



## EDITORIAL LEADER

Over the last three months our focus, like the rest of the world's, has rightly been on Ukraine. But the clever Kremlin-watchers will have spotted that while Mr Putin's focus of activity may well be on Ukraine, his strategic focus may have a wider lens. Colin Grey observed that strategy must always be about the management of the consequences of your actions. This *Digest* invites you to cast your mind rather more widely than eastern Europe, not least because it is becoming increasingly clear that Mr Putin is doing exactly that. His actions in Ukraine have not confined themselves to the targeting of Ukraine's military, nor, indeed, to the ruthlessly indiscriminate targeting of the civilian population. Perhaps much more sinister is the deliberate targeting of those things that matter not only to Ukraine's economy, in a lasting way, but to wider global security and wellbeing. The systematic destruction of farm machinery, farm infrastructure, grain silos and the broader agricultural capability of Ukraine is not, one suspects, undirected military vandalism. Couple it with the tearing up of the national infrastructure and the destruction of the Black Sea ports (vital global terminals for world-sustaining cereal exports) and a pattern seems to be evident. Rising grocery bills are the subject of daily British domestic news bulletins; this, coupled with uncontrollable fuel bills, mean inflation is already biting, and a much deeper bite looks likely. Germany (along with much of the rest of Europe) is staring hard at the implications of its gas, oil and cereal dependencies on its eastern neighbours. Africa and the Middle East are experiencing the early tremors of unrest. With Russia and Ukraine delivering around one quarter of the world's wheat to a hungry world the 'consequences' (intended or otherwise) of the 'special operation' in Ukraine are going to have global effect. Now more than ever, strategists need to have one eye on events in Ukraine and the other eye very firmly on the wider global consequences of those events. – **Maj Gen (Retd) Dr A R D Sharpe CBE, Director CHACR**

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Picture: Rodrigo Abad/Associated Press

## HOW RUSSIA'S WAR IS CHANGING UKRAINE'S POLITICS

Given the intensity of the conflict between Russia and Ukraine, the world's focus has understandably centred on the course of the war, with less attention paid to the impact of the war on Ukrainian politics and democratic development. In [this piece](#), CSIS scholar Andrew Lohsen argues that there are important changes taking place in the country. First is the erosion of pro-Russian sentiment in Ukraine, including in Russian speaking areas in the East, and Russian linked political parties that attempt to justify the invasion are now banned. Secondly, Ukraine's oligarch class (previously the target of Zelensky's de-oligarchisation campaign) are now universally behind the government, meaning that for now, their position is actually stronger and not weaker. And lastly civil-society actors are emboldened as are veterans movements, this is creating a different political and social order, meaning that post-war those outside actors who wish to see democracy thrive in Ukraine will need to pay careful attention to the rapid changes taking place.

## FINLAND AND SWEDEN MAKE BID FOR NATO MEMBERSHIP

Finland and Sweden announced their NATO membership applications on May 18, and NATO member states are enthusiastically welcoming the two siblings. But Turkey is delivering an unexpected and thorny complication involving Sweden's bid. [Elisabeth Braw](#) argues that in particular it is Sweden who has a chequered relationship with Turkey, but Turkey also alleges that both Finland and Sweden host members of "terror groups" such as the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK). Sweden's political class is divided with Swedish-Kurd Amineh Kakabaveh pulling her support for the government, thereby eroding its majority in parliament. So, from the outside the Swedish-Finnish bid for membership looks harmonious, but internally it is causing huge problems.



Picture: slon.pics/freepik.com



## US MARINES FORCE DESIGN 2030

The US Marine Corps has released its highly anticipated [Force Design 2030](#) strategy. Initial reactions highlight key takeaways: the Corps is to have fewer troops, with the target at 175,000, and focus on improving sensor abilities and operating in smaller unit formations. More will inevitably be written about the force structure changes and modernisation efforts, but [this piece](#) by Sam LaGrone, Mallory Shelbourne and Heather Mongilio is a good starting point.



## CHINA'S SECURITY PACT WITH THE SOLOMON ISLANDS

China's Foreign Ministry has confirmed that the Chinese government has signed a minimum five-year security agreement with the Solomon Islands. The agreement has not been made public, but analysts, such as [Euan Graham at the International Institute for Strategic Studies](#), see it as a setback for US and wider Western interests in the region. The Solomon Islands, which consist of six major and over 900 smaller islands with a total population of around 650,000, are not a major player in the security landscape of the Pacific. But their strategic location to the north-east of Australia is significant. The agreement could bring Chinese military assets into ever closer proximity to Australia and into the Oceania region.



Picture: natamadgiving/istock.com

### WIDER READING

Nuclear proliferation is increasingly becoming a hot topic. Putin's nuclear threats have attracted much attention; North Korea is posturing; and the Iran nuclear deal may well have run its course. Much of the literature on nuclear proliferation has concentrated on why states seek nuclear weapons, usually focusing on deterrence and prestige objectives. In his book [Seeking the Bomb](#), Vipin Narang explores how countries go about gaining nuclear weapons capabilities and how they navigate the international system designed to prevent proliferation. Looking at examples such as India, North Korea, Iraq and Iran, Vipin develops an original framework to understand proliferation strategies, ranging from hedging, to sprinting, sheltered pursuit and hiding.

## ISRAEL'S STRATEGIC SURVEY

Israel's premier think tank, the Institute for National Security Studies, has published its annual [Strategic Survey](#). The authors' overall argument is that Israel has to make a number of important and difficult decisions in the near future, not least to maintain its military and defence technological superiority in what is described as a rapidly shifting regional environment. Unsurprisingly, the survey identifies Iran as the main threat to Israel's national security, highlighting both advances in Iran's nuclear programme and – especially – the growing capabilities of Iran's network of armed non-state actors across the region. In a section on public opinion, the report finds that a total of 57% of Israelis support taking military action should it become clear that Iran is trying to develop a nuclear weapon (this combines 30% of respondents who support military action coordinated with the US, and 27% who support unilateral action). Notably, the survey also discusses challenges posed by societal polarisation and government weakness in Israel, as well as global trends such as the climate crisis.

## DOES US DEFENCE HAVE AN INNOVATION PROBLEM?

In an [interview](#) with *War on the Rocks* editor Ryan Evans, Steve Blank warns that the US Defence Department's ability to innovate and maintain the US military's technological edge over peer competitors, especially China, might not be up to scratch. Blank – a veteran, entrepreneur, and author focused on defence technology – argues that the Pentagon is moving too slowly and is not sufficiently connected to America's technology innovation base in Silicon Valley. He notes that China has recently made significant advances in removing barriers between its technology and defence sectors.

Picture: U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Marita Schwab



## NEIGHBOURS CONCERNED ABOUT NORTH KOREA

In late April, during a parade to mark the creation of North Korea's armed forces, the country's dictator, Kim Jong-un vowed to further expand North Korea's nuclear arsenal and ballistic missile programme. In March, Pyongyang announced that it had successfully [test fired](#) its newest Hwasong-17 missile, which is able to reach a higher altitude and, ultimately, further range than its previous missiles. These developments are understandably raising concerns amongst North Korea's neighbours, especially Japan and South Korea. An [episode](#) of the BBC's *The Real Story* podcast provides a useful overview of the various dynamics at play. This also comes as North Korea is confronting a dramatic Covid-19 outbreak after having managed to keep the virus under control for most of the pandemic to date.



Picture: Tibor Janosi Mozes/Pixabay

### NEWS STORIES TO WATCH OUT FOR

As the war in Ukraine and its multi-dimensional repercussions continue to dominate headlines, here are some other topics to keep an eye on:

Initial [results suggest](#) that Hezbollah has suffered setbacks in Lebanon's parliamentary election on 15 May.

China's [Covid-19 lockdowns](#) are only getting stricter as Beijing struggles to find a way out of its Zero-Covid policy.

[Tensions in Israel](#) increase over the killing of a Palestinian journalist in Jenin.

Hasan Sheikh Mahmoud has been elected as [Somalia's next President](#).

Following President Macron's victory, France is preparing for [parliamentary elections](#); political camps on the right and left are trying to consolidate.

Mali's military-led government has [pulled out of the G5 regional force](#) in the Sahel, further increasing concerns over deteriorating instability in the region.

In the UAE, [Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan](#) has officially succeeded his half brother Khalifa bin Zayed as President.

## CHINESE INFLUENCE IN SOUTH AMERICA

When it comes to geopolitical competition amongst global powers, analysis often concentrates on the Indo-Pacific or the Middle East; South America is often forgotten. Yet, as [the latest episode](#) of *The Red Line* podcast highlights, China is working to expand its influence on the continent, much to the concern of Washington. The interviewed guests, including Evan Ellis from the US Army War College, note that while US diplomats' main message to governments in the region tends to be about governance and human rights, China offers investment without many political strings attached. However, they also caution that while China may seek to turn its growing economic leverage into an expanding security and military presence in the region, it is unlikely to offer countries much support should they find themselves in conflicts with their neighbours.

# OUT NOW & UP NEXT...

● "Look at Zelensky dashing around the Kyiv cityscape, under-slept and under-shaved. He's not a superman, he's just like us – and that's the point." – **David Patrikarakos**

The latest *CHACR Commentary*, which salutes the 'Digital Statesman' of the Russia/Ukraine conflict, is out now and available online – along with other recent releases – at [chacr.org.uk](http://chacr.org.uk)

