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U.S. PATRIOT MISSILES COULD TRANSFORM UKRAINE'S DEFENCES: BUT IT'S A RISKY MOVE

Ukraine's airspace is replete with threats that have proven costly in both blood and treasure for Kiev. In the face of Iranian missiles, and increasing drone attacks, the provision of the Patriot missile defence system would seem like a good idea. But, as [Dr Jack Watling argues](#) in this piece, Patriot is not a magic bullet. Patriot can tackle specific threats extremely effectively, but achieving effective coverage across Ukraine's vast geography means an alternative solution will need to be found that is both affordable and sustainable. This will require some innovative thinking and investment by Ukraine's major military partners. After all, the defence of Ukraine cannot come at the expense of the defence of Taiwan, and the Indo-Pacific region.

EU AND US IMPOSE PRICE CAP ON RUSSIAN EXPORTS

In early December, the European Union's embargo on importing seaborne Russian crude came into force. At the same time, working with the US and in coordination with the G7, the EU also imposed a \$60 per barrel price cap on all seaborne Russian crude exports. With this measure, the West is trying to force oil buyers around the world to pay less for Russian crude. It is supposed to be enforced via Europe's significant control over the shipping insurance market. Attempting to impose a price cap on oil exports is an unprecedented move and could have far-reaching consequences on global oil markets, but it remains unclear whether it will work to restrain Russia. In this [op-ed for Chatham House](#), Timothy Ash provides a useful overview of the different dynamics at play and outlines the key issues to watch.

THE WINTER WAR WILL ONLY KEEP HEATING UP

In this [well-argued essay](#), Max Hastings interrogates the claim by US National Intelligence chief Avril Haines that winter will bring a lull to the conflict in Ukraine. Quite the contrary, Hastings sees both historical precedent for escalation as shown by the increased intensity of fighting between Russia and Germany in the Winter of 1941, and also sees evidence that this year's fighting shows no signs of slowing down. Russian pressure around Bakhmut continues, and additional offensives appear in the works. The Ukrainians appear to have paused for resupply in advance of a major offensive before Christmas, and – with Russia on the back foot – Hastings argues the time is right to press home the Ukrainian advantage. Although in the long run the result will have to be a negotiation to end the war, there is little incentive for the Ukrainians to slow down the tempo of operations.

WHERE NEXT FOR ISRAELI /U.S. RELATIONS?

As Benjamin Netanyahu comes back from political isolation to once again lead Israel, it is time to take stock of where the country and its politics are heading. At the head of the most right-wing government in the nation's history, Netanyahu faces a number of economic and security challenges. But perhaps most importantly, the relationship with Israel's closest ally the US is under very close scrutiny. Under the Biden Presidency, Washington's position toward Israel has cooled significantly, the depth of partisan division in the US has led to a marked difference between Republicans and Democrats on Israel and its security needs. This has not been helped by Netanyahu's overt interventions into US politics in recent years which have been distinctly partisan. So what is to be done? In this [erudite and thoughtful essay](#), Eldad Shavit argues that Israel policy should defend its security needs where necessary, but do a much better job of navigating Washington's partisan divides, and strenuously avoid interfering in domestic debates wherever possible, so as to ensure stronger relations with the current administration to 2024.

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CAN EUROPE HELP END THE WAR IN YEMEN?

A truce which has subdued the war in Yemen for much of 2022 has officially expired, but the parties in the conflict have not yet resumed full-scale fighting. The UN is working to revive negotiations over a ceasefire, and secret talks between Saudi Arabia and the Yemeni Houthis are also ongoing. In a [policy paper for the European Council on Foreign Relations](#), Helen Lackner argues that Europe can play a role in bringing the conflict to a close. She stresses that efforts to end the war must be about more than ending the Saudi-led military intervention in the country, highlighting fundamentally intra-Yemeni civil war dynamics that show little sign of abating. Lackner argues that Europe should focus on long-term diplomatic engagement, especially with regional powers, to address Yemen's catastrophic economic and human rights crises. Meanwhile, in [this report](#), Eleonora Ardemagni and Federica Saini Fasanotti at the Italian Institute for International Political Studies offer an insightful analysis of how the commanders of armed groups in Yemen – and Libya – have gradually developed first into warlords and now into 'statelords,' who simultaneously act as military leaders, tribal chiefs, politicians, and businessmen.

WIDER READING

In [Leadership: Lessons from a life in Diplomacy](#) Lord Simon McDonald, former Permanent Under-Secretary of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, opines about the men and women in charge of the UK's diplomatic affairs over the past four decades, and what constitutes the best and the worst qualities of leadership. Always in the room, but never himself the key decision-maker, McDonald had a front row seat to many of the most critical national security developments of the 21st century. His wealth of experience and critical eye provide an excellent lens to view those whom he worked alongside. This book is well worth reading for those trying to understand the UK's foreign policy in a shifting and unstable world, and provides much intellectual stimulation for those wanting to understand British leadership and its personalities in greater depth. A perfect holiday read.





CHINA'S GLOBAL BASING AMBITIONS

The RAND Corporation has [published a study](#) exploring the defence implications of China's ambitions to establish military bases around the world. It highlights that the main driver of Beijing's strategy to expand its military's international reach is to protect what it considers to be its vital interest, particularly related to economic growth. Pakistan, Bangladesh, Cambodia and Myanmar are identified as the most likely candidates to host new Chinese bases in the foreseeable future. The report argues that the US can do little to prevent China from adopting a more globally distributed posture, and suggests that the main risk is that new Chinese bases can disrupt local balances of power that could precipitate conflicts the US might be drawn into.

GULF STATES FLIRT WITH CHINA

In mid-December, China's President Xi Jinping visited Saudi Arabia for an unprecedented series of talks and summits. Beside bilateral engagement with the Kingdom, he also joined a summit of the Gulf Cooperation Council, and a get-together of Arab leaders from across the region. The visit – and the Xi's warm reception in Riyadh – has attracted much commentary about how the West is losing ground in the Gulf and China is expanding its reach in the region. This [analysis](#) in *The Economist* provides a more sober analysis. China is clearly fast becoming the Gulf monarchies' most important economic partner, and there is a lot of intellectual sympathy in the region for China's authoritarian development model, but when it comes to defence and security, most states in the region still rely on the US and the West.

U.S./CHINESE MILITARY-TO-MILITARY ENGAGEMENT COULD RESUME

In late November, US President Joe Biden and Chinese President Xi Jinping met for the first time in person since the beginning of the coronavirus pandemic; it was also the first in-person meeting since Biden was elected President in 2020. According to readouts, the meeting was relatively amicable, which has led to hopes that some of the bilateral dialogue initiatives between the two countries, which aim to retain a degree of mutual understanding, could be resumed after having been suspended by Beijing following US House of Representatives Speaker Nancy Pelosi's visit to Taiwan earlier this year. In the military sphere, this includes the China-US Military Maritime Consultative Agreement, Defense Policy Coordination Talks, and regular exchanges between US Indo-Pacific Command and China's Southern Theatre Command. In [this article for IISS](#), James Crabtree provides valuable context.



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:

[US Republicans are due to take over the House of Representatives in January](#), having won a narrow majority in the mid-terms, but Democrats expanded their control of the Senate after Raphael Warnock won in Georgia.

In Canada, [the military will no longer be involved in investigations of sexual offenses](#) allegedly committed by serving personnel of the armed forces.

The Chinese government has given in and dropped its [zero-Covid policy](#); now the virus is spreading quickly across the country, giving government a new challenge to deal with.

South Africa is fast sliding into a [political crisis](#) as President Ramaphosa is coming under fire for corruption allegations.

The International Rescue Committee, a non-governmental humanitarian organisation, [has listed Ethiopia and Somalia](#) as the countries of highest concern for 2023.

In Peru, [instability continues](#) after President Castillo was ousted following an unsuccessful coup attempt.

GERMANY'S ZEITENWENDE

In February, days after Russia's invasion of Ukraine, German Chancellor Olaf Scholz told the German Parliament that the war signalled a Zeitenwende – a turning point – in international affairs and in German thinking about its security, defence and foreign policy. His announcement of some €100 billion of extra investments in the German military attracted particular attention. In the months since, many analysts have questioned how serious Berlin really is about changing its approach, warning against backsliding, complaining about slow, bureaucratic processes, and highlighting Germany's oftentimes dithering provision of military aid to Ukraine. In an [essay](#) for *Foreign Affairs*, Scholz has now tried again to explain his thinking about the Zeitenwende. The piece highlights that changes in German defence policy are only a small part of what he has in mind, with the main focus being on adapting to a changing global order and preventing a new Cold War.



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UK TO DEVELOP NEW COMBAT AIRCRAFT WITH ITALY AND JAPAN

The UK, Italy and Japan have announced the launch of a new programme to jointly develop a new combat aircraft; the initiative is titled the Global Combat Air Programme. While the UK has long worked with partners in the US and across Europe to develop major weapons systems, the new initiative breaks new ground by forging European-Japanese cooperation. This [analysis by Douglas Barrie and Yuka Koshino](#) for IISS provides a useful analysis of the plans for the cooperation, including how it could be regarded as a manifestation of growing European interests in and concerns about security in the Indo-Pacific region.

STRATEGIC SURVEY 2022

The International Institute for Strategic Studies has published its annual [Strategic Survey](#), exploring how developments over the past year have shaped and changed the global strategic environment. This year's report highlights two key decisions – one made in Washington, one made in Moscow – as the main drivers of strategic change. It argues that the US withdrawal from Afghanistan has signalled both the end of a 20-year Western military intervention in that country, as well as a step-change in the still relevant, but much less talked about 'war on terror.' Russia's invasion of Ukraine, meanwhile, has brought European security back into focus, and forced Western militaries to re-engage with the concept of large-scale war fighting.

OUT NOW...

● *“Without directly engaging in conflict itself, Iran is honing its drone and missile capabilities – courtesy of the rigorous test provided by Saudi Arabia’s modern air defence systems – and strengthening its ability to wage war against a well-equipped enemy.” – Michael Horowitz, Head of Intelligence at Le Beck International, take a deep dive into Iran’s interests in Yemen. Read CHACR’s library of commentaries and articles at [chacr.org.uk](#)*

