

# MP-IDSA

## *Issue Brief*

# Decoding Key Naval Responses to the Red Sea Crisis

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## **S***ummary*

The attacks on commercial shipping transiting through the Red Sea by Yemen's Houthis since November 2023 have created a major maritime crisis. The US-led kinetic action has not succeeded in deterring or degrading the Houthi capability to launch attacks. China's notable inaction can be attributed to its own strategic interests in the region. India has demonstrated its ability to act as a responsible stakeholder through its calibrated yet conspicuous naval response.

In October 2023, terror attacks by Hamas inside Israel and the subsequent Israeli retaliation in the Gaza Strip once again plummeted West Asia into a state of crisis. This was accompanied by attacks on commercial ships by the Yemeni armed group Houthis in the critical maritime geography of the Red Sea. The Houthis claim that their attacks are in solidarity with the Palestinian cause and are demanding the immediate cessation of Israeli military action inside Gaza. The crisis both on the land and sea continues to rage on without any signs of abating. The prolonged disruptions in the Red Sea have created a major crisis with global implications.

The Sea Lane of Communication (SLOC) consisting of the Suez Canal, Red Sea, Bab-el-Mandeb and the Gulf of Aden is vital for the global economy. In the past, when shipping through this SLOC was disrupted due to piracy off the coast of Somalia, the navies of the US, China and India played a vital role in countering this threat. The sustained presence of their warships and collaborative approach in deployment through institutional counter-piracy initiatives such as Shared Awareness and De-confliction (SHADE) and Djibouti Code of Conduct played a vital role in restoring normalcy by ensuring the safety of commercial shipping in the region. However, during the current crisis, three countries have adopted different approaches in their naval responses.

Given the crucial importance of unhindered maritime trade in this era of globalisation and trade interdependence, the absence of a concerted, collaborative approach towards ensuring necessary protection to merchant ships in vital trade corridors has been rather perplexing. This is especially notable given the precedence of effective collaboration in the same geographical area in countering the menace of piracy. In order to understand the dynamics of these varied responses, it is essential to decipher the political motivations of the Houthis.

## Houthi Objectives

In the 1990s, the Houthis emerged as a Shia political and armed group in the northwestern part of Yemen which is a Sunni majority nation. The group grew rapidly and gained public support as a result of Arab Spring uprisings in the wider region that led to the growing political unrest and anti-establishment sentiments in Yemen. Subsequently in late 2014, the Houthis became embroiled in a full-scale civil war with the internationally recognised Yemeni Government.<sup>1</sup> In the course of the decade-long civil war, the Houthis gained control of nearly a third of Yemeni territory including its capital Sanaa and the key port city Hodeidah. Over 70 per cent of the Yemeni population reside in Houthi controlled territory.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> [“Who are the Houthis and Why are They Attacking Red Sea Ships ?”](#), BBC, 15 March 2024.

<sup>2</sup> [“2022 Report on International Religious Freedom: Yemen”](#), U.S. Department of State, 2002.

Currently, most of the eastern coast of Yemen is under the control of the Houthis and this provides them with crucial access to the Red Sea. In 2015, a Saudi-led coalition intervened militarily in the Yemeni civil war against the Houthis. Despite the Saudi coalition conducting large-scale aerial attacks and imposing a naval blockade, it failed to dislodge the Houthis from Yemen. By 2019, the conflict reached a stalemate and open hostilities subsided. Since then, several rounds of peace negotiations have been taking place between the Houthis and the Yemeni government. The Houthis are widely believed to be an Iranian proxy by Western observers who view them as a vital element of Tehran’s regional posturing against Israel and Saudi Arabia. Iran however has repeatedly denied these claims.<sup>3</sup>

Despite their military success thus far, the Houthis have been facing a host of internal challenges. The civil war has inflicted a devastating toll on Yemen’s population and infrastructure. Over 80 per cent of the population are in need of emergency aid and this has been described by the UN as the world’s worst humanitarian crisis.<sup>4</sup> Despite controlling over 70 per cent of the population and capital, the Houthi regime is not recognised by the international community as Yemen’s legitimate government.<sup>5</sup>

Further since 2015, several rounds of sanctions have been imposed on the Houthi regime by the US, UK and the UN. These sanctions have severely impeded the Houthi ability to govern their territory and indulge in economic activities. As a result, the Houthis have been heavily taxing their population who are already suffering from a severe economic crisis.<sup>6</sup> Observers note that the Yemeni public increasingly views the Houthi regime as a family enterprise comprising the relatives of its late founder Hussein al-Houthi.<sup>7</sup> As a result, there exists considerable resentment among the Yemeni population against the Houthi regime.

In the midst of internal challenges, the Houthi regime saw an opportunity in the Gaza crisis. Through their direct confrontation with Israel in support of Hamas and the US in the Red Sea, the Houthis are seeking to redirect the frustrations of the Yemeni public outwards.<sup>8</sup> In a bid to secure greater political legitimacy for themselves both domestically and internationally, the Houthis are attempting to cash in on the regional sentiments towards the Palestinian cause. Through their actions, domestically the Houthis have managed to swing public opinion in their favour. This has been

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<sup>3</sup> [“Iran’s UN Ambassador Denies Support for Houthis”](#), Iran International, 20 June 2024.

<sup>4</sup> [“Failure in Delivering Aid for Yemenis ‘the Worst International Response to a Humanitarian Crisis’, Civil Society Briefer Tells Security Council”](#), Meetings Coverage Security Council, United Nations, 14 October 2021.

<sup>5</sup> Joshua Keating, [“How a Yemeni Rebel Group is Creating Chaos in the Global Economy”](#), Vox, 12 January 2024.

<sup>6</sup> Maysaa Shuja Al-Deen, [“Entrenched Power: The Houthi System of Governance”](#), Sana’a Centre for Strategic Studies, 11 July 2022.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Ari Heistein and Jason Brodsky, [“What’s Driving the Houthis?”](#), *The National Interest*, 12 January 2024.

reflected through the massive protests taking place in the streets of Yemen in support of the Houthi actions in the Red Sea. This has also resulted in a surge in the recruitment of fighters by the Houthis.<sup>9</sup>

Externally, through the attacks, the Houthis have successfully managed to attract global attention to the Yemeni Civil War. The response from great powers like the US and UK has increased their profile regionally. Further, it is widely believed that they have entered into negotiations with powers like China and Russia. In such a scenario, the Houthis seem to have acquired a degree of de-facto legitimacy in Yemen.<sup>10</sup> These factors could lead to the strengthening of their political standing in the Yemeni civil war. The employment of helicopters, Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAV), Unmanned Surface Vessels (USV), and Anti-Ship Cruise/Ballistic Missiles by the Houthis indicates the sophistication of their operations. This also affirms that the Houthis are being strongly backed and aided by a state actor like Iran as claimed by the West.

## **Kinetic Action of the US and its Allies**

On 18 December 2023, the US Secretary of Defense Lloyd J. Austin announced the establishment of Operation Prosperity Guardian. This US-led multinational security initiative consists of 10 nations including the UK, Bahrain, Canada, France, Italy, Netherlands, Norway, Seychelles and Spain.<sup>11</sup> According to the US, this maritime coalition consists of 20 nations but the rest have opted to remain anonymous.<sup>12</sup> Notably, key strategic partners of the US, including France and Italy, have chosen not to be a part of this operation. Instead, they have deployed their navies in the region as different taskforces.

The naval assets of the US and the other nations that are part of this maritime coalition have been deployed in the Red Sea as part of Combined Task Force (CTF) 153 with a core mandate for securing commercial shipping and deterring the Houthis. This deployment, initially described simply as a ‘highway patrol of the region’,<sup>13</sup> has now escalated to a theatre of operation where the US Navy is engaged in the most intense kinetic action since World War II.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> [“Who are the Houthis? A Simple Guide to the Yemeni Group”](#), *Al-Jazeera*, 12 January 2024.

<sup>10</sup> James Farrell, [“Houthis Reportedly Strike Deal with Russia, China for Safe Passage”](#), *Forbes*, 21 March 2024.

<sup>11</sup> [“Statement from Secretary of Defence Lloyd J. Austin III on Ensuring Freedom of Navigation in the Red Sea”](#), U.S. Department of Defense, 18 December 2023.

<sup>12</sup> Tom Freebairn, [“Operation Prosperity Guardian Faces Early Hurdles”](#), *Defense and Security Monitor*, 2 January 2024.

<sup>13</sup> Jim Garamone, [“Ryder Gives More Detail on How Operation Prosperity Guardian Will Work”](#), U.S. Department of Defense, 21 December 2023.

<sup>14</sup> Jon Gambrell, [“US Navy Faces its Most Intense Combat Since World War II against Yemen’s Iran-Backed Houthi Rebels”](#), *Associated Press*, 15 June 2024.

On 11 January 2024, in response to the increasing attacks on commercial shipping, the US along with the UK, launched airstrikes inside Yemen for the first time. Houthi command centres, munitions depots, launching systems, production facilities and air defence radar systems were targeted in these airstrikes. President Joe Biden declared that the US will not hesitate to direct further measures for protecting the free flow of international commerce.<sup>15</sup> Since then, airstrikes have been carried out inside Yemen on almost daily basis for degrading the Houthis’ ability to attack commercial ships in the region. In February 2024, Rear Admiral Marc Miguez in a televised interview onboard the USS Eisenhower which is serving as the flagship of CTF 153 claimed that these strikes have been highly effective. He stated the Houthis cannot sustain in the long term and assured that the attacks on commercial shipping will cease soon.<sup>16</sup> Ironically, however, since then, the world has witnessed only an escalatory trend to this crisis.

In retaliation for the series of extensive airstrikes carried out by CTF 153 inside Yemen in May, the Houthis reportedly launched a barrage of missiles and drones against US warships in the region. The Houthis have reportedly even used Anti-Ship Ballistic Missiles (ASBM) for targeting ships.<sup>17</sup> They even claimed that one of their ASBMs had struck USS Eisenhower and inflicted severe damage to the aircraft carrier. The claim of attack on the US aircraft carrier have been proven to be false and most of these missiles have been successfully intercepted by the air defence systems of CTF 153.

However, US naval officers have acknowledged growing challenges and heightened risks to their ships operating in the region. Intercepting these missiles and drones involves technologically intensive operation of precisely tracking these incoming threats and responding to them in a matter of seconds. Cmdr Eric Blomberg of the US Navy described this predicament as ‘we only have to get it wrong once and the Houthis just have to get one through’.<sup>18</sup> Also, this is a high-cost operation because each of the air defence missiles used to intercept these relatively low-cost missile threats is valued at more than a million dollars.

After six months of intense naval action, there are no signs of the threats to shipping diminishing. The recent sinking of the Liberian Bulk Carrier MV Tutor by the Houthis emphasises this fact. This also indicates the operational and strategic challenges

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<sup>15</sup> Oren Liebermann, Haley Britzky, Natasha Bertrand, Kevin Liptak, Alex Marquardt, MJ Lee and Jennifer Hansler, “[US and UK Carry Out Strikes Against Iran-backed Houthis in Yemen](#)”, *CNN*, 12 January 2024.

<sup>16</sup> “[Inside the USS Eisenhower as it Targets Houthis](#)”, *ABC News*, 15 February 2024.

<sup>17</sup> Norah O’Donnel, “[Navy Counters Houthi Red Sea Attacks in its First Major Battle at Sea of the 21st Century](#)”, *CBS News*, 23 June 2024.

<sup>18</sup> Jon Gambrell, “[US Navy Faces its Most Intense Combat Since World War II against Yemen’s Iran-Backed Houthi Rebels](#)”, no. 14.

that the US-led taskforce will face in the future. Operationally, the task of defending ships is bound to become far more challenging as the Houthis are using a combination of weapons ranging from ballistic missiles to undersea drones for targeting ships. As per the reports, MV Tutor was simultaneously hit by a ballistic missile and a USV.

The high cost involved in intercepting these threats raises serious doubts on the ability of the US and its allies to sustain this operation in the long term. There is also a heightened risk of miscalculation, as was evidenced during Operation Earnest Will in the 1980s when the US Navy was deployed in the Persian Gulf. The attack on the USS Stark and the shooting down of Iran Air Flight 655 are examples of how miscalculations during such prolonged naval deployments can lead to unintended casualties.

Strategically, the US naval operation demonstrates the limitations of naval firepower in degrading the adversary’s capabilities, especially when they are geographically scattered over a vast area on land. This highlights a key limitation of naval power since the effectiveness of naval firepower dissipates quickly when attempting to obtain strategic effects ashore.<sup>19</sup> Thus far, Houthis’ capabilities have largely remained intact despite the continuous airstrikes targeting their infrastructure on land.

Satellite images reveal that the Houthis have significantly expanded their underground network.<sup>20</sup> These vast networks of underground facilities have enabled the Houthis to conceal, transport and replenish their offensive weapon system. Hence, the US Navy finds itself in a whack-a-mole situation in attempting to destroy and degrade the Houthis’ land-based capabilities for carrying out sea-denial attacks in the Red Sea.

Politically, the US has failed to convince its closest allies to become part of this naval operation. This has been evident from the fact that nearly half the nations that are part of the US-led maritime coalition have opted to remain anonymous. On the other hand, the European Union (EU) has decided to have its separate naval deployment in the region under Operation Aspides. The EU has made it clear that its naval deployment will not conduct any operations on land. These factors have considerably diluted the effectiveness of the US-led kinetic response against the Houthis. Therefore, it is unlikely at this point to expect that normalcy can be restored in the Red Sea through this approach.

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<sup>19</sup> Kevin D. McCraine, “[Lessons from the Red Sea: Considerations for Naval Strategy in the 21st Century](#)”, U.S. Naval Institute, May 2024.

<sup>20</sup> Fabian Hinz, “[Yemen’s Houthis are Going Underground](#)”, International Institute of Strategic Studies, 29 April 2024.

## China’s Deliberated Inaction

As the world’s largest exporter of goods and importer of energy, China has vital stakes in the uninterrupted flow of maritime traffic through this region. The annual value of Chinese exports through the Red Sea is estimated to be around US\$ 160 billion and Chinese imports are approximately nearly US\$ 120 billion.<sup>21</sup> This was one of the key motivations of China to deploy its naval taskforce in 2009 for counter-piracy operations in the Gulf of Aden. The protection of its maritime interests including maritime trade has been cited as justification for the permanent presence of PLAN in the Indian Ocean.

China’s strategic footprint across the littoral regions of the Red Sea has considerably expanded since then. To the north of the Red Sea, China has been consistently investing in the development and operation of several Egyptian ports. To the south, China has established its first overseas military base in Djibouti, which is fully capable of supporting its flotilla of warships deployed in the region.

Given China’s economic interests of its expansive maritime trade and military capability in the region, it was widely expected that China would proactively intervene in the current crisis to ensure unhindered flow of maritime trade through the Gulf of Aden. On the contrary, the Chinese position on this crisis thus far has been notable for its inaction rather than action. While China’s lack of intervention has drawn Western criticism, it seems to be benefitting Beijing’s interests in the region in more ways than one.

In West Asia, China is among the few external powers that maintain strong bilateral relations with all the major regional powers including Israel, Iran and Saudi Arabia. In fact, these three nations along with other nations in the region including Yemen are part of China’s Maritime Silk Road (MSR) initiative. Given the regional sentiments towards the Palestinian issue, it is natural that China has adopted a neutral approach to the current crisis since its onset.

This was articulated in the statement released by the Chinese Foreign Ministry in January 2024, days after the US launched its airstrikes against the Houthis. The statement underscored Beijing’s concern regarding the rapid escalation of tensions in the Red Sea as it called for the cessation of attacks on civilian ships. Identifying the crisis as a spillover effect of the Gaza conflict, China stressed the need for an immediate ceasefire. In a veiled criticism of the US-led airstrikes on Houthis, the statement highlighted that the use of force has not been authorised by the UN Security Council. It stressed the need to respect the sovereignty and territorial

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<sup>21</sup> Jasper Verchuur, [“Red Sea Shipping Chaos Puts Strain on Chinese Exports”](#), Think China, 24 January 2024.

integrity of Yemen and expressed Beijing’s eagerness to work with all parties in the region for the de-escalation of the tensions in the Red Sea.<sup>22</sup>

Beijing’s neutral outlook has largely allowed Chinese commercial shipping to pass through the region unscathed. It also appears that China along with Russia have been successful in establishing a tacit agreement with the Houthis for ensuring the safe transit of their commercial ships. This was made evident in March 2024, when a senior Houthi member announced in the media that Chinese and Russian ships will not be attacked. This assurance from the Houthi came a day after a missile attack upon the Chinese owned oil tanker M/V Huang Pu. The attack only caused minimal damage to the ship and no injuries to the crew was reported.<sup>23</sup>

Observers largely believe this one-off incident was the result of error on the part of Houthis. The lack of strong response from China to this incident also substantiates this assumption. David Scott notes that while overall commercial traffic through the Red Sea has largely declined, there has been a substantial increase in the transit of Chinese tonnage. He also notes that the smaller Chinese shipping companies are capitalising on this disruption by increasing their operations in the Red Sea.<sup>24</sup>

In the long term, China’s response to the present crisis is helping it in its strategic competition with the US. Washington’s unconditional support for Israel and its kinetic action against China has noticeably stirred up anti-Western sentiments in West Asia which may potentially lead to the erosion of the US’s influence in the region.

Western policy-makers have long accused China of using a freeriding strategy by reaping the benefits of secure SLOCs while others carry the burden of engagement and reputational costs for securing them.<sup>25</sup> Alluding to China’s inaction to this strategy, observers opine that this approach presents Beijing with a win-win scenario.<sup>26</sup> If the US-led coalition succeeds in deterring and neutralising the threats to commercial shipping in the Red Sea, then China stands to directly benefit from the return to normalcy. If this effort fails, then China indirectly stands to gain from the erosion of the US’s influence in West Asia which will further strengthen Beijing’s strategic foothold in the region.

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<sup>22</sup> [“Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Wang Wenbin’s Regular Press Conference on January 24, 2024”](#), Embassy of the People’s Republic of China in Solomon Islands, 24 January 2024.

<sup>23</sup> Saeed Al Batati, [“Russian, Chinese Ships Assured Safe Passage in Red Sea, Houthis Claim”](#), *Arab News*, 25 March 2024.

<sup>24</sup> David Scott, [“China’s Calculated Inaction in the Red Sea Crisis”](#), CIMSEC, 6 May 2024.

<sup>25</sup> Léonie Allard, [“China is Testing its Freeriding Strategy in the Red Sea”](#), Atlantic Council, 13 February 2024.

<sup>26</sup> David Scott, [“China’s Calculated Inaction in the Red Sea Crisis”](#), no. 24.



## India’s Astute Maritime Statecraft

The Red Sea and Gulf of Aden along with their littoral regions are among India’s primary areas of maritime interests.<sup>27</sup> It is because of this reason that the Indian Navy has assumed a leading role in countering piracy in the region since late 2000s. When the Indian frigate INS Tabar sunk a pirate mothership in 2008,<sup>28</sup> India became the first nation to engage in kinetic action as part of the wider anti-piracy operations in the region.

In response to the current crisis in the Red Sea, India has chosen to adopt a different operational approach. India has consciously decided to refrain from engaging in kinetic action directed against the Houthis. India’s approach towards Houthi crisis needs to be seen in the broader rubric of multi-faceted engagement with West Asia. India maintains strong bilateral relations with all key powers in West Asia and is cognizant of the regional sensitivities associated with the Palestinian issue.

While India declined the invitation of the US to become part of the Operation Prosperity Guardian in January 2024,<sup>29</sup> India has not remained a passive bystander to the Red Sea crisis. Instead, India has chosen to mount a calibrated yet conspicuous naval response to the crisis. Since December 2023, the Indian Navy has deployed 21 ships with over 5,000 personnel and maritime surveillance aircraft in the region. This deployment is under the aegis of ‘Op Sankalp’ which was initiated by the Indian Navy in 2019 as a response to the attacks on commercial shipping in the Gulf of Oman.<sup>30</sup>

On 2 April 2024, External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar elucidated the three operational objectives of this deployment which are as follows:<sup>31</sup>

1. Establishing forward presence for deterring attacks on commercial ships.
2. Swiftly respond to hijacking and attempted hijacking of commercial ships by pirates or other armed groups.
3. Rescue and repair commercial ships that have sustained damage by missile or drone attacks.

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<sup>27</sup> [“Ensuring Secure Seas: Indian Maritime Security Strategy”](#), Indian Navy, October 2015.

<sup>28</sup> Hari Kumar and Alan Cowell, [“Indian Navy Sinks Pirate Ships”](#), *The New York Times*, 19 November 2008.

<sup>29</sup> Pradip R. Sagar, [“Why India is Treading Cautiously on US-Led Naval Coalition in Red Sea”](#), *India Today*, 3 January 2024.

<sup>30</sup> [“Indian Navy’s Ongoing Maritime Security Operations \(OP SANKALP\) 14 Dec 23 to 23 Mar 24”](#), Press Information Bureau, Ministry of Defence, Government of India, 23 March 2024.

<sup>31</sup> [“Red Sea Crisis: India’s Responsibility to Look at Such Situations, Says EAM”](#), *Business Standard*, 4 July 2024.

The chaos created by the Israel–Hamas war and the Houthi attacks on commercial shipping has led to most of the Western naval assets from the Gulf of Aden being diverted to the Red Sea. Due to this, there has been a noticeable resurgence of piracy in the Gulf of Aden region. The Indian naval deployment has been critical in addressing the security vacuum that has emerged in the Gulf of Aden. Since December, the Indian Navy has responded to several distress calls from commercial ships that have come under attack by pirates, missiles and drones.

Among the most notable of these operations include the Indian Navy commandos thwarting of attempted hijacking of a Liberian flagged vessel MV Lila Norfolk by pirates in January 2024.<sup>32</sup> On 16 March 2024, INS Kolkata in a high tempo operation rescued bulk carrier MV Ruen which had been under the control of Somalian pirates since December 2023. The Indian Navy’s action led to the surrender of 35 Somalian pirates and the rescue of 17 crew members of MV Ruen.<sup>33</sup> In the same month, the Indian Navy rescued 23 Pakistani nationals from an Iranian fishing vessel that was hijacked by pirates.<sup>34</sup>

India’s naval response to the Red Sea crisis is reflective of its maritime outlook that has been doctrinally articulated in the 2015 Maritime Security Document and Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s vision of Security and Growth for All in the Region (SAGAR). As opposed to the naval responses of the great powers, India’s response is not suggestive of any political bias or ulterior strategic motives. Rather, it is emblematic of its maritime outlook to serve as a responsible stakeholder eager to contribute towards preserving good order at sea.

In the global system, a responsible stakeholder is a nation that is cognizant of its special obligations as a powerful state and utilises its comprehensive national power for achieving outcomes beyond its own narrow national interests.<sup>35</sup> This national outlook was brought out S. Jaishankar when he stated “We will not be considered a responsible country when bad things are happening in the surrounding country and we say I have got nothing to do with this”.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Vaibhav Tiwari, [“Navy’s MARCOS Rescue 21 Sailors from ‘hijacked ship: Watch Dramatic Footage”](#), *Hindustan Times*, 6 January 2024.

<sup>33</sup> [“Anti-Piracy Operations Against Pirate Ship MV Ruen by Indian Navy”](#), Press Information Bureau, Ministry of Defence, Government of India, 16 March 2024.

<sup>34</sup> [“Indian Navy Rescues Iranian Fishing Vessel, 23 Pakistani Crew Members”](#), *The Hindu Business Line*, 30 March 2024.

<sup>35</sup> Abhay Kumar Sing, [“India as a Net Security Provider in the Indian Ocean Region: The Strategic Approach of a Responsible Stakeholder”](#), in Jivanta Schottli (ed.), *Maritime Governance and South Asia*, World Scientific, pp. 63–78.

<sup>36</sup> [“Neighbours Need Each Other: EAM Jaishankar on ‘India Out’ Campaign in Maldives”](#), *The Indian Express*, 31 January 2024.

## Conclusion

The scale and sophistication of the attacks are indicative of the Houthis’ capability as a well-armed and organised armed group. The sustained manner in which these attacks are being carried out on both commercial and military vessels in the region is reflective of the Houthis own political motivations and aspirations that go beyond just the Palestinian cause. Therefore, it would not be prudent to assume that normalcy in the Red Sea can be assured by the cessation of hostilities in Gaza alone.

So far, the US-led kinetic action has neither deterred the Houthis nor has it ensured absolute safety of the commercial ships transiting through the region. The continued attacks on shipping despite the US Navy striking Houthi infrastructure for over seven months shows their resilience. Operation Prosperity Guardian underscores the limitation of coercive naval response to a crisis that is deeply entrenched in the political complexities of the littoral region.

China’s inaction, on the other hand seems to serve both its short-term and long-term interests in the region. At the same time, this approach highlights China’s lack of commitment as a responsible stakeholder in preserving good order at sea. India’s conspicuous naval response to the crisis exemplifies the attributes of how actions by a committed security provider can play a vital role in mitigating effects of such a crisis.

Overall, the Red Sea crisis can be considered as a cascading effect of the Yemeni Civil War rather than the Israel– Hamas War. Hence, the key to resolving this crisis lies in the efforts of the great powers to contribute to peaceful resolution of the civil war in Yemen.

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