

Colloquium
21 November 2024
14:30 - 18:30



Opportunities and Challenges in the Eastern Mediterranean: The Geopolitical Importance of Cyprus

Dear Madam, Sir,

We are pleased to invite you to a **half-day colloquium** organised on **Thursday 21 November 2024** from **14:30 till 18:30** by the **Royal Higher Institute for Defence** and the **Centre for Security and Defence Studies**.

The island of Cyprus is widely known for the unresolved territorial dispute between the Republic of Cyprus – a member of the United Nations since 1960 and a European Union (EU) Member State since 2004 – and the self-declared Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC), recognised solely by Türkiye. As Cyprus is the third largest and third most populated island in the Mediterranean Sea, located at the crossroads between Europe, Asia and Africa, this political stalemate reaches far beyond the purely regional dimension and raises geopolitical concerns at an international level.

This geopolitical importance can be observed from several perspectives. Cyprus plays a balancing role between Eastern Mediterranean players (Greece, Egypt, Israel, etc.), it is located in the vicinity of maritime trade routes that are crucial to the EU, and its geostrategic position constitutes a strong asset for potential NATO military operations, to name but a few. Moreover, this importance has further increased with the discovery of offshore natural gas fields in Cyprus' Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) in 2011, which has boosted its national economy, but also triggered new rows with Türkiye over maritime boundaries and exploration rights. Finally, as war rages on in the Middle East, Cyprus has recently been designated as a legitimate target by Lebanese Hezbollah, should Nicosia or the United Kingdom allow the Israel Defense Forces to use some of their military bases on the island for operations of any kind against Lebanon.

All these elements urge the need to reemphasise the island's centrality on the Levantine geostrategic chessboard, which we will do during our colloquium that will take place **in English and French** on **Thursday 21 November 2024 at 14:30 in the conference room at campus Renaissance** (entrance: **rue Hobbema 8/Hobbemastraat 8, 1000 Brussels**). Simultaneous interpretation in English, French and Dutch will be provided in the conference room. It will not be possible to follow the colloquium 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 Wednesday 13 November 2024 at the latest is compulsory.**

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

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Programme

14:00 – 14:30 Registration

14:30 – 14:40 Welcome Address

Flotilla Admiral Baudouin COPPIETERS DE GIBSON
Royal Higher Institute for Defence

14:40 – 15:00 Setting the scene

Dr Bernard SIMAN
Egmont Institute

15:00 – 16:00 Panel 1: The Cyprus Dispute between Old Tensions and New Stakes

Mr George HAJIPAVLI
University of Oxford

Rear Admiral (retd) Cem GÜRDENİZ
Koç University

16:00 – 16:30 Q&A

Moderated by Navy Captain Kurt ENGELEN
Centre for Security and Defence Studies

16:30 – 17:00 Coffee break

17:00 – 18:00 Panel 2: Cyprus on the Levantine Chessboard: European and Arab Views

Air Force Brigadier General (retd) Patrice MOYEUVRE
Institut des relations internationales et stratégiques

Major General (retd) Sayed GHONEIM
Institute for Global Security & Defense Affairs

18:00 – 18:30 Q&A

Moderated by Dr Didier LEROY
Centre for Security and Defence Studies

18:30 – 19:30 Reception