



Volume 4 | Issue 23

# SYLLOGE ON WEST ASIA

**FOCUS, NUCLEAR, MISSILES & OTHER  
SECURITY ISSUES IN WEST ASIA**

01 December - 15 December 2024



MANOHAR PARRIKAR INSTITUTE FOR  
DEFENCE STUDIES AND ANALYSES

मनोहर पर्रिकर रक्षा अध्ययन एवं विश्लेषण संस्थान

## Armenia

### Armenia-France 2025 defence cooperation program signed

News.am, December 10, 2024

Armenia-France strategic defence consultations were held Tuesday at the Armenian Ministry of Defense (MoD), the latter reports. During the consultations, the work carried out in the framework of cooperation in 2024 was recapped and the plans for the next year were outlined. Also, the visiting French military delegation was received by the Chief of the General Staff of the Armenian Armed Forces, Edward Asryan. The priorities of the Armenian Armed Forces' transformation process and the course of cooperation with France in that regard were discussed. Asryan expressed his satisfaction with the current level of cooperation and expressed hope that it will continue to develop. During the consultations, the parties exchanged views on regional and international security as well.

<https://news.am/eng/news/856588.html>

### India, Iran, Armenia hold 2nd trilateral consultations in New Delhi, discusses connectivity, regional cooperation

Economic Times, December 13, 2024

The second India-Iran-Armenia trilateral consultation was held on Thursday, where the three sides discussed a wide range of matters, including connectivity initiatives, engagement in multilateral fora, and regional developments, the Ministry of External Affairs press release stated. The discussion in the trilateral consultations was led by Joint Secretary of the Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Iran Division JP Singh

from the Indian side, along with delegations from Iran and Armenia. From Iran, the Director General of the South Asia Division in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Iran, Hashem Ashja' Zadeh, led the discussion; meanwhile, Armenia was represented by the Head of the Asia-Pacific Department in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Armenia, Anahit Karapetyan. "The 2nd India-Iran-Armenia Trilateral Consultations took place in New Delhi today. Discussions covered connectivity initiatives, multilateral engagement & regional developments. Emphasis was placed on enhancing trade, tourism, cultural exchanges & strengthening people-to-people ties," the MEA stated in a post in X.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/india/india-iran-armenia-hold-2nd-trilateral-consultations-in-new-delhi-discusses-connectivity-regionalcooperation/articleshow/116271744.cms?from=mdr>

## Azerbaijan

### Turkey, Azerbaijan plan to intensify joint military exercises

News.am, December 3, 2024

The Minister of Defense of Azerbaijan, Zakir Hasanov, received a delegation led by the Chief of the Main Intelligence Department of the Armed Forces of Turkey, Yasar Kadioglu, the Ministry of Defense of Azerbaijan told APA. Hasanov emphasized that cooperation in the military sector, as in other domains, continues to develop between the two fraternal countries. "It was stressed that the ongoing joint [military] exercises are important in terms of mutual exchange of experience. The meeting also discussed prospects for

the development of military cooperation and regional security issues. The importance of increasing the intensity of joint [military] exercises to further improve the professionalism of servicemen of fraternal countries was noted. During the meeting, a wide exchange of views on a number of other issues of mutual interest was held," APA added.

[https://news.am/eng/news/855388.html#google\\_vignette](https://news.am/eng/news/855388.html#google_vignette)

## Bahrain

### BDF Chief of Staff attends conclusion of "Bridge 25" naval exercise

Bahrain News Agency, December 5, 2024

Lieutenant General Theyab bin Saqr Al Nuaimi, Chief of Staff of the Bahrain Defence Force (BDF), attended the conclusion of the joint naval exercise "Bridge 25," conducted by the BDF's Royal Bahraini Naval Force (RBNF) in collaboration with the Eastern Fleet of the Royal Saudi Naval Forces (RSNF). The exercise aims to standardise combat concepts and strengthen cooperation and integration between the naval forces of both countries. It included joint military operations and the application of naval battle management procedures, enhancing the command and control capabilities of officers and personnel while fostering the exchange of combat expertise. "Bridge 25" is part of the ongoing series of "Bridge" exercises, highlighting the professionalism and readiness of participating officers, non-commissioned officers, and personnel. These exercises are among the most significant bilateral naval training activities, focusing on advanced combat

technology and large-scale force coordination.

<https://www.bna.bh/en/news?cms=q8FmFJgiscL2fwIzON1%2BDo6eKpDpulke1DHKyqKtgG4%3D>

### National security advisor and royal guard commander meets US deputy national security advisor for cybersecurity

Bahrain News Agency, December 7, 2024

Lieutenant General His Highness Shaikh Nasser bin Hamad Al Khalifa, National Security Advisor and Royal Guard Commander, received Anne Neuberger, US Deputy National Security Advisor for Cybersecurity, on the sidelines of the 20th edition of the IISS Manama Dialogue 2024. The meeting was attended by Shaikh Salman bin Khalifa Al Khalifa, Minister of Finance and National Economy. His Highness commended the historic and strategic partnership between Bahrain and the United States, which is founded on decades of trust, collaboration, and joint coordination across various fields, particularly in defence and advanced technology. His Highness highlighted the Comprehensive Security Integration and Prosperity Agreement (C-SIPA), signed in 2023, as a cornerstone of the bilateral relationship, enhancing cooperation and advancing shared goals of peace and stability. The meeting discussed ways to advance cooperation across various domains. The two sides also reviewed key regional and international developments.

<https://www.bna.bh/en/news?cms=q8FmFJgiscL2fwIzON1%2BDs7B6jAp3qjNhrjQXSaF4M%3D>

### **UK to join US-Bahrain Middle East security agreement**

Arabnews, December 7, 2024

The UK is set to join a security pact between Bahrain and the US designed to build “long-term stability in the Middle East.” The UK government said it would sign a deal to join the US-Bahrain Comprehensive Security Integration and Prosperity Agreement on Saturday in Manama. The original agreement between the US and Bahrain, which have long-standing security ties, was signed in September last year. At the time the State Department said it would “enhance cooperation across a wide range of areas, from defence and security to emerging technology, trade, and investment.” Bahrain’s foreign minister confirmed on Friday that the UK had been invited to be a partner in the agreement, Reuters reported. “The comprehensive security integration and prosperity agreement is designed not as a bilateral arrangement, but as the beginning of a multilateral framework that aims to bring together countries with an equal interest in delivering stability and prosperity,” Abdullatif bin Rashid Al-Zayani told the Manama Dialogue security conference in Bahrain.

<https://www.arabnews.com/node/2582094/middle-east>

### **Sixth session of Manama Dialogue addresses defence challenges**

Bahrain News Agency, December 8, 2024

Speakers, including high-level experts and officials participating in the sixth session of the Manama Dialogue, underscored the importance of enhancing regional and international cooperation to achieve peace

and stability. They emphasised addressing security challenges through peaceful and sustainable means, understanding the root causes of crises, and highlighted the necessity of modernising military capabilities and fostering defence collaboration as essential measures to counter threats, uphold national sovereignty, and leverage global developments that create opportunities for cooperation. The sixth plenary session, titled "Defence Challenges in a Complex World," was held as part of the 2024 Manama Dialogue and chaired by Sir John Chipman, CEO of the International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS). The session featured Kristóf Szalay-Bobrovniczky, Hungarian Minister of Defence; Stephanie Beck, Canadian Deputy Minister of National Defence; and Admiral Renato Rodrigues de Aguiar Freire, Chief of the Joint Staff of the Brazilian Armed Forces; and Daniel Shapiro, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for the Middle East, US.

<https://www.bna.bh/en/news?cms=q8FmFJgiscL2fwIzON1%2BDs6BQW4TUJzSHUY7Kr9SVV4%3D>

### **India adopts balanced approach to West Asia conflict: Jaishankar in Bahrain**

Business Standard, December 10, 2024

External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar on Monday said India's approach to the conflict that has been going on in West Asia since last year is balanced as it looks at the issues in all their complexities and also has a fundamental commitment to justice and equity. Jaishankar, 69, also reiterated that India supports a two-state solution to the Israel-Palestine issue during an interaction with the Indian community here. As a

country that itself has been impacted so deeply by terrorism, we are very strongly opposed to terrorism and hostage-taking. They should never be excused or condoned, Jaishankar said. But at the same time, it is very important that any action which is taken by any government or any armed force must always take care of civilian casualties and must always be respectful of humanitarian law, the minister said.

[https://www.business-standard.com/external-affairs-defence-security/news/india-adopts-balanced-approach-to-west-asia-conflict-jaishankar-in-bahrain-124120901360\\_1.html](https://www.business-standard.com/external-affairs-defence-security/news/india-adopts-balanced-approach-to-west-asia-conflict-jaishankar-in-bahrain-124120901360_1.html)

## Cyprus

### **Cyprus modernizes air defence capabilities with new Israeli Barak MX surface-to-air missile system**

Army Recognition, December 4, 2024

According to SigmaLive on December 3, 2024, the Cypriot National Guard received the first batch of Israeli Barak MX surface-to-air missile systems, with additional deliveries expected to enhance the nation's defense infrastructure. The procurement, initiated under the Anastasiades government in October 2021 and continued under the Christodoulidis administration, represents a significant investment aimed at upgrading Cyprus's air defense capabilities, which currently rely on Cold War-era systems. Negotiations for the acquisition began in October 2021 under the Anastasiades administration, initially exploring a variant of Israel's Iron Dome system. However, the Barak MX was ultimately selected due to its broader operational range and compatibility with existing systems, such as the Russian-made

Buk M1-2 and Tor-M1. Finalized under the Christodoulidis administration, the Barak MX deployment aligns with Cyprus's broader defence modernization plans, which include replacing Soviet-era Mi-35 helicopters with six Airbus H145M attack helicopters by the end of 2024.

<https://armyrecognition.com/news/army-news/army-news-2024/cyprus-modernizes-air-defense-capabilities-with-new-israeli-barak-mx-surface-to-air-missile-system>

### **Cyprus takes delivery of Israeli air defence system, report says**

Economic Times, December 5, 2024

Cyprus has taken delivery of an Israeli air defence system, local media reported on Thursday, as the east Mediterranean island taps new markets to upgrade its defence capabilities after the loss of key supplier Russia. TV station Sigma said the first deliveries were made on Tuesday. Cypriot officials declined to comment on the specifics of the report. "The only thing I can say is we will, and are doing everything necessary to bolster the deterrence force of Cyprus, not only because we are a country under occupation, but an EU member state in a region of particular geo-strategic importance," Cypriot President Nikos Christodoulides told reporters on Thursday. Cyprus was split in a Turkish invasion in 1974, with the internationally recognised government controlling the south, and a breakaway heavily militarised Turkish Cypriot state the north.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/defence/cyprus-takes-delivery-of-israeli-air-defence-system-report-says/articleshow/116008922.cms?from=mdr>



## Cyprus turns to west for new air defence system

Tom Cleaver

Cyprus Mail, December 5, 2024

Cyprus is turning to the west to renew its air defence systems, a senior government source said on Thursday. The source told Reuters the country is “turning to other countries of the European Union, as well as Israel” as it seeks to replace older military hardware which had been supplied by Russia. “As part of that, efforts are underway to upgrade our anti-aircraft umbrella,” the source added. Cyprus’ National Guard had suffered from sanctions placed on Russia in the aftermath of the country’s invasion of Ukraine in 2022. Russia had previously been a leading supplier of military hardware to the National Guard, but Cyprus’ reorientation towards the west had already begun to have a detrimental impact on that infrastructure even before a blanket ban was placed on Russian military hardware exports two years ago.

<https://cyprus-mail.com/2024/12/05/not-being-in-nato-prevents-national-guard-from-further-strengthening>

## Georgia

### Georgia’s shaky path to EU creates options for Middle East

Dr. Diana Galeeva

Arabnews, December 14, 2024

Almost a year ago, Georgia reached a milestone in its foreign policy when the European Commission announced the country was a candidate for EU

membership. Despite that historic decision, Georgian Prime Minister Irakli Kobakhidze said last week that arrangements to join the bloc would be delayed, and membership talks would not be held until 2028 — a statement that led to rioting in Tbilisi. What is Georgia’s path to the EU now, and the potential implications of this decision for the country; and what might these developments mean for the Middle East? Given its “small state” status, Georgia is torn between Russia and the West, especially since the outbreak of the Ukraine war. Georgia, as well as Moldova, which borders Ukraine, has been feeling the effects of the polarized political field on its ability to calibrate foreign policy. In August 2008, Russia and Georgia had a brief war, after which Moscow declared the independence of South Ossetia and another breakaway province, Abkhazia, and established an armed base there.

<https://www.arabnews.com/node/2583076/%7B%7B>

## Iran

### Iran says ready to study any Syrian request for troops

The Defense Post, December 3, 2024

Iran will consider any request from its Syrian ally for troops to help tackle a sweeping rebel offensive in the north, Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi said on Tuesday. “If the Syrian government asks us to send forces to Syria, we will study their request,” Araghchi said in an excerpt from an interview published on his official Telegram channel. Iran and Syria have been close allies for decades and Tehran has long provided military advisors to the Syrian

armed forces. On Monday, foreign ministry spokesman Esmail Baghaei said Iran's "military advisors were present in Syria, and they are still present" and would remain in the country "in accordance with the wishes" of its government. The Iranian government has been portraying the rebel assault as a US-Israeli plot to destabilize the Middle East. On Tuesday, the chief of the Iranian armed forces, General Mohammad Bagheri, called the rebel advance "dangerous for the region" according to state television. Bagheri held separate talks on Syria with his Iraqi and Syrian counterparts, as well as the Russian Defence Minister Andrei Belousov.

<https://thedefensepost.com/2024/12/03/iran-syrian-request-troops/>

### **Iran says it conducted a successful space launch in a program long criticized by West**

Economic Times, December 6, 2024

Iran said Friday it conducted a successful space launch, the latest in its program that the West alleges enhances Tehran's ballistic missile capabilities. Iran conducted the launch using its Simorgh program, a satellite-carrying rocket that had had a series of failed launches, at Iran's Imam Khomeini Spaceport in rural Semnan province. That's the site of Iran's civilian space program. The Simorgh carried what Iran described as an "orbital propulsion system," as well as two research systems to a 400-kilometer (250-mile) orbit above the Earth. The system could allow Iran to change the orbit of a spacecraft, something Tehran long has wanted to have geosynchronized orbits for its satellites. Iran also put the payload of the Simorgh at 300

kilograms (660 pounds), heavier than its previous successful launches.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/technology/iran-says-it-conducted-a-successful-space-launch-in-a-program-long-criticized-by-west/articleshow/116035460.cms?from=mdr>

### **Iran successfully launches Saman-1 space tug**

Islamic Republic News Agency, December 7, 2024

The Saman-1, along with a CubeSat and a research payload, has been successfully sent into space using a Simorgh launcher, according to the chief of Iran's space agency. Hassan Salaryieh said on Saturday that Simorgh, a satellite launch vehicle (SLV), set a new record for payload liftoff on Friday. He noted that the launch of Saman-1 marked the largest and heaviest space payload sent into orbit by the country. This multi-phase mission successfully deployed the Saman-1 orbital transfer block along with two research payloads, totaling nearly 300 kilograms. The Saman-1 system is designed to elevate satellites to higher orbits and will be crucial for Iran's space program, he added. One of the mission's payloads was the Fakhr-1 communication satellite, he further noted. The Iranian Space Agency announced on Friday that initial tests indicate all subsystems of the space tug are functioning properly. Simorgh is a two-stage, liquid-fueled satellite launch vehicle developed by the Iranian Ministry of Defense.

<https://en.irna.ir/news/85682234/Iran-successfully-launches-Saman-1-space-tug>

### **IAEA claims Iran dramatically accelerating uranium enrichment**

Mehr New agency, December 7, 2024

Iran is dramatically accelerating its enrichment of uranium to up to 60% purity, a Western media outlet has cited Director General of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) Rafael Grossi as saying. "Today the agency is announcing that the production capacity is increasing dramatically of the 60% inventory," Reuters quoted Grossi who was speaking on the sidelines of the Manama Dialogue security conference in Bahrain. He claimed that Iran's production capacity was set to rise to seven, eight times more, maybe, or even more than the current level of 5-7 kg of uranium enriched to up to 60% purity a month. Reuters also claimed to have seen a confidential report to IAEA member states, which said Iran had increased enriching uranium to up to 60% at its Natanz and Fordow sites. The report claimed that Iran had increased the enrichment rate of the material to feed them into two interconnected cascades of advanced IR-6 centrifuges at Fordow. Western countries accuse Iran of trying to build nuclear weapons. Iran rejects that, saying it wants nuclear energy to meet its domestic needs.

<https://en.mehrnews.com/news/225314/IAEA-claims-Iran-dramatically-accelerating-uranium-enrichment>

### **Iran says pursuing its peaceful nuclear program under IAEA supervision**

Islamic Republic News Agency, December 7, 2024

Iran's Foreign Ministry Spokesman Esmail Baghaei has said that the Islamic

Republic's nuclear program is peaceful and based on technical needs, and remains under supervision of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). Baghaei made the comments on Saturday, a day after IAEA Director General Rafael Grossi said that Iran is dramatically accelerating its enrichment of uranium to up to 60% purity. The spokesman said that Grossi's remarks are a reference to the "confrontational and unconstructive" action by the US, the UK, France and Germany at the IAEA's Board of Governors where they pushed for the approval of an anti-Iran resolution without any legal basis or logical justification. Baghaei also referred to Grossi's visit to Tehran three weeks ago, during which Tehran and the IAEA agreed to strengthen technical cooperation. The spokesman said that Grossi brought initiatives, but it was the US and those three European countries that caused the IAEA chief's efforts to be fruitless through pursuing a policy of pressure and exploiting the Board of Governors.

<https://en.irna.ir/news/85683093/Iran-says-pursuing-its-peaceful-nuclear-program-under-IAEA-supervision>

### **Minister: Iran plays key role in protecting global energy security**

Islamic Republic News Agency, December 8, 2024

Iran's Oil Minister Mohsen Paknejad says his country plays a key role in protecting global energy security through developing its infrastructure for transfer and export of gas. The minister made the remark on Sunday afternoon as the daylong 26th ministerial meeting of the Gas Exporting Countries Forum (GECF) wrapped up in



Tehran. He said that Iran has managed to develop its gas resources using domestic capacities, and despite sanctions imposed on the country. The Islamic Republic is also making efforts to develop its international cooperation through enhancing “energy diplomacy” and expanding gas swaps, Paknejad added. He further said that the 26th GECF ministerial meeting emphasized the importance of international cooperation on natural gas industry and its role in global energy security, adding that the meeting served as a platform to exchange experiences and innovative ideas among member states and observer countries.

<https://en.irna.ir/news/85684183/Minister-Iran-plays-key-role-in-protecting-global-energy-security>

### **Iran's nuclear countdown: Could Bashar al-Assad's downfall accelerate the timeline?**

Economic Times, December 9, 2024

Bashar al-Assad's government fell after a swift and meticulously coordinated rebel offensive, ending five decades of Assad family rule in Syria. The operation, led by the Islamist coalition Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) and supported by the Syrian National Army (SNA), culminated in the capture of Damascus within two weeks, following the seizure of Aleppo. The fall came as Assad's forces, weakened by years of corruption and economic mismanagement, crumbled under the pressure. Reports suggest Assad has fled to Moscow as rebel leaders consolidate power in key regions. Ahmed al-Sharaa, better known as Abu Mohammed al-Golani, leader of HTS, addressed a jubilant crowd at the Umayyad Mosque in Damascus,

declaring: "How many people were displaced across the world? How many people lived in tents? How many drowned in the seas? A new history, my brothers, is being written in the entire region after this great victory." The fall of Assad's government resulted from a meticulously planned offensive that had been in development for six months. Spearheaded by Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) and supported by the Syrian National Army (SNA), the operation unfolded with unprecedented speed. Within two weeks, rebels seized Aleppo and advanced southward to Damascus, culminating in the regime's collapse.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/defence/irans-nuclear-countdown-could-bashar-al-assads-downfall-accelerate-the-timeline/articleshow/116140854.cms?from=mdr>

### **Iran assumes rotating presidency of OPEC for 2025**

Islamic Republic News Agency, December 10, 2024

Iran's Oil Minister Mohsen Paknejad was appointed as Rotating President of the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) Conference for 2025 by alphabetical order during a ministerial meeting on Tuesday which was held via videoconference and chaired by Marcel Abeke, the Gabonese petroleum minister and OPEC conference president for 2024. Iran has assumed the rotating presidency of the OPEC for 2025, a sign the country is still a major player in the bloc despite US sanctions seeking to restrict its oil exports. The ministerial meeting convenes twice a year to review the general affairs of the 12-

member OPEC and discuss its key internal matters. Paknejad said in the meeting that it was an honor for him and Iran as a founding member of the OPEC to assume its presidency at a time when the organization needs more unity to deal with “sensitive and complicated” issues in the global energy market.

<https://en.irna.ir/news/85686417/Iran-assumes-rotating-presidency-of-OPEC-for-2025>

### **Iran to build nuclear reactors in coastal provinces: AEOI chief**

Islamic Republic News Agency, December 11, 2024

Mohammad Eslami, the head of the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran (AEOI) has outlined plans to construct nuclear reactors in coastal provinces. In a meeting with the governor of the northern province of Golestan on Wednesday, Eslami emphasized that significant steps have already been taken to identify suitable locations for establishing nuclear power plants in the province. This includes initiating environmental studies and conducting geological tests at proposed sites, he added. Emphasizing the importance of developing irradiation technology, Eslami added that plans are underway to establish a major irradiation complex in Golestan. The facility, he said, will support the agricultural sector by enhancing pesticide-free product storage as well as pest control and seed improvement.

<https://en.irna.ir/news/85687172/Iran-to-build-nuclear-reactors-in-coastal-provinces-AEOI-chief>

### **Iran rejects E3 accusations against country's peaceful nuclear program**

Islamic Republic News Agency, December 11, 2024

Iran's Foreign Ministry Spokesman Esmail Baghaei has rejected the claims made in a joint statement by France, Germany and the UK with regard to the recent developments in Iran's peaceful nuclear program. The decision to activate a number of advanced centrifuges at an Iranian nuclear facility was made within the framework of the rights of the parties to the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and with prior information and under the supervision of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), Baghaei said on Tuesday night, while responding to the statement of the three European countries, together known as E3 or Troika. The spokesman clarified that the Islamic Republic of Iran, as a responsible IAEA member, has proven its commitment to cooperating with the Agency, which is also evident by understandings reached during last month's visit of the IAEA Director General to Tehran. It is regrettable that the three European countries, regardless of the achievements of Rafael Grossi's visit, which could have been a basis for strengthening future cooperation, insisted on their unconstructive approach and proceeded with an anti-Iran resolution at the IAEA Board of Governors meeting, he said. Remarks came a day after the E3 reiterated politically-motivated claims and accusations that Iran is militarizing its nuclear program with an increased number of centrifuges and with preparations to install additional enrichment infrastructure.

<https://en.irna.ir/news/85686446/Iran-rejects-E3-accusations-against-country-s-peaceful-nuclear>

### **Iran, Turkiye sign trade cooperation agreement, set \$30 billion target**

Islamic Republic News Agency, December 11, 2024

Iran and Turkiye have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to enhance bilateral trade, with both countries setting a target of \$30 billion in trade within the next five years. The agreement was signed in the presence of Iran's Minister of Roads and Urban Development and Turkiye's Minister of Trade during the 29th Joint Economic Cooperation Commission meeting held in Tehran on Wednesday. According to Amineh Tarfa'a, head of the International Affairs Center at Iran's Ministry of Roads and Urban Development, the three-day event concluded with the signing of a comprehensive MoU that covers various sectors, including trade, transport, customs, transit, investment, banking, electricity, agriculture, culture, tourism, and cooperation. The agreement will strengthen existing ties, particularly in the transport sector, where the two countries have maintained robust relations, especially in road transportation, Tarfa'a said.

<https://en.irna.ir/news/85687275/Iran-Turkiye-sign-trade-cooperation-agreement-set-30-billion>

### **Iran has high potential to build passenger plane: MoD spox**

Mehr News Agency, December 14, 2024

Spokesperson for Iran's Defense Ministry Brigadier General Reza Talaei-Nik said that Iran has high potential and capability to build passenger plane. Iran has the scientific capability and potential to be among the leading countries in

manufacturing passenger and commercial aircraft, he underlined. Touching upon organizing 12th Iran International Aerospace Exhibition in Kish Island, the spokesperson noted that the exhibition encompasses a part of Iran's national and scientific capabilities and also the participating countries. The participation of China, Russia, Pakistan, Malaysia, and Iran in the exhibition indicates synergy and cooperation of countries in the exchange of science and technologies in the aerospace sector, he stated. The 12th Iran International Aerospace Exhibition, also known as Iran Airshow 2024, commenced on Tuesday, December 10 in Kish Island, southern Iran. This exhibition is crucial for strengthening the country's aerospace infrastructure. It features air shows, unveil new achievements in the industry, and create opportunities for the exchange of knowledge and technology.

<https://en.mehrnews.com/news/225580/Iran-has-high-potential-to-build-passenger-plane-MoD-spox>

### **Iraq**

#### **Iraq deploys armoured vehicles to border with Syria**

Al-Monitor, December 2, 2024

Iraq sent armoured vehicles on Monday to reinforce its long border with Syria, in a bid to ease concerns after a surprise offensive in the neighbouring country by Islamist-led insurgents. The lightning offensive by Islamist Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) group and allied factions saw government forces lose full control of Syria's second city Aleppo for the first time since the civil war began in 2011. The attacks have caused

unease in Iraq, which still bears the scars of decades of conflict, including the rise of jihadists from the Islamic State (IS) group. "Any infiltration on the Syrian-Iraqi border is absolutely impossible, because of the fortifications and the combat units located there," interior ministry spokesman General Moqdad Miri said on Monday. The defence ministry said "armoured units of the Iraqi army" were sent to reinforce the border, from the western border town of Al-Qaim to the border with Jordan further south. Similar forces were deployed along the border further north in Nineveh province, it said. The move comes after the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights reported 200 fighters from a pro-Iran Iraqi armed group being sent into Syria to support government forces.

<https://www.al-monitor.com/originals/2024/12/iraq-deploys-armoured-vehicles-border-syria>

### **Iran-backed Iraqi militias enter Syria to help govt fighting rebels**

Business Standard, December 2, 2024

Hundreds of fighters from Iran-backed Iraqi militias crossed into Syria overnight to help the government fight rebels who seized Aleppo last week, Syrian and Iraqi sources said on Monday, and Tehran pledged to aid the Damascus government. At least 300 fighters, primarily from the Badr and Nujabaa groups, crossed late on Sunday using a dirt road to avoid the official border crossing, two Iraqi security sources said, adding that they were there to defend a Shi'ite shrine. A senior Syrian military source said the fighters had crossed in small groups to avoid airstrikes. "These are fresh reinforcements being sent to aid

our comrades on the front lines in the north," the source said. The head of Iraq's Popular Mobilisation Forces said no group under its umbrella had entered Syria, and that it does not operate outside Iraq. Iran's constellation of allied regional militia groups has long been integral to the success of pro-government forces in subduing rebels who rose up against President Bashar al-Assad in 2011, and they have long maintained bases in Syria.

[https://www.business-standard.com/external-affairs-defence-security/news/iran-backed-iraqi-militias-enter-syria-to-help-govt-fighting-rebels-124120201310\\_1.html](https://www.business-standard.com/external-affairs-defence-security/news/iran-backed-iraqi-militias-enter-syria-to-help-govt-fighting-rebels-124120201310_1.html)

### **Israel**

#### **Israel, Argentina deepen defence ties in official ministerial talks**

The Jerusalem Post, December 3, 2024

Newly appointed Defense Minister Israel Katz welcomed Argentina's Defense Minister Dr. Luis Alfonso Petri to Israel for an official visit aiming to deepen the strategic partnership between the two countries, the Israeli Defense Ministry announced on Monday. During the visit, Katz highlighted Argentina's steadfast support for Israel throughout the Israel-Hamas War and proposed a multi-year program to enhance bilateral ties through strategic workshops and seminars across various fields of mutual interest. Additionally, Dr. Petri spoke with Maj. Gen. (Res.) Eyal Zamir, Director General of Israel's Defense Ministry. Their dialogue addressed critical security concerns, focusing on Iran's destabilizing activities in both the Middle East and Latin America.

According to the announcement, both sides emphasized the need for sustained cooperation to foster regional stability and security. Dr. Petri conveyed a message from Argentine President Dr. Javier Milei, reaffirming Argentina's strong support for Israel's right to self-defense. He described Israel's current struggle as "not only a national fight but the free world's collective battle against terrorism and civilization's stand against barbarism."

<https://www.jpost.com/israel-news/article-831713>

### **‘Forward-looking capabilities’: Defence min. purchases advanced drones, autonomous defence systems**

The Jerusalem Post, December 3, 2024

The Defence Ministry announced on Tuesday it had purchased advanced drones and autonomous systems from Elbit Systems Ltd. The systems are set to "upgrade the operational capabilities of the forces on the ground," the ministry stated. These were developed in conjunction with the Directorate of Defence Research & Development and the IDF Ground Forces, the ministry added, noting that these systems included advanced capabilities for intelligence gathering and conducting precision strikes. Tens of thousands of Jews immigrated to Israel since October 7 massacre, data reveals. The military is set to acquire drones from Elbit, including models designed for intelligence gathering, strike-capable drones, and smaller drones suited for urban operations.

<https://www.jpost.com/breaking-news/article-831743>

### **Israel buys advanced drones worth \$40m**

Middle East Monitor, December 3, 2024

Israel today revealed that it purchased advanced drones worth around \$40 million amid its deadly war on the Gaza Strip. In a statement, the Defence Ministry said it "has completed several contracts with Elbit Systems totaling approximately \$40 million." Under the contracts, Elbit Systems, an Israeli military company, will supply the army "with advanced drones and autonomous systems to upgrade the operational capabilities of its forces in the field," it added. "They include advanced capabilities and are designed for various missions, including precise intelligence gathering and targeted strikes," the ministry said. Israeli occupation forces have extensively used drones in their genocide in Gaza, targeting medical and aid workers, Palestinians as they flee their homes and to mimic the cries of babies in an effort to encourage Palestinians to lure and shoot Palestinians in Gaza.

<https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/2024-12-03-israel-buys-advanced-drones-worth-40m/>

### **Israel has 'destroyed the most important military sites in Syria': war monitor**

Economic Times, December 11, 2024

A war monitor said Tuesday that Israel had "destroyed the most important military sites in Syria" with a flurry of air strikes since the fall of president Bashar al-Assad's government. Israel, which borders Syria, sent troops into a buffer zone on the east of the Israeli-annexed Golan Heights after Assad's fall, in what Foreign Minister



Gideon Saar described as a "limited and temporary step" for "security reasons". It has also carried out "about 250 air strikes on Syrian territory" over the last 48 hours with the aim of destroying the former regime's military capabilities, according to the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights. "Israel destroyed the most important military sites in Syria, including Syrian airports and their warehouses, aircraft squadrons, radars, military signal stations, and many weapons and ammunition depots in various locations in most Syrian governorates," the Britain-based Observatory said in a statement Tuesday. Near the port city of Latakia, Israel targeted an air defense facility and damaged Syrian naval ships as well as military warehouses.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/defence/israel-has-destroyed-the-most-important-military-sites-in-syria-war-monitor/articleshow/116164384.cms?from=mdr>

### **IDF signs NIS 2.8b. deal for five new advanced and faster Navy ships**

Yonah Jeremy Bob

The Jerusalem Post, December 12, 2024

Despite years of delay, the Defence Ministry on Thursday took another move to modernize the Israel Navy. It signed a NIS 2.8 billion deal to acquire five advanced Reshef missile ships from Israel Shipyards. These ships are 1000 tons lighter than the new Saar 6 ships. They are intended to replace the Saar 4.5 ships at the level of a maritime vehicle that can move faster and be more maneuverable. Defence Ministry Director-General Eyal Zamir approved the deal after the Ministerial Procurement

Committee and the Knesset Joint Committee on the Defence Budget gave the green light. Announcements about the deal being imminent had been made in 2021 and in mid-2023, but for reasons that remain unclear, the Ministerial Procurement Committee had never approved the deal.

<https://www.jpost.com/israel-news/article-833241>

### **Israel's defence tech sector showcases Israel's pioneering edge - analysis**

Seth J. Frantzman

The Jerusalem Post, December 12, 2024

Recently, over 120 students took part in a hackathon aimed at providing solutions to the defence technology sector. One of the teams was made up entirely of students from the minority Druze community. The team showcased their innovation by offering a solution to a problem that combat vehicles and sensors that are deployed on the battlefield face. In essence, many combat vehicles and other systems rely on cameras and various sensors and electro-optics that provide the operators with a way to see what is happening. The problem: Sensors can become clouded with dirt and dust. The team, all of whom are reservists, sought to solve this with a way to clean the external cameras using a system of rolling film. This was one of the many technologies presented at the recent DefenceTech Summit at Tel Aviv University. Significantly, Israel has been at war for more than a year. During this time, hundreds of thousands of Israelis have been called up to fight. This has caused many young people to put aside their studies and go to the front. It also means that people

have not been working in companies, such as start-ups.

<https://www.jpost.com/israel-news/defense-news/article-833220>

### **Israel's defence tech sector showcases Israel's pioneering edge - analysis**

Seth J. Frantzman

The Jerusalem Post, December 12, 2024

Recently, over 120 students took part in a hackathon aimed at providing solutions to the defense technology sector. One of the teams was made up entirely of students from the minority Druze community. The team showcased their innovation by offering a solution to a problem that combat vehicles and sensors that are deployed on the battlefield face. In essence, many combat vehicles and other systems rely on cameras and various sensors and electro-optics that provide the operators with a way to see what is happening. The problem: Sensors can become clouded with dirt and dust. The team, all of whom are reservists, sought to solve this with a way to clean the external cameras using a system of rolling film. This was one of the many technologies presented at the recent DefenceTech Summit at Tel Aviv University. Significantly, Israel has been at war for more than a year. During this time, hundreds of thousands of Israelis have been called up to fight. This has caused many young people to put aside their studies and go to the front. It also means that people have not been working in companies, such as start-ups.

<https://www.jpost.com/israel-news/defense-news/article-833220>

## **Kuwait**

### **India, Kuwait to set up joint commission to expand overall cooperation**

Business Standard, December 4, 2024

India and Kuwait on Wednesday decided to set up a joint commission for cooperation (JCC) at the foreign ministers' level, which will act as an umbrella mechanism to comprehensively review and monitor the entire gamut of bilateral ties, officials said. The decision was taken at a meeting between External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar and his Kuwaiti counterpart Abudullah Ali Al Yahya, who arrived here on Tuesday as part of his first official visit to India. The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said the two ministers reviewed the entire spectrum of India-Kuwait ties in diverse areas, including trade, investment, energy, food security and people-to-people ties. They also exchanged views on regional and international issues of mutual interest, the ministry said in a statement. "The two ministers signed an MoU on establishing a joint commission for cooperation (JCC) at the level of foreign ministers," the MEA said.

[https://www.business-standard.com/external-affairs-defence-security/news/india-kuwait-to-set-up-joint-commission-to-expand-overall-cooperation-124120401370\\_1.html](https://www.business-standard.com/external-affairs-defence-security/news/india-kuwait-to-set-up-joint-commission-to-expand-overall-cooperation-124120401370_1.html)

### **US approves \$300m armoured vehicle maintenance sale to Kuwait**

Army Technology, December 11, 2024

The US State Department has approved a potential foreign military sale to Kuwait,

encompassing military vehicle maintenance repair sustainment capability and associated equipment, with an estimated cost of \$300m (Kd93m). The Defense Security Cooperation Agency has formally notified Congress of this potential transaction. Kuwait seeks to upgrade its maintenance facilities, acquiring services and equipment for the refurbishment of existing infrastructure. The request includes a range of items such as sustainment maintenance, tools, repair parts, shop equipment, material handling devices, initial repair parts supply for two years, mandatory replacement materials, and the capability to repair arms up to 100mm. Additionally, the package covers cables, wiring harnesses, hydraulics, fuel oil pumps, starters, generators, AGT1500 engine parts, testing and limited repair services for communication systems, fire control, night vision, and laser devices.

<https://www.army-technology.com/news/us-approves-300m-armoured-vehicle-maintenance-sale-to-kuwait/>

## Lebanon

### Lebanon's Hezbollah sees 'major, dangerous' change in Syria

Economic Times, December 9, 2024

Lebanon's Hezbollah views events in Syria as a "major, dangerous and new transformation", a senior Hezbollah politician said on Monday, the Iran-backed group's first reaction to the toppling of its ally Bashar al-Assad. Hezbollah played a major part propping up Assad through years of war in Syria, before bringing its fighters back to Lebanon over the last year to fight in a bruising war with Israel - a redeployment which weakened Syrian

government lines. His downfall has stripped Hezbollah of a vital ally along Lebanon's eastern border. Assad-ruled Syria long served as a vital conduit for Iran to supply weapons to the Shi'ite Islamist Hezbollah. "What is happening in Syria is a major, dangerous and new transformation, and how and why what happened requires an evaluation, and the evaluation is not done on the podiums," Hezbollah lawmaker Hassan Fadlallah said in a statement. Syrian armed groups led by the Sunni Islamist Hayat Tahrir al-Sham swept into Damascus on Sunday, seizing the capital and forcing Assad to leave for Russia.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/defence/lebanons-hezbollah-sees-major-dangerous-change-in-syria/articleshow/116141442.cms?from=mdr>

### Russian bases and Hezbollah weapons: Key questions follow fall of Syrian regime

Breaking Defense, December 12, 2024

The dust is yet to settle in Damascus after the sudden collapse of Bashar al-Assad's regime, leaving anxious officials and observers to watch closely for signs of what's to come. There are a myriad of questions to be answered; among the most pressing occupying the minds of American and Middle Eastern officials is whether extremism will take root in the power vacuum. But several experts told Breaking Defense their eyes were on other key flashpoints that could affect the balance of power in the region for years to come, from the fate of Russian military bases in Syria to the potential collapse of an Iranian weapons pipeline to the Lebanese group Hezbollah. "The fall of the Assad regime will have dire consequences for [Russia and

Iran's] regional influence,” Ali Bakir, professor at Qatar University and non-resident senior fellow at the Atlantic Council's Scowcroft Middle East Security Initiative, told Breaking Defense. “The pressing question for the ordinary citizens in Tehran and Moscow is: What have we gained from propping up this regime for nearly 14 years? How can our leadership explain the huge political, financial, and military investment in this regime?”

<https://breakingdefense.com/2024/12/russian-bases-and-hezbollah-weapons-key-questions-follow-fall-of-syrian-regime/>

## Oman

### Platform launched to streamline military recruitment process in Oman

Muscat Daily, December 4, 2024

The Ministry of Labour, in collaboration with the Ministry of Defence and military and security agencies, launched a new recruitment system, Tazamun, on Wednesday. The initiative aims to enhance efficiency in employment processes and support Oman's national workforce goals. The launch event, held under the patronage of H E Dr Mahad bin Saeed Baowain, Minister of Labour, was attended by Dr Mohammed Nasser al Zaabi, Secretary-General of the Ministry of Defence, senior officers of the Sultan's Armed Forces, and officials from military and security agencies. Speaking at the event, H E Khalid bin Salem al Ghamari, Undersecretary for Labour, emphasised the importance of integrating modern technology into recruitment systems. “This initiative is part of a broader national effort, in collaboration with the Ministry of Defence and other security agencies, to streamline and

optimise employment processes as a key national priority,” he said.

<https://www.muscatdaily.com/2024/12/04/platform-launched-to-streamline-military-recruitment-process-in-oman/>

### Oman successfully launches 'Duqm-1' experimental rocket in historic first for Middle East

Times of Oman, December 5, 2024

Oman successfully launches 'Duqm-1' experimental rocket in historic first for Middle East

Muscat: In a landmark achievement for Oman and the Middle East, the Sultanate successfully launched its first experimental rocket, "Duqm-1," today. This historic event was executed by Edaq, a subsidiary of the National Space Services Company (NASCOM), under the supervision of the Ministry of Transport, Communications, and Information Technology (MTCIT). The launch is part of Oman's broader strategic vision to advance its space sector. The rocket was launched at 10:05 AM local time from coordinates 18°N, 56°E, south of the Wilayat of Duqm. Dr. Ali bin Amer Al-Shezani, Undersecretary for Communications and Information Technology at MTCIT, hailed the successful launch as a pivotal step in putting Oman on the global space sector map. He emphasised that this milestone could attract international investors and space companies to explore opportunities in Oman for space-related investments and activities.

<https://timesofoman.com/article/152813-oman-successfully-launches-duqm-1-experimental-rocket-in-historic-first-for-middle-east>

## Turkish-Omani Relations: The Path to Strategic Partnership

Ismail Numan Telci

Aljazeera Centre for Studies, December 11, 2024

One of the regions that stand out clearly in Turkiye's foreign policy is the Gulf. Turkiye has determined political and economic relations with the countries of this region as one of its foreign policy priorities and has implemented policies in this context. Despite a period of tension between Turkiye and some of the Gulf countries following the Arab revolutions of 2011, the relations were back on track in 2021. Even during that time of tension, economic relations flourished. Countries like Qatar were able to form a strategic alliance with Turkiye, encouraging other smaller and non-aligned monarchies of the region to consider a similar path. Kuwait and Oman stand out as Gulf countries with potential to strengthen their relationship with Turkiye. Initial signs of such collaborations had been taking place during the last few years between Turkiye and these countries. Turkiye and Kuwait marked the 60th anniversary of diplomatic relations in 2024 with Kuwaiti Emir Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah's visit to Ankara in May. The visit witnessed the further strengthening of relations with the signing of six additional cooperation agreements in various fields including the defence sector.

<https://studies.aljazeera.net/en/analyses/turkish-omani-relations-path-strategic-partnership>

## Palestine

### Amnesty International investigation concludes Israel is committing genocide against Palestinians in Gaza

Amnesty International, December 5, 2024

Amnesty International's research has found sufficient basis to conclude that Israel has committed and is continuing to commit genocide against Palestinians in the occupied Gaza Strip, the organization said in a landmark new report published today. The report, 'You Feel Like You Are Subhuman': Israel's Genocide Against Palestinians in Gaza, documents how, during its military offensive launched in the wake of the deadly Hamas-led attacks in southern Israel on 7 October 2023, Israel has unleashed hell and destruction on Palestinians in Gaza brazenly, continuously and with total impunity. "Amnesty International's report demonstrates that Israel has carried out acts prohibited under the Genocide Convention, with the specific intent to destroy Palestinians in Gaza. These acts include killings, causing serious bodily or mental harm and deliberately inflicting on Palestinians in Gaza conditions of life calculated to bring about their physical destruction. Month after month, Israel has treated Palestinians in Gaza as a subhuman group unworthy of human rights and dignity, demonstrating its intent to physically destroy them," said Agnès Callamard, Secretary General of Amnesty International. "Our damning findings must serve as a wake-up call to



the international community: this is genocide. It must stop now.

<https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2024/12/amnesty-international-concludes-israel-is-committing-genocide-against-palestinians-in-gaza/>

## Qatar

### UK, Qatar broaden cooperation on Typhoon and Hawk

Airforce Technology, December 5, 2024

The UK and Qatar have fortified their defence partnership with new agreements, particularly in the areas of land and air cooperation, during the Amir of Qatar's state visit. These agreements aim to deepen cooperation in regional security and promote mutual growth and prosperity. The newly signed agreements include extended collaboration and knowledge sharing for the joint UK-Qatar Typhoon and Hawk aircraft squadrons. The Hawk aircraft operates in two versions, the Hawk T.Mk 1 (and the similar Mk 1A) and T.Mk 2, while the Typhoon is said to have consistently performed precision attack missions. The signing of the latest agreements took place at the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst in the presence of the Amir of Qatar and UK Defence Secretary John Healey. Among these agreements was a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), which will enable the UK Royal Military Police to impart their expertise to the Qatar Amiri Guard's Close Protection Unit.

<https://www.airforce-technology.com/news/uk-qatar-typhoon-hawk-partnerships/>

### Qatar donates GBP 25m to support establishing sandhurst centre for leadership and technology

Ministry of Foreign Affairs State of Qatar, December 5, 2024

The State of Qatar has announced a major donation of GBP 25 million to support the establishment of the Sandhurst Command and Technology Centre, a pioneering project in the development of military leadership, education and technology. Located within the grounds of the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst, the centre is designed to enhance the leadership and technical skills of officers and soldiers through state-of-the-art training and interactive simulation methods. It will also serve as a global hub for defence technology and innovation, expected to attract military leaders and experts from around the world to foster cooperation and exchange ideas. The management of the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst praised this generous donation, emphasizing that Qatar's contribution will play a crucial role in realizing the centre's vision as a world-class institution that strengthens defence strategies and equips leaders to adapt to evolving global challenges.

<https://mofa.gov.qa/en/qatar/latest-articles/latest-news/details/2024/12/05/qatar-donates-gbp-25m-to-support-establishing-sandhurst-centre-for-leadership-and-technology>

### Qatar looks to buy another 12 Typhoon jets from UK

Financial Times, December 6, 2024

Qatar has said it will buy another 12 Eurofighter Typhoon aircraft from Britain,

easing fears of a gap in workload on the UK assembly lines for the pan-European combat aircraft. The commitment came after this week's state visit by the emir of Qatar during which he held talks with Sir Keir Starmer about strengthening economic co-operation between the two countries. In a joint statement issued by Qatar on Thursday evening, the emirate said the two countries had agreed to extend the existing partnership between the Qatar Amiri Air Force and the Royal Air Force beyond 2030. The extension, it said, would "allow for the continued development of capabilities through the training, exercises, and graduation of Qatari and British pilots in both countries". To enable this partnership, it added, "Qatar will procure an additional 12 Typhoon jets". Qatar on Friday updated its online statement to remove the reference to the additional jets. A spokesperson for Qatar's foreign ministry declined to comment on the reason for the removal.

<https://www.ft.com/content/fd730e6e-de47-4aa6-8330-d64e505a77f3>

### **Ministry of Defence Launches Defence Digitalization Compass**

Qatar Day, December 12, 2024

Under the patronage of HE Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of State for Defense Affairs Sheikh Saoud bin Abdulrahman Al-Thani, the Ministry of Defense launched on Wednesday the Defense Digitalization Compass at Ahmed bin Mohammed Military College. The compass objective to transform the Qatar Armed Forces into an efficient, information-driven, knowledge-based and networked organization, and to foster digital acumen in its workforce. "The Digitalization Compass marks a

fundamental shift in the armed forces' work culture and perspective, shaping how to leverage on technologies to operate and gain advantage in a global information environment and modern battlespace. It aligns with and responds to high-level guidance from the country's Defence and National Security Strategies. It will also be supported through other subordinate strategies," said HE the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of State for Defence Affairs. The Defense Digitalization Compass also aligns with Qatar's national security strategies and the Third National Development Strategy (NDS3), which aims to support Qatar National Vision 2030. This vision has identified digital technology as a key sector for developing the country's long-term capabilities in emerging fields such as artificial intelligence and robotics.

<https://www.qatarday.com/ministry-of-defense-launches-defense-digitalization-compass>

### **Saudi Arabia**

#### **China's ties with Saudi Arabia buoyed by green tech**

Financial Times, December 4, 2024

Chinese exports and investment are pouring into Saudi Arabia as the kingdom's demand for green tech deepens a relationship once defined by oil sales and challenges business ties with its traditional western partners. Bilateral trade has for many years been almost totally dominated by Chinese purchases of Saudi oil. But now, Chinese exports to Saudi Arabia are tracking towards a record high, at \$40.2bn in the first 10 months of the year, up from \$34.9bn for the same period last year, according to Chinese government data. China has also become the

kingdom's largest source of greenfield foreign direct investment, with investments from 2021 to October this year totalling \$21.6bn, about a third of which were in clean technologies such as batteries, solar and wind, according to investments tracked by fDi Markets. This compares with \$12.5bn from the US, the next highest. The figures herald a change, with China eclipsing the kingdom's traditional investment partners, the US and France. Many of the Chinese deals have yet to show up in official Saudi figures, indicating the capital has yet to be deployed.

<https://www.ft.com/content/f0babafc-57e6-434f-9d94-013c312dc0f9>

### **Saudi Arabia, France praise strong economic relations, stress the importance of developing and diversifying economic and investment cooperation**

Saudi Press Agency, December 8, 2024

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the French Republic praised the strength of economic relations between the two friendly countries in various fields and the level of trade between them. The two nations stressed the importance of enhancing efforts to develop and diversify the base of economic and investment cooperation, and exploring opportunities for cooperation in the fields of energy, industry and mining, agriculture, health, healthcare, biotechnology, communications and information technology, artificial intelligence, quantum technologies, space, and smart and sustainable cities. The two sides welcomed the announcement of the strategic partnership roadmap, and the signing of a memorandum of understanding to form the

Strategic Partnership Council, which will serve as a comprehensive framework for further development and deepening of Saudi-French relations in many strategic and promising sectors in both countries.

<https://www.spa.gov.sa/en/N2221209>

## **Syria**

### **How Syria's rebels developed lethal drone technology**

Economic Times, December 5, 2024

Just five years ago, Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS), Syria's most prominent Islamist rebel group, was a beleaguered jihadist force fighting for survival after relentless assaults by the Russian-backed Assad regime. Today, HTS operates as a polished proto-military force in its stronghold of Idlib province. Its transformation is marked by a centralised command structure, specialised combat units, advanced weaponry, and locally developed manufacturing capabilities, as reported by the Financial Times. This shift underscores HTS's evolving role in Syria's prolonged conflict and its challenge to regional stability. The changes in HTS's operations and structure have been striking. The group now boasts a military academy, rapid-deployment specialist units, and the capacity to manufacture weapons domestically. As told to the Financial Times, Aaron Zelin, an expert on the group at the Washington Institute, observed, "It has transformed over the past four, five years into essentially a polished proto-military."

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/defence/how-syrias-rebels-developed-lethal-drone-technology/articleshow/116008411.cms?from=mdr>

## Turkiye

### Turkey's evolving geopolitical strategy in the black sea

Antonia Colibasanu

Foreign Policy Research Institute,  
December 4, 2024

Turkey's strategic position between Europe, the Middle East, and Central Asia places it at a pivotal crossroads in Eurasian geopolitics, particularly as regional conflicts reshape power dynamics and international alliances. Turkey's strategic significance has long been underscored by its control over the Bosphorus and Dardanelles Straits, which grant exclusive access to the Black Sea from the Mediterranean. This geographical position, combined with deep historical and cultural ties to Ukraine's Crimea, positions Turkey as a key player in Black Sea security. Recent years witnessed significant changes in the Eurasian security framework. Russia's belligerent posture in Ukraine and questions over the United States' changes in its enduring commitment to European security have renewed demands for a more autonomous and more powerful European defense mechanism.

<https://www.fpri.org/article/2024/12/turkey-evolving-geopolitical-strategy-in-the-black-sea/>

## United Arab Emirates

### Union Fortress showcases capabilities of 'Guardians of the Union'

Emirates News Agency, December 6, 2024

Over its nine editions, the Union Fortress military parade has showcased the UAE

Armed Forces' exceptional capabilities, highlighting their efficiency in defending the nation, safeguarding the Union, and upholding national unity. The Union Fortress underscores the UAE's leadership dedication to empowering its Armed Forces, prioritising personnel training, and equipping them with the most advanced and cutting-edge weapons globally. These efforts have positioned the UAE Armed Forces among the world's most well-trained, professional, and well-equipped armies. The military parade demonstrates the readiness of the Armed Forces units and their crucial role in advancing the nation's progress and prosperity while ensuring the security of everyone in the UAE. It also emphasises the pivotal role of Emirati women, with groups such as the Women's Rapid Intervention Team and the Presidential Guard female recruits participating in field operations, underlining their contributions to counter-terrorism efforts and national service.

<https://www.wam.ae/en/article/b6k0kbv-union-fortress-showcases-capabilities-guardians>

### India, France, UAE strengthen defence ties with Desert Knight air combat exercise

Economic Times, December 12, 2024

India, France, and the UAE began a major air combat exercise, "Desert Knight," on Wednesday over the Arabian Sea. The operation aims to enhance trilateral defence cooperation and foster better interoperability among their air forces during complex combat scenarios, as reported by TOI. The Indian Air Force

(IAF) participated with aircraft such as Sukhoi-30MKIs and Jaguars, along with IL-78 mid-air refuellers and AEW&C (airborne early-warning and control) systems, operating from Jamnagar on India's west coast. French Rafale jets and UAE's F-16 fighters were deployed from the Al Dhafra airbase in the UAE. The exercise, described as a "large force engagement," featured intensive combat manoeuvres approximately 350-400 km southwest of Karachi over the Arabian Sea. As told to TOI, a source close to the exercise shared, "The Desert Knight exercise will continue for three days. It is the second such trilateral endeavour this year to build synergy among the three air forces as well as improve combat skills, with multiple aircraft types operating in a realistic scenario."

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/defence/india-france-uae-strengthen-defence-ties-with-desert-knight-air-combat-exercise/articleshow/116245509.cms?from=mdr>

### **India, UAE discuss IMEEC; resolve to expand energy, trade ties**

Economic Times, December 13, 2024

India and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) on Friday discussed implementation of the ambitious India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEEC) and resolved to shore up ties in areas of energy including long-term supplies and collaboration in upstream and downstream projects. Ways to further deepen bilateral relations in areas of energy, connectivity and trade figured prominently at the 15th India-UAE Joint Commission Meeting (JCM) that was co-chaired by External Affairs Minister S

Jaishankar and his UAE counterpart Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed Al Nahyan. The two foreign ministers also deliberated on expanding strategic partnership between the two countries in areas of defence, emerging technologies, nuclear energy, polar research, critical minerals and renewable energy at a meeting of the India-UAE Strategic Dialogue held last night. At the JCM, Jaishankar and Al Nahyan welcomed the signing and entry into force of the India-UAE bilateral investment treaty, according to the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA).

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/economy/foreign-trade/india-uae-discuss-imeec-resolve-to-expand-energy-trade-ties/articleshow/116295662.cms?from=mdr>

### **Abu Dhabi civil defence authority supports manifesto for global industrial safety**

Emirates News Agency, December 13, 2024

Abu Dhabi Civil Defence Authority (ADCDA) has announced its support for the Manifesto for Global Industrial Safety, becoming the first official entity worldwide to adopt its guiding principles, which sets a new global benchmark for enhancing safety standards and protecting lives and property. The announcement was made during the 2024 edition of the Global Manufacturing and Industrialisation Summit (GMIS2024), held as part of Abu Dhabi Business Week. The event brought together global leaders, decision-makers, and representatives of international organisations, with ADCDA signing three strategic global partnerships, reaffirming its commitment to leveraging modern technologies to safeguard lives,



protect property, and enhance operational efficiency. The summit witnessed the signing of a strategic partnership between ADCDA and the Global Manufacturing and Industrialisation Summit, in the presence of representatives from the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), to officially join the Global Initiative for Industrial Safety (GIFIS) and support efforts to scale the global adoption of the Manifesto. This partnership aims to boost investment, accelerate the integration of advanced technologies, and foster the development of resilient industrial ecosystems.

<https://www.wam.ae/en/article/b606m7a-abu-dhabi-civil-defence-authority-supports>

## Yemen

### US Navy destroys Houthi missiles and drones targeting American ships in Gulf of Aden

Economic Times, December 2, 2024

US Navy destroyers shot down seven missiles and drones fired by Yemen's Houthi rebels at the warships and three American merchant vessels they were escorting through the Gulf of Aden. No damage or injuries were reported. US Central Command said late Sunday that the destroyers USS Stockdale and USS O'Kane shot down and destroyed three anti-ship ballistic missiles, three drones and one anti-ship cruise missile. The merchant ships were not identified. The Houthis claimed the attack in a statement and said they had targeted the US destroyers and "three supply ships belonging to the American army in the Arabian Sea and the Gulf of Aden." Houthi attacks for months have

targeted shipping through a waterway where \$1 trillion in goods pass annually over the Israel-Hamas war in Gaza and Israel's ground offensive in Lebanon. A ceasefire was announced in the latter last week.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/defence/us-navy-destroys-houthi-missiles-and-drones-targeting-american-ships-in-gulf-of-aden/articleshow/115885325.cms?from=mdr>

### Yemen's Houthis and Russia: Why their growing ties matter

The New Arab, December 5, 2024

Since the 7 October Hamas attack on Israel, the Houthi movement has emerged as one of the most active and capable members of Iran's so-called 'Axis of Resistance' - an alliance built over years of Iranian support to counter Israeli and US influence in the Middle East. Over the past year, the Yemeni group has intensified threats to global naval trade by attacking commercial shipping in the Red Sea and Bab el-Mandeb while defying US-led efforts to neutralise its arsenal. Despite growing ties with Tehran and alignment with other members of the Axis, the Houthis remain the most autonomous entity in Iran's network. They have distinct regional ambitions, forging new partnerships beyond the Middle East. According to Eleonora Ardemagni, a senior associate research fellow at the Italian Institute for International Political Studies (ISPI), the Houthis' primary aim is to strengthen their decision-making autonomy and influence, both within the Axis and beyond. "The Houthis are building their own 'network of resistance'," she told The New Arab, highlighting alliances with Shia

militias in Iraq, Somalia's Al-Shabab, and even al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP).

<https://www.newarab.com/analysis/yemens-houthis-and-russia-why-their-growing-ties-matter>

### **Houthis claim attack on central Israel in response to Gaza 'massacres'**

Al Jazeera, December 9, 2024

Yemen's Houthi group says it has carried out a drone attack in central Israel's Tel Aviv area in "a specific military operation" in support of Palestinians in Gaza. The Houthis said in a statement on Monday that their forces struck "a sensitive target of the Israeli enemy". An Israeli military statement said a drone hit a building in the city of Yavne after air defence systems failed to detect it and an investigation into the failure is under way. The Houthis said the operation "achieved its objective" without providing details. No injuries were reported in the attack, which caused damage to several apartments in the building, according to Israeli media reports. The Houthis said the attack was in response to Israel's "massacres" against Palestinians in the besieged Gaza Strip, where Israel has been waging a devastating assault for more than a year. The Houthis – who control large areas of Yemen, including the capital, Sanaa, and present themselves as the country's official armed forces – pledged to continue their attacks on Israel until the end of the war on Gaza.

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2024/12/9/houthis-claim-attack-on-central-israel-in-response-to-gaza-massacres>

### **Israel says its air strikes destroyed most of Syria's strategic weapons stockpiles**

Economic Times, December 11, 2024

Israel aims to impose a "sterile defence zone" in southern Syria that would be enforced without a permanent troop presence, Defence Minister Israel Katz said on Tuesday, as the military said a wave of air strikes had destroyed the bulk of Syria's strategic weapons stockpiles. Over the past 48 hours, following the collapse of the government of President Bashar al-Assad, the military said jets had conducted more than 350 strikes on targets including anti-aircraft batteries, military airfields, weapons production sites, combat aircraft and missiles. In addition, missile vessels struck the Syrian naval facilities of Al-Bayda port and Latakia port, where 15 Syrian naval vessels were docked. Israeli officials said the strikes across Syria were aimed at destroying strategic weapons and military infrastructure to prevent them being used by rebel groups that drove Assad from power, some of which grew from movements linked to al Qaeda and Islamic State.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/defence/israel-says-its-air-strikes-destroyed-most-of-syrias-strategic-weapons-stockpiles/articleshow/116192631.cms?from=mdr>

# NUCLEAR AND ARMS CONTROL CENTRE

*Sylloge on West Asia is compiled by Ms. Bhawna*

**Manohar Parrikar Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses**

**No. 1, Development Enclave,  
Rao Tula Ram Marg,  
Delhi Cantt., New Delhi-110 010  
Telephone: 91-11-26717983;  
Fax: 91-11-26154191,  
Website: [www.idsa.in](http://www.idsa.in)**



**MANOHAR PARRIKAR INSTITUTE FOR  
DEFENCE STUDIES AND ANALYSES**  
मनोहर पर्रिकर रक्षा अध्थयन एवं विश्लेषण संस्थान