher at the Institute for Social Anthropology (ISA) of the Austrian Academy of Sciences (ÖAW) and Captain (N) Christophe Colonval, Director of Operations Belgian Navy and Deputy Director of Operations of Admiralty Benelux (ABNL).

This conference will take place **in English** on **Thursday 17 April 2025 at 17:00 in the conference room at campus Renaissance** (entrance: **rue Hobbema 8/Hobbemastraat 8, 1000 Brussels**). A simultaneous interpretation in French and Dutch will be provided in the conference room. It will not be possible to follow the conference online. However, subject to the consent of the speakers, a recording of their presentations will be made available afterwards on our website.

We thank you in advance for registering via the following link: www.defence-institute.be. **Registration by Thursday 10 April 2025 at the latest is compulsory.**

(Signed)

Baudouin COPPIETERS DE GIBSON, MSc Eng
Rear Admiral (LH)
Director-general
Royal Higher Institute for Defence

Programme:

16:30: Welcome
17:00: Conference and Q&A
18:30 – 19:30: Reception