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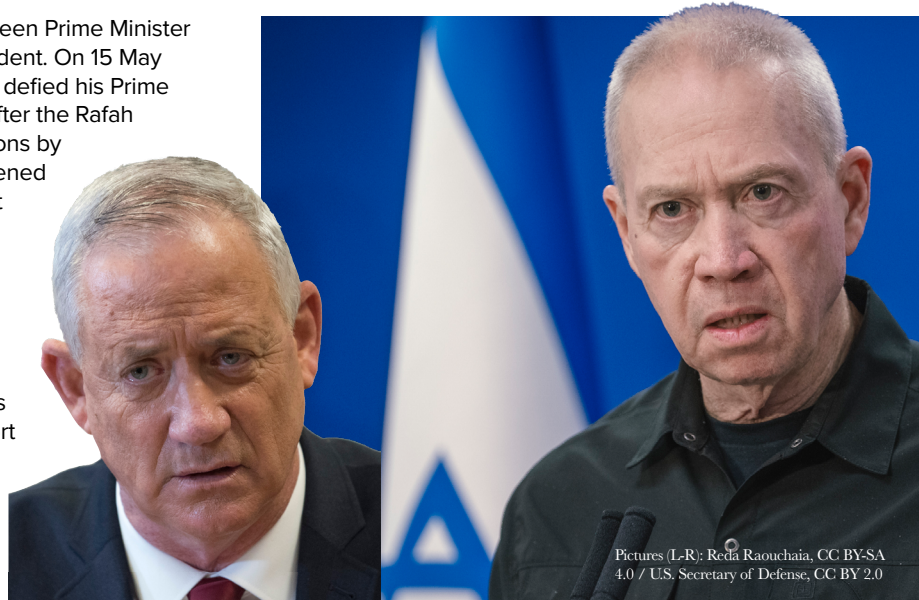


## ISRAEL'S INTELLIGENCE FAILURES

In April Major General Aharon Haliva, the Israel Defence Forces' (IDF) military intelligence chief, [announced his resignation](#), accepting full responsibility for his organisation's failure to provide advance warning of Hamas' assault on 7 October 2023. Shay Shabtai, a senior researcher at the Begin-Sadat Centre for Strategic Studies, [attributes](#) the Israeli intelligence failure to “seven sins”: politicisation, certainty, preoccupation with cyber, targeting, professionalism, understanding, and risk management. Shabtai criticises IDF intelligence for narrowly focusing on operational imperatives such as target development; he argues that this focus impacted on the IDF's “ability to analyse [Hamas] as a strategic and operational entity”. Beth Sanner and Adam Siegel suggest that an [alternative analytical framework](#) may have helped Israel avoid strategic surprise on 7 October. The report outlines how “crowd-sourced strategic forecasting” can force analysts to challenge their assumptions and biases. They also suggest that the events of 7 October provide lessons for intelligence services globally, including the importance of creating an organisational culture where officials feel comfortable challenging conventional wisdom and long-held assumptions.

## IN THE ABSENCE OF STRATEGY: SPLITS BETWEEN THE GENERALS AND THE POLITICIANS

As the war in Gaza reaches its eighth month, splits between Prime Minister Netanyahu and his cabinet partners are increasingly evident. On 15 May Defence Minister Yoav Gallant (pictured far right) openly defied his Prime Minister, noting his failure to prepare plans for the day after the Rafah operation, despite being presented with a range of options by the IDF. Benny Gantz (pictured right) has likewise threatened to resign if his plans are not adopted by the government before June 8, accusing the government of “choosing the path of the fanatics”. This [piece by Natan Sachs](#) outlines the strategic options for Israel, highlighting the damage that no political strategy has created for Israel's international standing. This [analysis by The Times' Anshel Pfeffer](#) considers whether Mr Gantz could emerge as Israel's man for the future; Gantz's supporters note that many reservists are willing and ready to support him. Internal polls in Israel seem to show that he is the most favoured politician, and could lead a future government, but it may not be in Gantz's character to bring down the government during a time of war.



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## US AID PACKAGE FOR UKRAINE

After months of delay, the US Congress [passed a \\$61 billion foreign aid package](#) for Ukraine. The package includes military equipment from US stockpiles and funding for American officials to purchase Soviet-era equipment for Ukraine on the global market. Mark Cancian and Chris Park of the Centre for Strategic and International Studies [breakdown the bill's various components](#), arguing that Ukraine would have lost the war without the aid package. Debating the latest developments in Ukraine on the [Net Assessment podcast](#), Christopher Preble, Zack Cooper and Melanie Marlowe suggest that the aid package will buy Ukraine time; however, they argue that short-term weapon deliveries will not be enough to swing the momentum of the conflict in Kyiv's favour. Following the approval of the US aid package, members of the Ukraine Defence Contact Group are working to [rush weapons deliveries](#) to Ukraine as Moscow looks to exploit its advantage in manpower and weaponry before foreign military aid reaches the battlefield.

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## A NEW RUSSIAN OFFENSIVE?

On 10 May Russian forces crossed into Ukraine's Kharkiv region, capturing several villages along the border. *Frontelligence Insight*, a Ukrainian open-source intelligence group, provided an [initial assessment](#) which suggested that Russian units had made gains in less well-defended areas near the border. Discussing these latest developments on the [Chain Reaction podcast](#), Rob Lee, a senior fellow at the Foreign Policy Research Institute, claimed that Russia's offensive is aimed at drawing Ukrainian forces away from the Donbas and creating dilemmas for Ukrainian planners. While Lee believes that Russian forces are unlikely to breach Ukraine's main [defensive lines](#) around Kharkiv – declining Russian troop quality means they are unable to mount effective combined operations above the platoon-level – he argues that Moscow's offensive will exacerbate Ukraine's manpower problems. Lee argues that the outcome of Ukraine's mobilisation debate, which has become [intensely politicised](#), will be crucial in determining the future trajectory of the conflict.

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## THE ANTI-WESTERN AXIS?

Russia's deployment of Iranian-built drones and the discovery of Chinese components in [Russian weapons systems](#) in Ukraine has focused Western attention on the deepening ties between China, Iran and Russia. Tehran and Beijing's diplomatic support and technology transfers have strengthened Moscow's position on the battlefield, leading some analysts to describe China, Iran, and Russia as an "[axis of upheaval](#)" or "[axis of disorder](#)". However, Lucas Winter, Jemima Baar and Jason Warner, researchers at the US Army's Foreign Military Studies Office, [urge Western policymakers](#) to avoid viewing all interactions between the three countries as inherently threatening. While China, Iran and Russia appear to be converging around a common interest of undermining US influence, the authors argue that differences between the three countries mean trilateral cooperation is "more rhetorical than real", arguing China's reluctance to risk business with the West will limit Beijing's enthusiasm for an "explicit counter-order". Other commentators disagree: Andrea Kendall-Taylor and Richard Fontaine [claim](#) in *Foreign Affairs* that differences between Beijing, Tehran and Moscow are unlikely to "dissolve the bonds forged by their common resistance to a Western-dominated world". As a result Western governments will be unsuccessful in trying to drive wedges between China, Iran and Russia.

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## ARMS TRAFFICKING IN SUDAN

The prospects for peace in Sudan look increasingly bleak. While the Sudan Armed Forces (SAF) have begun to claw back some battlefield momentum, neither the SAF nor the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) appear interested in compromise. Human Rights Watch recently [accused](#) the RSF of ethnic cleansing in West Darfur. Writing for the German Institute for Global and Area Studies, Hager Ali [argues](#) that the RSF's battlefield gains in 2023 were underpinned by the group's superior logistics networks, particularly in regions close to the RSF's cross-border smuggling routes. She claims that external actors – including the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Russian private military contractors – use these logistics networks to transfer weapons, ammunition and fuel to the RSF. Ali also uses satellite imagery to explain why neither side has been able to gain a decisive military advantage in Sudan's main urban areas of Khartoum and Omdurman. This study underlines the resilience of the RSF's supply lines and highlights the difficulties the SAF faces in disrupting these logistical networks.



## NEWS STORIES TO WATCH OUT FOR

With tensions in the Middle East and the conflict in Ukraine continuing to dominate headlines, here are some other topics to keep an eye on:

China's President Xi Jinping visited [France, Hungary, and Serbia](#) in May. Some analysts believe Xi's trip was an attempt to undermine European unity – all three countries are praised by Chinese officials for their commitment to “strategic autonomy”.

[Turkey launched a new round of airstrikes on Kurdish militants](#) in northern Iraq. Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan has hinted at a major offensive this summer against the Kurdistan Workers' Party.

Authorities in Burkina Faso [blocked access to several foreign news websites](#), including the BBC and the *Guardian*, following their coverage of a Human Rights Watch [report](#) about alleged abuses by the country's security forces. Burkina Faso's armed forces are struggling to contain an insurgency by Islamist armed groups, including the al-Qaeda-linked Group for the Support of Islam and Muslims (JNIM) and the Islamic State in the Greater Sahara (ISGS).

[Ecuador's government declared a state of emergency](#) in five coastal provinces as the authorities battle drug trafficking gangs. Violence has surged in the country following the escape from prison of a high-profile gang leader in January.

[Indian security forces engaged in gun battles](#) with Maoist rebels in the central Indian state of Chhattisgarh in April and May.

[Flash flooding in Afghanistan](#) is believed to have killed over 300 people. The Taliban have been criticised for their poor response to the flooding. The Taliban's restrictions on NGOs working in Afghanistan has also exacerbated the problem.

## THE IMPACT OF AN HELICOPTER CRASH IN IRAN

On 19 May a helicopter carrying Iran's President Ebrahim Raisi and Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian crashed in poor weather, killing both. Although neither man held the power and authority of the Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, there are still important impacts to consider, particularly with Middle East regional politics at a delicate juncture and Iran's stockpile of enriched uranium increasing by the day. This [short interview](#) with Jon B. Alterman is a good overview of the immediate impacts, both domestically in Iran and given the chances there will be changes to its foreign policy. For now, much won't change, but Raisi's death changes the calculations for those wishing to succeed the ailing 85-year-old Khamenei for the top job, and could have substantial impact on Iran's political scene in the coming years.

## THE UAE'S MILITARY INFLUENCE IN AFRICA

The internationalisation of the conflict in Sudan highlights the growing competition for influence in the Red Sea region. Among the many regional powers involved in the conflict, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) has emerged as one of the primary backers of the Rapid Support Forces (RSF). Eleonora Ardemagni, a senior associate research fellow at the Italian Institute for International Political Studies, [contextualises](#) the UAE's support to the RSF by explaining Abu Dhabi's wider strategy in Africa. Ardemagni argues that the UAE's engagement with the continent has a significant maritime component and follows three broad patterns: support to counter-terrorism missions; capacity building and defence cooperation in countries where the UAE has significant commercial investments such as ports; and support to certain non-state actors to enhance Emirati influence. The article's analysis highlights several areas of overlapping interest between the UK and UAE, including combating terrorism and piracy in Somalia, maritime security in the Horn of Africa and military support to UK partners such as Kenya.

## THE HOUTHIS ARE GOING UNDERGROUND

Recent [statements](#) by major shipping firms suggest that the US and UK's strikes on the Houthis in Yemen have failed to ease concerns about the safety of Red Sea shipping lanes. Maersk claimed that “the risk zone has expanded, and the [Houthi] attacks are reaching further offshore”. Analysis of satellite imagery by the International Institute for Strategic Studies suggests that the Houthis' network of underground tunnels and bunkers may be limiting the effectiveness of the aerial campaign. New underground facilities were built following the conclusion of a truce between the Houthis and the Saudi-led coalition in April 2022, suggesting that the Yemeni group was quick to incorporate lessons from the Saudi and Emirati bombing campaign between 2015 and 2022. By building new underground facilities and reinforcing existing bunkers, the group appears to be bolstering its defences against future aerial campaigns.

## CHINA'S MILITARY REFORMS

Chinese officials recently ordered the largest reorganisation of the People's Liberation Army (PLA). The Strategic Support Force (SSF) – established as part of the 2015 reforms – has been [scrapped](#) and replaced by three separate units: the Information Support Force, the Aerospace Force and the Cyberspace Force. This updated force structure has been described by official Chinese media outlets as “four services” (Army, Navy, Air Force and Rocket Force) and “four arms” (Information Support Force, Aerospace Force, Cyberspace Force and Joint Logistics Support Force). Yung Yu Lin and Tzu-Hao Liao [suggest](#) that these latest reforms bring the PLA into closer alignment with US and Russian force structures. They also indicate that the reforms were likely motivated by operational inefficiencies within the SSF. By contrast, Katsuji Nakazawa, a journalist for Nikkei Asia, [argues](#) that these reforms are linked to the purging of Li Shangfu, a former defence minister, and designed to tighten President Xi Jinping's grip on the PLA.

## GEORGIA'S 'RUSSIAN LAW'

Georgia's capital Tbilisi has been rocked by weeks of street protests following the ruling party's decision to introduce a “foreign agents” bill. The bill requires local media and non-governmental organisations to register as pursuing the interests of foreign powers if they receive more than 20 per cent of their funding from abroad. Gosia Paskowska, writing for the European Council on Foreign Relations, [argues](#) that “the bill is straight out of the Russian handbook”. Georgian President Salome Zurbishvili [vetoed](#) the proposed legislation on 18 May, describing the bill as “Russian in its essence”. Indeed, Russian officials have welcomed the bill, [claiming](#) that Georgia's ruling party – Georgian Dream (GD) – simply wants to limit “interference” from other countries in Georgia's domestic politics. Eto Buziashvili, a research associate at the Atlantic Council, [suggests](#) that the bill is part of a broader rapprochement between Georgia and Russia under GD. Despite recent polls showing that over 80 per cent of Georgians want to join the European Union, Russia appears to have steadily expanded its influence in Georgia by forging close links to GD and other sections of the country's ruling elite.