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THE RUSSIAN AIR WAR AND UKRAINIAN REQUIREMENTS FOR AIR DEFENCE

The air domain of the war in Ukraine, and specifically Russia's inability to establish air dominance in the initial stages of the war, and later its escalation of attacks on civilian targets, including with Iranian drones, has been a major area of debate. This month, RUSI researchers Justin Bronk, Jack Watling and Nick Reynolds have published an [in-depth report](#) based on extensive field work conducted in Ukraine, which outlines the state of play and looks ahead at how things may develop. The report outlines how improvements in Ukrainian SAM capabilities significantly reduced the air superiority Russia enjoyed in the first few weeks of the war, but the authors also warn against complacency, arguing that Ukrainian air defence needs to be continuously strengthened, including to deal with missile and drone attacks.

IRANIAN DRONES IN UKRAINIAN SKIES

Over the past few months, Russia has repeatedly deployed Iranian Shahed 136 drones in Ukraine. There have also been reports of Iranian personnel working with Russian troops on the ground in Ukraine, and much speculation about Russia looking to procure other Iranian weapons, including both missiles and further UAVs. This has naturally received a lot of attention; it is, for example, also covered in the RUSI report highlighted above. Amongst the countries particularly concerned with this development is Israel and organisations like the Institute for National Security Studies in Tel Aviv have featured some interesting analysis on the subject. One [piece](#) worth reading is by Liran Antebi, who argues that Israel has to learn lessons from Ukraine, suggesting that Iranian weapons like the Shahed 136 may one day also target Israeli cities.

AID TO UKRAINE IN SIX CHARTS

At the time of writing US aid to Ukraine totals \$68bn, and the Biden Administration hopes to increase this funding by another \$37.7bn pending Congressional approval. In [this article](#) CSIS scholar Mark Cancian explains how US aid is structured, and breaks down the component parts of US military assistance into four components: 1) Short-term military support; 2) Long-term military support; 3) US military operations; 4) DoD general support. The article usefully situates US assistance within the context of wider support to Ukraine and explains in detail the time frames within which Ukraine's armed forces might expect full military support.

TIME FOR THE WEST TO THINK ABOUT ENGAGING WITH A DEFEATED RUSSIA

Although its premise might be premature, in that Russia is increasing its troop numbers in Ukraine, [this article](#) argues that the time is right to consider how best to deal with Moscow in the light of what appears to be an inevitable military defeat in Ukraine. Writing for Brookings, Pavel Baev warns that Russia faces a clear challenge to its internal stability, and attempts to outline a trajectory which would prevent a catastrophic breakdown of the Putin regime. The prevention of a collapse and sketching Russia's gradual exit from the war is, Baev argues, not an application of optimistic wishful thinking, but a task of practical significance.

CLIMATE CHANGE AND DEFENCE AND SECURITY

From 6-18 November, Egypt hosted COP27, the annual UN Climate Change Conference. Much of the discussion surrounding the summit has focused on whether or not Egypt was an appropriate host, with some focusing on its human rights record, and others suggesting it was engaging in 'greenwashing'. This [piece](#) by Tobias Borck at RUSI highlights some of the other issues that make climate change and climate action likely to shape the geopolitical environment in the Middle East for decades to come. More widely, however, there is also a growing debate about the intersections between climate change – and the fight against it – and defence, security, and conflict. The geopolitics-focused *The Red Line* podcast has launched a special series, dubbed *The Green Line*, to highlight some key issues in this area. The first and second episodes focused on how the US and Chinese militaries are engaging with climate change, respectively, while the third episode examined the notion of water wars – the question about the extent to which water scarcity and access to water function as drivers of conflict.



Picture: CC BY-NC-SA 2.0

FORECASTING DEMANDS ON US GROUND FORCES

As part of its work to model and forecast the demands US ground forces may face in the coming two decades (the published paper can be found [here](#)), the RAND Corporation has developed an [interactive tool](#) that allows users to explore a number of different scenarios by modifying baseline assumptions about US policy and the global order, and distinguishing between interstate wars and military interventions. The work is based on a multi-year research project that was concluded in February 2019 – i.e. before Russia's war against Ukraine. Nevertheless, the tool, finally published this month, offers some interesting insights and is worth spending some time on.

WILL WE GET OMICRON'D AGAIN?

Although the Covid-19 pandemic appears to be firmly in the rear-view mirror, the conditions at the start of winter 2022 are very close to those of winter 2021. Just as everything seemed to be getting back to normal Omicron tore up the programme. The variant upended scientists' expectations about SARS-CoV-2's evolution; it turned having Covid into a horrific norm. Now, as the world approaches its Omicron anniversary, conditions may seem ripe for an encore. Some experts worry that the emergence of another Greek-letter variant is overdue. [This article](#) discusses the potential impact of another super variant of Covid, with a likelihood, the author argues, of several strains producing localised epidemics.



WIDER READING

The AUKUS agreement which included submarine sales to Australia from the UK, at the expense of a previously agreed French sale, proved to be a huge blow for French business and national security interests in the Pacific. Although there are still deep concerns in Paris, its Indo-Pacific interests are still a cornerstone of French foreign policy. And so, a year on from the deal the need to reassess French interests in the light of a major strategic disappointment is both timely and important for Paris. In this [ten-page paper](#) IFRI scholars Jeremy Bachelier and Celine Pajon discuss the importance of maintaining French interests in the Pacific, including preserving the security of 1.6m French citizens in the region, and maintaining a strong working relationship with Australia. The rebuilding of French interests in the region they argue, is of utmost strategic importance.

NORTH KOREA'S ESCALATING MILITARY POSTURE

Over the past few months, tensions on the Korean Peninsula and in the surrounding region have increased steadily as the regime in Pyongyang has ramped up missile tests and nuclear posturing. A [paper](#) by Eric Ballbach, published by the German Institute for International and Security Affairs, offers a succinct overview of the recent steps taken by the North Korean regime, including a revision of its nuclear doctrine. Joseph Dempsey's [piece](#) for the International Institute for Strategic Studies takes a related, but narrower view, explaining why it appears increasingly likely that North Korea is in the processes of developing an air-launched cruise missile capability.





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:

In Ethiopia, a [fragile truce](#) could pave the way for a negotiated settlement of the civil war between the central government and rebel forces in Tigray.

After [winning the Brazilian presidency](#) by the narrowest of margins, Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva is taking office in Brasilia, facing a number of domestic and regional challenges.

After surviving an apparent assassination attempt, the campaign of Pakistan's ousted Prime Minister [Imran Khan](#) to reclaim power seems to have received a boost.

The UN and Turkey-brokered [deal to facilitate Ukrainian grain exports](#) is set to expire; Ukraine and much of the international community are keen to renew the agreement, but Russia's position is less clear.

IRAQ CONTINUES TO WALK A FINE LINE

More than a year after holding parliamentary elections in October 2021, Iraq finally has a Prime Minister-designate: veteran Shia politician Mohammed al-Sudani is the candidate of the so-called Coordination Framework, a group of mostly Shia parties with close ties to Iran and opposed to the Sadrist movement, the Shia grouping led by populist cleric Muqtada al-Sadr. Al-Sudani's appointment reflects an at least temporary de-escalation, coming after months during which the conflict between the Coordination Framework and the Sadrists repeatedly looked like it might escalate into civil war. In a [briefing paper](#) for the Qatar-based Middle East Council on Global Affairs, Ranj Alaadin outlines how intra-Shia fault lines, combined with other brewing conflicts, could yet lead to renewed escalation. However, he also suggests that decentralisation could bring more stability, and that by playing a role as a regional mediator, Iraq could win the goodwill of countries around the region, indirectly supporting its own stability.



Picture: Hasan Mazini, CC BY 4.0

WILL IRAN'S REGIME SURVIVE?



Protests inside Iran have now entered their third month. Women and young people in particular appear to have had enough of the regime's conservative values and are taking matters into their own hands. The regime for its part has responded forcefully, killing 350 people to date, and imprisoning thousands. In this 40-minute podcast with [Foreign Affairs](#), noted Iran scholar Karim Sadjadpour ponders the regime's ability to overcome this most testing of moments, and discusses if the leadership may have to tread the path of reform in order to quell popular unrest.

OUT NOW & UP NEXT..

● *"The Chief of the General Staff has declared that this is the British Army's '1937 moment'. If he is correct, then we must conduct field research now, during this conflict. There are lessons to be learned and little time to lose."* – James Sladden presents the case for in-conflict investigations in our latest [In-Depth Briefing](#). Read CHACR's library of commentaries and articles at [chacr.org.uk](#)

● Date for the diary... **December 9:** The CHACR Conference: Making sense of a confusing world (see [website](#) for details).

IN-DEPTH BRIEFING // #40 // NOVEMBER 22

ON THE GROUND: FIELD RESEARCH IN UKRAINE

AUTHOR: Dr Robert Johnson

The CHACR In-Depth Briefing #40 is a special issue that explores the challenges of conducting field research in conflict zones. It features a collection of articles from experts in the field, including a foreword by James Sladden, CHACR's Director of Research. The issue covers a range of topics, from the importance of local knowledge to the risks of conducting research in active conflict zones. It is a must-read for anyone interested in the complexities of conflict and the role of research in understanding it.

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IN-DEPTH BRIEFING // #39 // OCTOBER 22

LINGERING INSTABILITY IN THE BALKANS

AUTHOR: Dr Robert Johnson

The CHACR In-Depth Briefing #39 is a special issue that explores the challenges of conducting field research in conflict zones. It features a collection of articles from experts in the field, including a foreword by James Sladden, CHACR's Director of Research. The issue covers a range of topics, from the importance of local knowledge to the risks of conducting research in active conflict zones. It is a must-read for anyone interested in the complexities of conflict and the role of research in understanding it.

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THE CHACR CONFERENCE: Making sense of a confusing world

0900-1230 / December 9 2022 / Churchill Hall, RMAS

0830-0900: Arrivals

0900-1230: Keynote address by Dr Robert Johnson (Director of the Secretary of State for Defence's Office of Net Assessment and Challenge) followed by panel discussions on *Geopolitical developments and Global security challenges*

Open to all British and Allied Defence personnel