



المركز العربي للأبحاث ودراسة السياسات  
Arab Center for Research & Policy Studies

وحدة الدراسات الاستراتيجية  
Strategic Studies Unit

The Strategic Studies Unit Fifth Annual Conference

# Defence Strategies of Small States and Smaller Forces

## Tactical Adaptations and Operational Innovations

23-25 February 2025

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# About



The Strategic Studies Unit (SSU) of the Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies (ACRPS) is convening its fifth annual conference, titled "Defence Strategies of Small States and Smaller Forces: Tactical Adaptations and Operational Innovations" on 23-25 February 2025. Across ten panels, 36 leading scholars and expert practitioners from 28 countries will examine a spectrum of security challenges and responses available to 30 cases of small(er) states and substate forces. Drawing from numerous comparative and regional case-studies – from the Caribbean to Southeast Asia, including the Gulf and the wider Middle East region – participants will analyse the evolving nature of defence practices in small states and the innovative ways they employ to confront emerging security threats.

Recent wars highlight how land, sea, air, and *increasingly* space, cyber, and electronic domains of operations are all woven into a single interconnected battlespace. Small(er) states (and nonstate forces) often stand at the forefront of experimentation across these domains, pioneering new tactics to offset their material disadvantages. In contrast to large states, which can rely on extensive resources and conventional military power, small states must leverage agility, alliance-building, and hybrid and innovative capabilities to survive, resist, adapt, and prevail. Whether they are enhancing operational art through unmanned vehicles, shaping deterrence strategies in maritime chokepoints, or forging resilience in cyberspace and the information domain, small(er) states frequently chart innovative paths that challenge traditional defence paradigms.

The aim of this conference is threefold. First, it provides a multi-level analysis – from tactical innovations to strategic transformations – that bridges frontline field-experiences with broader academic debates about alliance structures, mobilization, the role of transnational nonstate forces, and other factors impacting small state defence. Second, it offers comparative insights drawn from both regular small(er) state militaries and irregular nonstate forces, illuminating how similar constraints – such as limited manpower, economic resources, or geopolitical influence – produce diverse, sometimes surprising strategic adaptations, operational arts, and tactical innovations. Third, it considers how these developments shape strategic defence policy agendas, contribute to national and regional security postures, and potentially transform or disrupt regional and international security architectures as well as defence doctrines.

Following the conference, selected papers may be published as *Strategic Papers* by the Strategic Studies Unit of ACRPS or as chapters in a peer-reviewed edited volume. Collectively, these outputs will constitute a core reference for the study of small state defence strategies, setting out future research agendas in Security and Strategic Studies, as well as in War Studies. By spotlighting and analysing case-studies of adaptability and operational ingenuity, the conference ultimately seeks to enrich both scholarly understanding and strategic policymaking, ensuring that the distinct perspectives and capabilities of small(er) states remain integral to broader strategic discourses.





# Timetable

# Day 1: Sunday, 23 February 2025

8:30-9:00	<b>Registration</b>
9:00-9:15	<b>Welcoming Remarks</b>
9:15-10:30	<p><b>Keynote Panel</b></p> <p><b>Anthony King:</b> Small States in Modern Wars: The Roles of Urban Warfare and Artificial Intelligence in Strategic Defence</p> <p><b>Omar Ashour:</b> Hybrid Defence for Small(er) States: Lessons in Combat Effectiveness from Ukraine to Gaza</p> <p><b>Chair: Abdelwahab El-Affendi</b></p>
10:30-10:45	<b>Coffee Break</b>
10:45-12:15	<p><b>Panel One</b></p> <p><b>Strategic Endurance: Gaza and Modern Warfare Lessons</b></p> <p><b>Bilal Shalash:</b> "A History-Making Vanguard": Palestinian Resistance Organizations as Smaller Forces (1965-2025)</p> <p><b>Mahmoud Muhareb:</b> The Israeli Army's Reserve Forces: Reasons for Their Decline in Quantity and Quality</p> <p><b>Majd Abuamer:</b> How Hamas Defends: Combat Tactics and Operational Innovations in the 2023-2024 Gaza War</p> <p><b>Bashir Saade:</b> The Resilience of Hezbollah's Islamic Resistance</p> <p><b>Chair: Ayat Hamadan</b></p>
12:15-12:30	<b>Coffee Break</b>
12:30-14:00	<p><b>Panel Two</b></p> <p><b>The Role of Women in Small(er) State Defences</b></p> <p><b>Yara Nassar:</b> Women in the Palestinian Armed Resistance: History and Trajectory</p> <p><b>Fatima Al-Nuaimi:</b> The Role of Women in the Qatari Armed Forces: Opportunities and Challenges</p> <p><b>Mariia Chekh:</b> Women in the Ukrainian Armed Forces: Evolution, Challenges, and Field Experiences</p> <p><b>Ivana Kovačević Bekić:</b> Women in the Defence System of the Republic of Croatia</p> <p><b>Chair: Aicha Elbasri</b></p>

14:00-15:00	Lunch
15:00-16:30	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Panel Three</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Securing the Gulf: Multi-Domain Adaptions and Innovations</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Talab Alfleej:</b> Kuwait's Defence Strategy: Toward a Military Doctrine That Defeats Challenges</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Muhammad bin Said Al-Futaisi:</b> Oman's Strategic Resilience</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Khalifa Al-Kuwari:</b> Cyber Defence of Small Gulf States: The Cases of Qatar and the United Arab Emirates</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Rashid Al-Mohanadi:</b> From Buyers to Builders: The GCC's Quest for a Homegrown Defence Industry</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Chair: Haider Saeed</b></p>

## Day 2: Monday, 24 February 2025

<p>10:00-11:30</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Panel Four</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Ukraine and Smaller Forces' Dilemmas</b></p> <p><b>Oleksandr Bogomolov (online):</b> How Ukraine Defends: From Societal Resilience to Integrated Defence</p> <p><b>Viacheslav Semenenko:</b> Ukraine: Warfare in the Land and Air Domains</p> <p><b>Yevgeniya Gaber:</b> The Power of Asymmetry: Ukraine's Maritime Strategy as a Model for Small State Naval Defence</p> <p><b>Henrik Praks:</b> Small State Defence: An Estonian Perspective</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Chair: Christina M. Paschyn</b></p>
<p>11:30-11:45</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Coffee Break</b></p>
<p>11:45-13:15</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Panel Five</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Smart Defence: Qatar's Approach to Security</b></p> <p><b>Khalid Al-Khulaifi:</b> The Smart Power of Small States: Qatar Alliance Building and Deterring Strategies</p> <p><b>Danah Alenezi:</b> Soft-Power Strategies of Small States: A Comparative Study of Kuwait and Qatar</p> <p><b>Abdulrahman Al-Kuwari:</b> The Gendarmerie as a Strategic Option: Enhancing Qatar's Defence Capabilities amid Manpower Challenges</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Chair: Rashid Hamad Al-Naimi</b></p>
<p>13:15-14:15</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Lunch</b></p>
<p>14:15-15:45</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Panel Six</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Caucasus Confrontations: Tactical Evolutions and Strategic Lessons</b></p> <p><b>Robert E. Hamilton:</b> The 2008 Russia-Georgia War</p> <p><b>Vasif Huseynov:</b> Azerbaijan-Türkiye-Pakistan Trilateral Format and the Karabakh War</p> <p><b>Hanna Shelest:</b> Can Alliances Protect in Times of Crisis? Comparing Armenia and Ukraine</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Chair: Saban Kardash</b></p>

## Day 3: Tuesday, 25 February 2025

<p><b>9:00-10:30</b></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Panel Seven</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Asia's Security Landscape: Enduring and Evolving Strategies</b></p> <p><b>Fu-Kuo Liu:</b> Beefing up Taiwan's Defence Capability in Countering Potential Conflict in the Taiwan Strait</p> <p><b>Insoo Kim:</b> South Korea's Defence Strategy and Its Dilemma: Alliance or Self-reliance First?</p> <p><b>Inbum Chun:</b> North Korea's Military Capabilities: From East Asia to East Europe</p> <p><b>Ong Wei Chong:</b> Singapore's Total Defence at Forty: An Evolutionary Response to Hybrid Threats and Grey Zone Ambiguity</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Chair: Hani Awad</b></p>
<p><b>10:30-10:45</b></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Coffee Break</b></p>
<p><b>10:45-12:15</b></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Panel Eight</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Nordic Shields: Baltic and Scandinavian Defence Strategies</b></p> <p><b>Margarita Šešelgytė:</b> Guarding the Frontline: Lithuania's Defence Policy in the Context of Russian Geopolitical Assertiveness</p> <p><b>Sintija Broka:</b> Small-States' Defence Strategies: The Transformation of Latvian Armed Forces</p> <p><b>Mikael Weissmann:</b> Sweden's Alliance and Defence Transformations: Strategic Shifts in the Wake of Russia's 2022 Invasion of Ukraine</p> <p><b>Joel Linnainmäki:</b> Finland and the Total-Defence Strategies</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Chair: Ghassan Elkahlout</b></p>
<p><b>12:15-12:30</b></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Coffee Break</b></p>

<p><b>12:30-14:00</b></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Panel Nine</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Forgotten Performances: The Balkans and Caribbean in Focus</b></p> <p><b>Gordan Akrap:</b> How Croatia Won the Homeland War: Organization and Transformation of Armed Forces and Intelligence Community</p> <p><b>Zoran Ivanov:</b> Small State Internal Defence and Intelligence Resilience: How North Macedonia Avoided a Civil War</p> <p><b>Ramadan Ilazi:</b> Post-Conflict Military-Building Process in the Western Balkans: A Comparative Analysis of the Armed Forces of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Republic of Kosovo</p> <p><b>Rut Diamint:</b> The Military in Cuba</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Chair: Adham Saouli</b></p>
<p><b>14:00-14:15</b></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Concluding Remarks</b></p>
<p><b>14:15-15:15</b></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Lunch</b></p>

**Participants**

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**Abstracts**







**Majd Abuamer**

ACRPS Researcher, Coordinator of the Strategic Studies Unit, and Editorial Secretary of *Omran*. He received his master's in Political Science and International Relations from the Doha Institute for Graduate Studies and a Bachelor of Law from the University of Palestine. His current research interests focus on democratic transition, social movements, the Arab state, as well as Palestinian studies with a special interest in the Gaza Strip. His most recent publications include "Gaza's Subterranean Warfare: Palestinian Resistance Tunnels vs. Israel's Military Strategy" (*Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, 2024); "To Be or Not to Be: The Hamas Dilemma in International Law and Community" in *Gaza's Cycle of Destruction and Rebuilding* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2024).

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## **How Hamas Defends: Combat Tactics and Operational Innovations in the 2023-2024 Gaza War**

The genocidal Israeli "Iron Swords" war, which came in response to Hamas's 7 October attack, is considered the bloodiest since the 1948 Nakba in terms of the number of casualties, the scale of destruction, and the duration of the war. Nevertheless, Palestinian resistance forces remained capable of launching rockets and targeting military vehicles and soldiers on various fronts in the Gaza Strip during the ground battles, even until the end of the war. How did Hamas manage to endure? And what were its defence strategies as a smaller force? Hamas utilized tunnels in Gaza as an operational tool that increased its combat effectiveness, overcoming the challenge of Gaza's small, besieged geography and the lack of an air defence system on the one hand, and Israeli military and intelligence superiority, along with surveillance, on the other. Hamas directed its combat doctrine away from Israeli strengths by shifting the battle to areas where it has superior performance, forcing the Israeli military to change its strategy by engaging in ground warfare instead of relying solely on airstrikes. This paper examines the combat performance of the al-Qassam Brigades (the military wing of Hamas), tracking their combat tactics and effectiveness based on an analysis of video clips published by the al-Qassam Military Media since 7 October 2023, across three phases. The first phase involved the multi-domain operation on 7 October 2023. The second phase extended until 26 October 2023, during which Palestinian resistance relied on long-range missiles. The third phase began with the start of the Israeli ground invasion on 27 October 2023 and continued until 19 January 2025, with the implementation of a ceasefire agreement.



**Gordan Akrap**

Vice-Rector of Dr. Franjo Tuđman Defense and Security University, Zagreb, Croatia, and founder and president of Hybrid Warfare Research Institute, Croatia. He is also an Associate Fellow at the Center for Advanced Security, Strategic and Integration Studies (CASSIS) at the University of Bonn, Germany; Editor-in-Chief of *National Security and the Future*; and co-editor of *Security Science*. He received his PhD in Information and Communication Sciences from the University of Zagreb (2011), with a dissertation titled "Informational Strategies and Operations in Public Knowledge Shaping". He had an active role in Croatia's Homeland War. During his career in diplomatic and security structures of Croatia, he completed a number of professional courses, including at the Diplomatic Academy. He was awarded eight medals and decorations. He was part of the international project "Military Aspects of Countering Hybrid War: Experience, Lessons, Best Practices". His research interests focus on national and regional security, intelligence, and the history of Homeland War.

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## **How Croatia Won the Homeland War: Organization and Transformation of Armed Forces and Intelligence Community**

In this paper, the author, as a direct witness and participant in the organization and transformation of the armed forces and intelligence community during low- and high-intensity conflicts, including the Homeland War, will examine the following processes: (1) The assumption of power without security instruments to defend against offensive actions; (2) the creation of armed defence units within the framework of the legislation of socialist Yugoslavia without providing justification to the federal authorities for armed intervention against the newly elected government; (3) the transformation of the intelligence system from totalitarian to democratic amid conflict and war; (4) the transformation of defence police units and (un)armed civilian volunteer units into armed defence forces; (5) the transformation of armed defence forces into forces capable of carrying out complex offensive action; (6) the role of the intelligence community in the development of these capabilities and the collection of strategic intelligence, such as the development and use of UAVs in 1991 and 1992 and the application of SIGINT capabilities to monitor the telephone communications of Serbian President Slobodan Milošević; and (7) the strategic determinants of Croatian state policy (national and international) that enabled the success of the defensive war.



**Danah Alenezi**

Senior Researcher in International Relations and Strategic Studies in Kuwait, and an advisor for the Kuwaiti Journalists' Syndicate. She holds a PhD in Political Science from Cairo University's Faculty of Economics and Political Science. She writes for Kuwait's *Al-Rai* newspaper and is a member of the Kuwait Human Rights Society. Her research interests focus on comparative strategic studies between Gulf States and East Asia. Her latest publications include "US Rebalance Strategy to Asia and US-China Rivalry in the South China Sea from the Perspective of the Offensive Realism" (*Review of Economics and Political Science*, 2020); "Biden's Strategic Competition Approach Towards China" (*Asian Social Science*, 2020).

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## **Soft-Power Strategies of Small States: A Comparative Study of Kuwait and Qatar**

This study explores how small states employ soft power strategies to enhance their regional and international standing amid geopolitical challenges. It compares the soft power tools of Kuwait and Qatar, including diplomacy, media, education, sports, and humanitarian aid. While Qatar's strategy relies heavily on major investments in media and sports, Kuwait primarily focuses on mediation diplomacy and humanitarian efforts, allowing it to play a key role in conflict resolution and providing aid to countries in the region and beyond. Although both countries have successfully leveraged soft power in ways that reflect their strengths, they, as small states, continue to face challenges in an evolving regional and international environment in securing their stability and achieving their strategic objectives.



## Talab Alfleej

Retired Lieutenant General in the Kuwaiti Armed Forces. He held several positions before retiring in 2021, including Commander of Mubarak Al-Abdullah Joint Command and Staff College, Senior Instructor at the Military Education Authority's School of Administration, Head of the Academic Sciences Wing at Ali Al-Sabah Military College, and Platoon Commander in the Commando Forces. He is a graduate of the Kuwaiti Military College and holds a Bachelor of Geography from Kuwait University and a master's in Geographic Information Systems from the University of Leicester, UK. He had completed several military courses, most recently the Senior Strategic Leadership Program at Cranfield University, UK. He participated in various military exercises alongside the Kuwaiti Armed Forces, as well as US, British, and French Special Forces. His interests focus on strategic analysis models, forecasting national security trends, and the political ideologies of Arab armed factions.

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## Kuwait's Defence Strategy: Toward a Military Doctrine That Defeats Challenges

Kuwait is a small state whose greatest existential challenge lies in its geographic location. Surrounded by larger states in terms of size, population, and resources – both quantitatively and qualitatively – overcoming this challenge necessitates a military doctrine centred on precision, technology, and elite, highly trained forces. These forces must be small yet tactically and operationally impactful, possessing formidable firepower, high deterrence capabilities, and the ability to conduct limited pre-emptive actions in exceptional circumstances. Additionally, advanced technological capabilities must provide reconnaissance, early warning, and protective measures. From a military perspective, Kuwait's geographic environment is highly susceptible to any large-scale operational activity. The country's vital and civilian areas, along with its energy infrastructure, would be easy targets and integral components of the operational battlefield in a potential conflict. As a result, all parts of the state and its facilities would fall within the operational movements of allied ground, naval, and air forces, making it impossible to keep critical infrastructure and civilian areas outside the direct sphere of influence. The limited manoeuvring space for Kuwait's armed forces makes it highly vulnerable to rapid penetration, allowing adversaries to reach major population centres in a short time, posing a severe existential threat and creating leverage for blackmail and coercion. This paper examines the structure of Kuwait's armed forces, the challenges they face, and the impact of the strategic environment on their organization. It also explores the philosophy of training necessary for forces operating under such conditions at the tactical level, with the ultimate goal of developing a combat doctrine that addresses these significant challenges and ensures the state's survival, sovereignty, and territorial integrity.



## Muhammad bin Said Al-Futaisi

Lecturer at the College of Law in the University of Al Buraimi, Oman. He holds a PhD in Criminal Law and serves as a member of the Advisory Committee for the Preparation of the Terrorism Terminology Dictionary under the Islamic Military Counter Terrorism Coalition in Saudi Arabia. His research interests focus on security and terrorism studies as well as counterterrorism policies. He has published several studies and books, including *Defensive Counterterrorism: Toward a Proactive Management of Crises and Terrorist Threats Targeting Critical State Infrastructure* (Al-Dhamri Library, 2023); *Government Media and Public Opinion Formation* (Al-Dhamri Library, 2024); and *The Second Tanker War in the Arabian Gulf and the Strait of Hormuz* (2019-2021) (Al-Dhamri Library, 2022).

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### Oman's Strategic Resilience

This study examines the strategic resilience of Oman within the framework of its defence strategy, designed to navigate a turbulent regional landscape marked by crises such as the Iranian nuclear issue, the conflict in Yemen, maritime piracy, and emerging threats like terrorism, grey zone operations, among others. Given these transnational risks in the regional and international security environment, Oman has adopted a cautious yet flexible approach – tactical and operational adaptability – centred on developing cyber and space capabilities, bolstering diplomatic influence (soft power) to mitigate the impact of international polarization in its surroundings, and implementing a criminal justice model in counterterrorism efforts. These measures aim to protect national interests and adjust to an evolving global security landscape. At the strategic level, Oman's security and military institutions focus on enhancing preventive and defensive capabilities, strengthening multi-dimensional alliances (political, economic, and security-oriented), and ensuring internal stability and national deterrence.



## Khalid Al-Khulaifi

Diplomat and academic specializing in international relations, with a focus on small states studies and smart power. He earned his PhD in International Relations and Political Science from the Australian National University. Since 2016, he has been part of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the State of Qatar, where he has held various roles. He also serves as a senior expert at the Center for International Policy Research (CIPR) and has lectured on International Relations, Gulf Studies, Security, and International Law at Qatar University.

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### The Smart Power of Small States: Qatar Alliance Building and Detering Strategies

Applying armed threats to deter global conflicts has been a central international discursive controversy. Given the deteriorating conflicts and security dilemmas in the Middle East, it has become pivotal for international relations experts to be well-versed in the current framework of small states and their smart power in deterring conflicts and building alliances. The paper suggests that a rational comprehension of small states' smart power and its applicability reveals a vital and urgent task for enhanced global peace and security. It facilitates lucid projections to inform policymakers and politicians about vigorous smart power notions and small states' capabilities; to challenge international blind spots toward small states; to defy assumptions of security vulnerability toward small states; to promote collective understanding to counter the Eurocentric and prejudiced orientations of international relations; and to offer contemporary approaches that safeguard regional security and stability in the Middle East. The paper concentrates on various international relations intuitions on improving future regional relations, and on the interpretations that have captivated spectators to international relations toward the power of small states. Lastly, the paper examines Qatar's role as a small state in terms of deterrence capacities and building alliances to establish peace and stability and consolidate relations with the international community.

## Abdulahman Al-Kuwari

PhD Researcher in the Critical Security Studies Program at the Doha Institute for Graduate Studies, where he earned a master's in Critical Security Studies. His research focuses on security threats in the Middle East and the Islamic world, the development of strategic models to address defence-related risks, and the exploration of innovative strategies for counterterrorism, counter-extremism, transnational crime, and money laundering.

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### **The Gendarmerie as a Strategic Option: Enhancing Qatar's Defence Capabilities amid Manpower Challenges**

This study addresses Qatar's limitations in human resources within its national defence strategy. As a small state, Qatar faces unique challenges in safeguarding its national security, particularly due to its limited manpower, which hinders the development of a large, well-equipped conventional army. This constraint underscores the urgent need for effective and sustainable defence solutions. The study analyses Qatar's defence policy in light of these challenges and examines the measures the country has adopted to compensate for its manpower shortage. It proposes a strategic framework for integrating a gendarmerie force as a reserve component of the Qatari Armed Forces. By drawing on international case studies, the study outlines a strategic roadmap to answer a key question: How can Qatar transform its gendarmerie into a professional military force that offsets human resource shortages in its defence strategy?



## Khalifa Al-Kuwari

Faculty Member at Qatar Police College and PhD Researcher in International Law at the University of Bradford, UK. He has completed specialized training in cyber operations at NATO's Cooperative Cyber Defence Centre of Excellence and the International Cyber Law Academy. His research interests focus on international law governing cyber operations, regional cooperation in cyber operations, particularly within the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries, cyber sovereignty, and the application of human rights in the digital domain.

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### Cyber Defence of Small Gulf States: The Cases of Qatar and the United Arab Emirates

This study examines how small Gulf states, particularly Qatar and the United Arab Emirates, navigate the complex legal landscape of cyber defence through the lens of international law. The analysis focuses on three key legal concepts: cyber sovereignty, state responsibility, and due diligence obligations in cyberspace. While small states face unique challenges in maintaining digital sovereignty, Qatar and the UAE have developed distinct legal approaches to cyber defence that reflect their strategic needs and international commitments. The study explores how both states interpret and implement due diligence obligations in cyberspace, their legal frameworks for responding to cyber operations, and their approaches to state responsibility. Through a comparative analysis of their regulatory frameworks and legal positions on cyber warfare, the study illustrates how small states can effectively assert their rights and fulfil their obligations under international law while maintaining strong cyber defence capabilities. The findings reveal that despite resource constraints, both states have established sophisticated legal mechanisms for cyber defence, though they continue to face persistent challenges in areas such as attribution and enforcement.



## Rashid Al-Mohanadi

Seasoned professional in the defence industry and geopolitical risk adviser. He holds a first-class honours degree in Electronic Engineering from the University of Surrey, a master's in Defence and Security Studies from Joaan bin Jassim Military Academy, and a master's in Critical Security Studies from the Doha Institute for Graduate Studies. He began his career in the Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) sector, holding multiple roles. He later transitioned to the defence industry, where he played a key role in developing national defence capabilities, in addition to his consulting practice through which he provides advice and insight to local and international entities. His expertise includes small-state security, indigenous defence industry development, regional stability, and strategic affairs. He is a frequent speaker at regional and global forums where he provides insights on security, the defence industry, and geopolitical challenges.

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### From Buyers to Builders: The GCC's Quest for a Homegrown Defence Industry

The Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states have made significant investments in developing indigenous defence industries, driven by strategic autonomy, economic diversification and development, and national prestige. While these efforts are often framed as essential for security and economic growth, a critical question arises: Are these investments primarily driven by strategic and economic imperatives, or do they serve as symbols of prestige? This paper provides an overview of the GCC defence industry, analysing the defence industrial policies and investments, namely of Saudi Arabia, the UAE, and Qatar, while looking into the limited initiatives of Oman and Kuwait. It assesses whether these countries' choices align with tangible strategic and economic benefits, such as reducing dependency on foreign suppliers, fostering technological innovation, and contributing to economic diversification, or whether prestige considerations have played a disproportionate role. By examining policy frameworks, industrial capabilities, and economic impact data, this study offers insights into the balance between pragmatism and symbolic status in the GCC's approach to defence industrialization. The paper also lists policy recommendations for key defence industry policymakers of the GCC to maximize the strategic and economic benefits of developing a homegrown defence industry.

## Fatima Al-Nuaimi

Researcher and analyst at the Qatari Ministry of Defence. She holds a master's from Joaan Bin Jassim Academy for Defence Studies (2022) and a bachelor's in Economics from Qatar University (2017). Her research interests focus on analysing economic trends from a military and defence perspective and examining the impact of economic policies on the development of defence capabilities. Her most recent publications include "The Reality of Economic Intelligence in Arab Military Institutions" (*Arab Journal for Scientific Publishing*, 2023).

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### The Role of Women in the Qatari Armed Forces: Opportunities and Challenges

The role of women in the Qatari Armed Forces presents a unique experience, particularly within the context of small states like Qatar, beset with challenges related to limited human resources and the need to achieve the highest levels of military efficiency. This study examines this experience and explore ways to develop policies that support women's participation in the Qatari military. Through an empirical sociological approach, the study addresses the integration of women into Qatar's military through three key dimensions. The first dimension examines the reasons for integrating women into its armed forces and their impact on military effectiveness by focusing on how the overall efficiency can be enhanced by leveraging the diverse skills and expertise that women bring to the institution. The second dimension assesses how women are incorporated into the armed forces, highlighting programs and initiatives designed to encourage female participation, evaluating the effectiveness of these policies in achieving their objectives, and exploring professional opportunities available to women in non-traditional fields such as engineering, medicine, and intelligence, alongside combat. The third dimension addresses cultural and institutional challenges that women face in military service and assesses how these challenges affect their career advancement and full integration into the military establishment.



**Omar Ashour**

Professor of Security and Military Studies and founder of the Critical Security Studies Programmes at the Doha Institute for Graduate Studies. He is Head of the ACRPS Strategic Studies Unit. He is also an Honorary Professor at the Security & Strategy Institute of the University of Exeter, UK and a Non-Resident Senior Fellow at the Ilko Kucheriv Democratic Initiatives Foundation, Ukraine. He specializes in small state defence; military adaptations and innovations of nonstate forces; asymmetric, conventional, irregular, and hybrid warfare; assessing combat and military effectiveness; counterinsurgency and counterterrorism; and collective de-radicalization and transformations from violence to non-violence. He is the author of *The De-Radicalization of Jihadists: Transforming Armed Islamist Movements* (Routledge, 2009) and *How ISIS Fights: Military Tactics in Iraq, Syria, Libya and Egypt* (Edinburgh University Press, 2021), and the editor of *Bullets to Ballots: Collective De-Radicalisation of Armed Movements* (Edinburgh University Press, 2021). His current research project is titled *Hybrid Defence for Small States: Comparative Combat Effectiveness and the War on Ukraine*.

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## **Hybrid Defence for Small(er) States: Lessons in Combat Effectiveness from Ukraine to Gaza**

If deterrence fails and diplomacy falters, how can small states defend themselves against adversaries that outnumber, outgun, and outmatch them? The paper contributes to the ongoing scholarly discourse on how "the few" can achieve a military upset – not just a political or a propaganda one – against "the many". The paper coins a definition for the concept of "hybrid defence", examining its correlations with, and impacts on, military effectiveness and combat effectiveness. It then analyses selected operational arts and tactical adaptations employed by the relatively smaller forces – such as the Ukrainian military and security forces, as well as nonstate forces, exemplified by the Palestinian resistance factions in Gaza – for confronting numerically and technologically superior adversaries. The paper extracts seven key lessons and concludes with their comparative implications for the defence policies of small states. The paper is a part a broader research agenda examining how the forces of small(er) states adapt, innovate, endure, and, sometimes, prevail, in the face of numerically and technologically superior adversaries across various global theatres of war. It offers strategic insights into the evolving character of contemporary warfare and its implications for defence policies and national security strategies.



## Ivana Kovačević Bekić

First Lieutenant in the Croatian Army and a PhD candidate in Media and Communications at University North, Croatia. She has completed courses in military engineering (2020) and in journalism and public relations (2024). Her first duty was as platoon commander for ground-based air defence. Today she is a training officer in the Operations Department at the Cyber Command of the Croatian Army.

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### Women in the Defence System of the Republic of Croatia

According to the 2021 census, the Republic of Croatia has a population of 3.8 million, of which 51 percent are women. The elements of the national security in the country include institutions that have repressive measures, namely the Croatian Army, the Ministry of Defence, the police, the Ministry of the Interior, and intelligence services (military and civilian). Women participate in all of these institutions. For instance, the Croatian Army provides women equal rights and opportunities for work and advancement. According to data from the 2022 Annual Report on Defence, the army has 14,562 soldiers, including 2,046 women (amounting to 14 percent) more than the average for NATO member countries. In 2008, the Republic of Croatia passed the Law on Gender Equality (OG 85/08 I 112/12), which prohibits any type of discrimination against any person based on race, ethnic affiliation, skin colour, gender, language, religion, etc. Protection of female employees of the Croatian Army is regulated by the Law on Service in the Armed Forces of the Republic of Croatia (OG 73/13, 75/15, 50/16, 30/18 and 125/19) and the Defence Law (OG 73/13, 75/15, 27/16, 110/17, 30/18, 70/19). Through the content analysis approach, this paper analyses the number of women in Croatia's defence institutions, their position, their rights, and how they contribute to the defence of Croatia.



## Oleksandr Bogomolov

Professor of Arabic Linguistics. He received his PhD in Arabic Dialectology from the Institute of Oriental Studies, Moscow (1992). He has been Director of the National Institute for Strategic Studies, a Ukrainian government-affiliated think tank. He was previously Director of the A. Krymsky Institute of Oriental Studies. He has worked as a consultant with the UNDP, UNHCR, and OSCE (Crimea-related projects, refugee issues, and project evaluation). His research interests include Arab and Ukrainian political discourse, Middle Eastern politics, conflict studies, Muslim communities in Ukraine, Russian soft-power, and post-Soviet identity politics. His most recent paper (as project initiator, editor, and coauthor) is "Strategic Impact of Russian Aggression on Ukraine and the Road to Peace" (September 2023). His most recent book is *Names of the Revolution: Discourse of the Arab Spring* (Dmytro Burago, 2018).

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## How Ukraine Defends: From Societal Resilience to Integrated Defence

Despite Russia's numerical advantage, Ukraine has demonstrated a remarkable societal and economic resilience and ability to achieve success in terms of defence. This proves the well-known adage that wars are fought by countries, not just armies. In February 2022, Ukraine started from all-out defence relying mostly on pre-war national resources. By the end of 2022, Ukraine liberated 50 percent of its territories occupied by Russia due to the higher quality of its troops and military support from partner nations. In 2023-2024, the war brought mixed results. Traditional forms of warfare gradually exhausted the effectiveness of both sides, and further progress required either higher numbers or new techniques and revolutionary technologies. The best case in point is Ukraine's successful maritime drone campaign against Russia's conventional Black Sea fleet. In the current attritional mode, the best realistic outcome would be for Russia to run out of its Cold War-era stockpiles, which could bring hostilities to a halt and allow Ukraine to transition to an integrated deterrence mode, which will rely on continued native military capabilities build-up, including defence industrial base, societal/economic resilience, and partner engagement.



## Sintija Broka

Deputy Director and Head of the Middle East Research Program at the Latvian Institute of International Affairs. She is a PhD Fellow at Riga Stradiņš University and a Guest Lecturer at both Riga Stradiņš University and the Riga Graduate School of Law. She holds a master's in International Relations and Diplomacy and in Public International Law and Human Rights. She is the editor of the *Latvian Foreign and Security Policy Yearbook*, an annual publication that provides comprehensive assessments and strategic recommendations for Latvia's foreign and security policy.

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### **Defence Strategies of Small States: The Transformation of the Latvian Armed Forces**

This study examines the evolution of Latvian defence strategies post-independence, focusing on two critical strategic levels: transnational military alliances and force readiness and projection. Latvia, as a small state on the periphery of NATO and the EU, has navigated complex security challenges through integration into multilateral security frameworks while modernizing its national armed forces. The first strategic level explores the deepened integration of Latvia into NATO, emphasizing collective defence, burden sharing, and interoperability. It highlights Latvia's hosting of NATO's enhanced forward presence and its contributions to multinational operations as a reflection of its alliance-centric defence posture. Currently, Latvia uses EU initiatives like PESCO to complement NATO efforts and strengthen regional security. The second level evaluates Latvia's modernization of its armed forces, focusing on hybrid defence models that combine professional troops, conscription, and national security enhancements. Investments in high-tech systems, cybersecurity, and hybrid threat resilience underpin its readiness strategy. Active participation in joint exercises and the reintroduction of conscription signal the commitment of Latvia to force projection and territorial defence. This analysis underscores how Latvia effectively balances alliance dependence with domestic readiness to address evolving threats, offering insights into small-state defence adaptation in contemporary geopolitics.



**Mariia Chekh**

Researcher, soldier, and one of the Mariupol Defenders. She has served in the 12th Brigade of the Ukrainian National Guard since 2017. In May 2022, she was captured by the Russian forces in Mariupol and spent one year in Russian prisons. In May 2023, she was exchanged back to Ukraine. She holds a degree in Mandarin Language and Literature from Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv and a Master of Military Studies with specialization in Strategic Communications. She developed the international relations of her unit and of the National Guard of Ukraine.

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## **Women in the Ukrainian Armed Forces: Evolution, Challenges, and Field Experience**

This paper analyses the accelerated incorporation of women in the Ukrainian Armed Forces (UAF), emphasizing doctrinal evolution, operational complexities, and firsthand field-data and field-observation. Historically relegated to non-combat functions, women have increasingly assumed frontline and specialized combat roles, particularly after the onset of the 2014 conflict. Official metrics reveal a substantial surge in female enlistment, culminating in a 40 percent escalation after the large-scale Russian invasion in 2022. Despite quantitative progress, significant impediments endure, including insufficient infrastructure, logistical deficiencies, and sociocultural pressures mandating heightened performance standards for women. Drawing on empirical observations, the study elucidates the multifaceted interplay between combat efficacy and unit cohesion in mixed-gender environments. Tailored mobilization paradigms underscore the importance of targeted recruitment narratives – ranging from empathy-driven to warrior archetypes – highlighting the potential for increased voluntary enlistment. Women excel in mission-critical specialties, such as sniper operations and frontline medical stabilization, augmenting force projection, and bolstering operational tempo. The Battle of Mariupol exemplified how female combatants, particularly in siege conditions, reinforce both morale and mission sustainability. Ultimately, the paper contends that gender-inclusive force structures are indispensable for holistic operational capabilities, reinforcing Ukraine's – as well as smaller states' – national defence posture amidst ongoing hostilities and ever-evolving strategic imperatives.



**Inbum Chun**

Retired Lieutenant General, who served in the South Korean Army for 38 years before retiring in 2016. He commanded combat units from platoon to the division level, and his final command position was Commanding General of the ROK Special Forces. He is also fondly referred as the Father of the Combined ROKUS Division. He has a PhD in political science, worked with the Brookings Institute and US-Korea Institute under Johns Hopkins University, and was a fellow with the Sam Nunn School at Georgia Tech. He has a Bronze Star Medal, three Legion of Merit awards, and is the first Korean to receive the USSOCOM Medal. He is currently a Senior Fellow with the Association of the United States Army. He is a Distinguished Military Fellow at the Institute for Security Policy Development, Sweden. He advises many organizations, including the Korean Counterterrorism Studies Center in Pyeongtaek and Sungnam, and is an active YouTuber in Korea.

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## **North Korea's Military Capabilities: From East Asia to East Europe**

Despite demographic and economic challenges, North Korea maintains one of the world's largest standing armies, with approximately 1.2 million active personnel and significant reserves. Its military strategy emphasizes self-reliance and deterrence, supported by substantial artillery, missile, and special operations forces. This paper analyses the North Korean involvement in the ongoing conflict in Europe and extended support to Russia. Reports indicate that North Korean troops have been deployed to assist Russian forces, particularly in the Kursk region. These soldiers, initially inexperienced, have rapidly adapted, gaining valuable combat experience. Recent research findings suggest that this exposure to modern warfare could enhance North Korea's military capabilities, particularly in areas like drone operations. Additionally, North Korea has supplied Russia with artillery shells and short-range ballistic missiles, such as the Hwasong-11A. These missiles have been utilized in Ukraine, with reports noting improvements in their accuracy over time. The paper argues that the collaboration not only bolsters Russia's military efforts but also provides North Korean forces with practical battlefield experience, potentially influencing future military strategies and regional security dynamics.





## Rut Diamint

Professor at Torcuato di Tella University, Argentina and Principal Researcher at the National Council for Scientific and Technologic Research (CONICET), Argentina. She has served as advisor to the Argentine Ministry of Defence (2003-2005) and as General Coordinator of the Advisory Units for the Argentine Senate (2006-2009). She is a member of the Advisory Committee of the Club de Madrid. She specializes in international and regional security, civil-military relations, defence issues, and peace and democracy. Since 2016, she has co-directed a project on the Cuban Armed Forces with Laura Tedesco.

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### The Military in Cuba

Studying the armed forces of Cuba makes sense for two reasons: first, they were the least studied forces in all Latin America; second, if a change toward a democratic model was to occur in Cuba, it would be necessary to count on the support of some sectors of the military. The Revolutionary Armed Forces (FAR) of Cuba are the most influential and powerful official institution on the island. The top leadership is not willing to lose the privileges granted by the revolutionary government. But Cuban military personnel are prohibited from conversing with foreigners. Control over the members of the armed forces is more excessive than over society, and the evolution of the FAR is mysterious. From being a triumphant army in its participation in Africa, they became military entrepreneurs in the mid-1980s. This paper will address the history and transformation of Cuban Revolutionary Armed Forces and its role in current times.



## Yevgeniya Gaber

Professor of National Security Studies at the George C. Marshall European Center for Security Studies, Non-Resident Senior Fellow at the Atlantic Council, and Non-Resident Senior Fellow at the Centre in Modern Turkish Studies at Carleton University. Prior to joining the Marshall Center, she worked as a foreign policy advisor to the Prime Minister of Ukraine and Deputy Director of the Diplomatic Academy at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine. She served as a diplomat in the Embassy of Ukraine in Ankara. She specializes in European and Black Sea security, with a particular focus on Ukraine, Türkiye, and Russia.

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### **The Power of Asymmetry: Ukraine's Maritime Strategy as a Model for Small State Naval Defence**

This paper examines innovative maritime defence strategies of small states, using Ukraine's successful counteroffensive against Russian naval forces as a case study. In the Black Sea, Ukraine effectively dismantled a third of Russia's navy and significantly degraded its maritime capabilities without even having a traditional fleet, using unmanned aerial and surface vehicles and creative, asymmetric tactics. The study analyses Ukraine's operational innovations and offensive strategies as a model for small states facing larger naval adversaries. It explores how Ukraine has been able to resume its maritime exports and establish humanitarian corridors for the transport of grain and other commodities in the western part of the Black Sea, contributing to global food security. By protecting these maritime routes, Ukraine has demonstrated the strategic importance of protecting critical economic interests alongside military assets. This analysis provides insights into the role of autonomous technologies and adaptive tactics in enabling small states to secure their maritime domains, maintain economic resilience, and ensure food security under challenging conditions and under port siege by a much stronger, but less innovative, naval power.



## Robert E. Hamilton

Head of Research at the Foreign Policy Research Institute's Eurasia Program. He is a graduate of the German Armed Forces Staff College and the U.S. Army War College. He holds a Bachelor of Science from the United States Military Academy, and a master's of Contemporary Russian Studies and PhD in Political Science from the University of Virginia. In a 30-year career in the US Army, spent primarily as a Eurasian Foreign Area Officer, he served overseas in Saudi Arabia, Germany, Belarus, Qatar, the Republic of Georgia, Pakistan, and Kuwait. He also worked as an Associate Professor of Eurasian Studies at the US Army War College. He is the author of *China-Russia Relations: The Dance of the Dragon and the Bear* (2024) and numerous articles and monographs on conflict and security issues, focusing principally on the former Soviet Union.

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### The 2008 Russia-Georgia War

Russia's 2008 invasion of Georgia shocked the world but was predictable in many ways. Moscow had consistently pressured and destabilized Georgia throughout the 1990s. Russian pressure increased after 2004, when a pro-Western government came to power in Tbilisi, and culminated after the 2008 NATO Summit, only months before the war, when the Alliance announced that Georgia would one day become a member. The war's outcome – a Russian victory and the military occupation of the Georgian regions of South Ossetia and Abkhazia – was also predictable, but not inevitable. Instead, a series of pre-war Russian moves combined with mistakes by Georgia and its partners paved the way for Russia's victory. Russia set the stage for the war by using its role as the primary peacekeeping force in both Georgian regions to take steps that increased its military advantages. With US help, the Georgian military had increased its capabilities rapidly in the years leading up to the war, but these increases were mostly in counterinsurgency, not conventional manoeuvre warfare. Finally, although Georgian units tended to be better trained and equipped than their enemy, and prevailed in many tactical engagements, they were no match for the size and speed of the Russian force they encountered. The war unfolded so rapidly that before Georgia had a chance to transition its defence efforts from symmetrical to asymmetrical, Russian forces were within striking distance of Tbilisi, forcing the Georgian government to accept a cease fire that ratified Russia's gains.



## Vasif Huseynov

Head of the Western Studies Department at the Center for Analysis of International Relations (AIR Center) in Baku, Azerbaijan. He also teaches Politics at Khazar University and ADA University in Baku. He holds a Bachelor of Arts in International Relations from the Academy of Public Administration, Azerbaijan; a Master of Arts in Global Political Economy from the University of Kassel, Germany; and a PhD in Political Science from the University of Göttingen, Germany. His master's and doctoral studies were supported by full scholarships of German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD). He has authored several op-eds, articles, and academic publications, including a book titled *Geopolitical Rivalries in the "Common Neighborhood": Russia's Conflict with the West, Soft Power, and Neoclassical Realism* (Ibidem Press, 2019).

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## The Azerbaijan-Türkiye-Pakistan Trilateral Format and the Karabakh War

In the early 1990s, Armenia, taking advantage of the collapse of the Soviet Union and a political crisis in Azerbaijan, occupied 20 percent of Azerbaijani territories. In the years that followed, Azerbaijan's national objective focused on liberating these occupied territories and facilitating the return of over 700,000 internally displaced people to their homeland. A key strategy in pursuit of this goal was the establishment of de facto alliances with close partner countries. The Azerbaijan-Türkiye-Pakistan trilateral cooperation emerged as a crucial alliance in this context. The three countries have consistently supported each other on critical issues: Azerbaijan's efforts to liberate its formerly occupied territories and the subsequent peace process with Armenia; Pakistan's stance on the Jammu and Kashmir conflict, advocating for a resolution in line with United Nations Security Council resolutions; and Türkiye's disputes involving Cyprus, the Aegean, and the Eastern Mediterranean, emphasizing adherence to international law. This paper analyses the role of this trilateral cooperation in Azerbaijan's efforts to de-occupy the Karabakh region, examining its impact on Azerbaijan's defence strategy and armament before and during the Second Karabakh War (2020).



## Ramadan Ilazi

Head of Research at the Kosovar Centre for Security Studies (KCSS), Kosovo, and a team leader in the framework of the Horizon Europe-funded SMIDGE project, which investigates the rise of extremist narratives among middle-aged individuals in Europe. He holds a PhD in Politics and International Relations from Dublin City University (DCU), Ireland. He is a member of the International Republican Institute's Western Balkans Task Force on Threats to Democracy. He has co-authored a paper on Kosovo's vulnerabilities to malign foreign influence. From 2015 to 2016, he was Kosovo's Deputy Minister for European Integration, where he contributed to the development of the national plan for implementing the Stabilization and Association Agreement with the European Union and the European Reform Agenda (ERA) for Kosovo. He has also consulted for organizations such as OECD/SIGMA on public administration reform in Kosovo. He is the author of *The European Union and Everyday Statebuilding: The Case of Kosovo* (Routledge, 2023).

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## Post-Conflict Military-Building Process in the Western Balkans: A Comparative Analysis of the Armed Forces of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Republic of Kosovo

This paper provides a comparative analysis of the development, structure, and performance of the armed forces in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo, situating them within the broader context of regional security dynamics and post-conflict state-building. The Armed Forces of Bosnia and Herzegovina (AFBiH), established under the Dayton Accords, represent a complex model of military integration, bringing together ethnically distinct units under a unified command to support national cohesion and international peacekeeping mandates. In contrast, the Kosovo Security Force (KSF), transitioned from the Kosovo Protection Corps through extensive international oversight, embodies the institutional aspirations of a newly independent state grappling with strengthening sovereignty and securing a Euro-Atlantic integration perspective. The paper looks critically at the institutional evolution, including operational readiness, resource allocation, and adherence to democratic oversight principles of the AFBiH and KSF. It also examines their respective contributions to regional security and stability amidst broader geopolitical tensions and relations with NATO. Key challenges, such as Bosnia's issues with resource constraints and personnel retention, are juxtaposed with Kosovo's focus on aligning its security architecture with NATO standards and fostering regional cooperation. The paper concludes by offering policy recommendations to enhance the civilian-military relations, and regional interoperability of these forces, to strengthen their roles as pillars of peace and security in the Western Balkans.



**Zoran Ivanov**

Distinguished Assistant Professor at TOBB University of Economics and Technology, Türkiye and a Senior Advisor at RINK Institute, Slovenia. He also serves as an Adjunct Faculty member at Arizona State University, United States and the Director of the Center for Balkan Studies at The Economic Policy Research Foundation of Türkiye (TEPAV), Ankara. He received a PhD in History of Security Studies from the Command and General Staff College, United States. His research interests include organizational theory, policymaking, and national and military strategy development. He has published numerous peer-reviewed articles, conference papers and presentations, and analyses on contemporary issues.

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## **Small State Internal Defence and Intelligence Resilience: How North Macedonia Avoided a Civil War**

In 2001, Macedonia faced an imminent risk of civil war amid rising ethnic tensions between Macedonian and Albanian communities. Macedonia, as small state, managed to avert full-scale conflict whilst facing the numerous challenges of solidifying its internal defence and intelligence resilience. This paper examines the strategic advantages and weaknesses of the way military and intelligence frameworks were integrated to avoid full scale conflict. It focuses on the role of the internal security apparatus in dealing with insurgency, the influence of diplomatic interventions, and the capacity to balance minority rights with state integrity. By analysing intelligence cooperation, inter-agency coordination, and the adaptation of counterinsurgency tactics, the study reveals how Macedonia navigated a volatile situation to restore stability without descending into widespread violence. The case presents a valuable model for small states facing similar challenges, highlighting resilience as a critical component in managing internal conflicts and preventing civil war in ethnically diverse societies.



**Insoo Kim**

Professor of Sociology at the Korea Military Academy, South Korea, specializing in military affairs in the Korean Peninsula. Since 2003, he has been committed to educating future military leaders. He earned a PhD in Sociology from the University of Wisconsin–Madison, United States, with his research focusing on national security studies, North Korea studies, and civil-military relations. His work has been widely published in *Armed Forces & Society*, *Journal of Strategic Studies*, *Korean Journal of Defense Analysis*, and *Korea Observer*, significantly shaping academic and policy discussions on South Korea's national defence. Additionally, he actively engages in comparative studies to bridge theory and practice, contributing to advancements in global security studies.

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## **South Korea's Defence Strategy and Its Dilemma: Alliance or Self-Reliance First?**

South Korea is confronted with significant security threats from North Korea, particularly its nuclear and missile programs, military provocations, and cyber warfare. These challenges are compounded by the geopolitical complexity of the Korean Peninsula, given the presence of China and Russia. The strategic positioning of these regional actors further complicates South Korea's defence strategy, as South Korea fosters a strong alliance with the United States and navigates cooperation with Japan, keeping China and Russia in check. This study aims to present the benefits and costs of alliance-based defence in achieving national security of small states by analysing the South Korean case. To this end, this study first explains the reason why an alliance with the United States is indispensable for deterring North Korea's threat of war. Second, it discusses the process through which the weakening of US security commitments and the subsequent pursuit of an independent defence policy led to the development of a world-class defence industry.



## Anthony King

Professor of War Studies and Director of the Strategy and Security Institute at the University of Exeter, UK. He has advised the armed forces for many years. In 2019, he finished a trilogy on military transformation in the twenty-first century: *The Transformation of Europe's Armed Forces* (Cambridge University Press, 2011), *The Combat Soldier* (Oxford University Press, 2013) and *Command* (Cambridge University Press, 2019). His most recent publications include *Urban Warfare in the Twenty-First Century* (Polity, 2021), the second, revised edition of which will be published in April 2025, and *AI, Transformation, and War* (Princeton, 2025).

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### Small States in Modern Wars: The Roles of Urban Warfare and Artificial Intelligence in Strategic Defence

In the last ten years, great power competition has returned. The world order is being reconfigured and the prospect of a major international war is real for the first time since the 1980s. The rising tensions between US and China are of profound significance for states across the world. Indeed, in the current era, it may be that smaller states are more exposed than ever. Consequently, as China and the US assert themselves, many smaller states have revised their defence policies and have sought to re-invigorate their military forces to maintain their sovereignty. This keynote explores the role of urban warfare and AI as a defensive strategy. It claims that, as Ukraine has showed, even a relatively small military power may be very capable of defending itself, if it harnesses the defensive potential of urban areas, enabled by AI.





**Joel Linnainmäki**

Research Fellow in Finnish foreign policy, Northern European security, and NATO research programme at the Finnish Institute of International Affairs. He is particularly well-read in Finnish foreign policy, security policy and defence policy. During the 2019–2023 government, he worked as Special Advisor to Foreign Affairs Minister Pekka Haavisto and oversaw preparations for Ministerial Committee on Foreign and Security Policy, the Government Report on Finnish Foreign Policy, and the Report on Finland's Accession to NATO. He has also worked at the Parliament of Finland and several non-governmental organizations. His recent research explores NATO's alliance policy, defence cooperation in the Nordics, foreign policy schools of thought in Finland, and the impact of geoeconomic risks on security and supply in Finland and the European Union.

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## **Finland and the Total-Defence Strategies**

Finland has received international attention for its societal resilience and civil preparedness capacities, and many actors have turned to Finland for inspiration and practical advice or insights. The country has a long history of civil preparedness based on the historical notion of total defence – as a non-allied country in a difficult geopolitical position, Finland has needed a capability to mobilize the whole society against an overwhelming superpower enemy. As a result, Finland has developed unique capabilities with relevant concepts, processes, structures, and actors to tackle threats that range from natural disasters to hybrid/grey zone actions to industrial state-on-state warfare. The paper investigates the key components of the Finnish total defence system and analyses the potential best practices that may be utilized also in other countries.



**Fu-Kuo Liu**

Research Fellow at the Institute of International Relations (IIR) and Professor at the International Doctorate Program in the Asia Pacific Studies (IDAS) at the National Chengchi University, Taiwan. He is also Director of the Taiwan Center for Security Studies (TCSS). He received a PhD in Politics from the University of Hull, United Kingdom. He was Dean of the International College of Innovation at National Chengchi University, Chairman of Research Division of American and European Studies, and Chairman of the Research and Planning Committee at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Taiwan. His research and teaching focuses on Asia Pacific security, Asian regionalism, geopolitics in the Indo-Pacific, national security and the South China Sea, the peace process across the Taiwan Strait, US strategy in Asia, Asian maritime security, and Taiwan foreign and security policy.

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## **Beefing Up Taiwan's Defence Capability in Countering Potential Conflict in the Taiwan Strait**

Since May 2016, it has been a new beginning of a sea change in Taiwan's defence efforts. As the independence-driven DPP government has pushed the political agenda further away from China, tension has risen as a result. Great efforts have been made to strengthen defence capabilities by increasing the defence budget and accelerating US-Taiwan defence cooperation further. Facing up to a more challenging strategic environment, Taiwan will have to select the adequate approaches to strengthen its defence capabilities and deter potential conflict. This paper addresses the dimensions of strengthening Taiwan's national security and armed forces.



## Mahmoud Muhareb

ACRPS Associate Researcher. He holds a PhD in Political Science from the University of Reading, UK. He has published numerous studies and books on Zionism, Israel, the Palestine question, and the Arab-Israeli conflict. His most recent works include: *Israel's Nuclear Policy and National Security Decision-Making* (ACRPS, 2013); *The Secret Relations Between the Jewish Agency and Syrian Leaders During the Great Palestinian Revolt* (Jusoor for Translation and Publishing, 2021); *The Israeli Communist Party and the Nakba: Position and Role* (ACRPS, 2022); and *Archives in Israel, the Historical Narrative, and the Nakba: Unveiling the Report That Refutes the Israeli Historical Narrative* (Mada al-Carmel, 2022).

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### The Israeli Army's Reserve Forces: Reasons for Decline in Quantity and Quality

The primary combat force of the Israeli army relies heavily on its reserve troops, who must remain in a constant state of readiness and prepared to mobilize for war within a maximum of three days. This study examines the significance of reserve forces in the Israeli army and their crucial role in Israel's wars, particularly in 1956, 1967, 1973, and 1982. It then traces the factors that, over the past three decades, have led to the decline of the reserve forces' role and status within the Israeli military. The study explores the reduction in their numbers and equipment, the significant decrease in their call-ups for service and training, and how these trends have weakened their combat readiness and overall military effectiveness.



**Yara Nassar**

ACRPS Researcher and Coordinator of the Gulf and Arabian Peninsula Studies Unit. She is also Editorial Secretary of *Al-Muntaqa*. She holds a master's in Political Science and International Relations from the Doha Institute for Graduate Studies and a Bachelor of International Relations from Qatar University. Her research interests focus on the intersection of Palestinian Studies and Gulf Studies through examining the history of Palestinian political movements and the formation of the Palestinian diaspora in Arab Gulf countries and exploring Palestinian-Gulf relations.

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## **Women in the Palestinian Armed Resistance: History and Trajectory**

This study traces the evolution of the role of Palestinian women in armed resistance against the Israeli occupation. The post-1948 Nakba period saw low involvement by women in military activities due to the harsh social and economic conditions affecting all Palestinians. However, the launch of the Palestinian revolution in 1965 marked a turning point that intensified after the 1967 Naksa, as women began participating directly in military operations and combat driven purely by their own initiative. Prominent figures such as Fatima Barnawi, Abla Taha, Mariam Shakhshir, Leila Khaled, Dalal Mughrabi, Shadia Abu Ghazaleh, and Aisha Odeh led significant operations. The General Union of Palestinian Women further played a crucial role in organizing and training women since its establishment in 1965. The change in the geography and nature of the operations had an impact on women's participation abroad as well through training camps and plane hijacking operations. During the Second Intifada (2000-2005), women's armed groups emerged within various factions, including figures like Dareen Abu Aisheh, Hanadi Jaradat, and Hiba Daraghme, and particularly Islamist women. This shift was further exemplified by the announcement of women's participation in the al-Qassam Brigades, including figures such as Reem Al-Riyashi in 2004. These transformations reflect the evolving role of women in resistance, from logistical support to direct military engagement, in an ongoing and dynamic struggle.



## Henrik Praks

Research Fellow with the Security & Resilience Programme at the International Center for Defence and Security (ICDS), Estonia. He holds master's degrees from Tartu University's Faculty of Law and in East European Studies from Freie Universität Berlin. He is also a graduate of the International Training Course of the Geneva Centre for Security Policy. In 2020, he was seconded by the Estonian Government Office as a Senior Analyst to the European Centre of Excellence for Countering Hybrid Threats in Helsinki, where he served until coming back to the ICDS. Earlier in his career, he held various positions within the Estonian Ministry of Defence, focusing on defence and security policy, regional security, NATO, and EU defence issues. He has lectured in Strategic Studies at the Baltic Defence College. Between 2015 and 2018, he was a member of the ICDS and Director of the Annual Baltic Conference on Defence (ABCD). His area of expertise includes hybrid warfare, influence activities, Baltic Sea regional security, and comprehensive security.

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### Small State Defence: An Estonian Perspective

From its geopolitical position, Estonia cannot build military security solely on traditional deterrence (denial/punishment). A small state like Estonia must be prepared to decisively halt aggression, using all the resources of the state and undoubtedly its allies as well. Defence against military threats not only involves armed force but also requires the involvement of all state institutions and citizens in one way or another. This certainly demands appropriate legislation and a citizen mindset – a will to defend. The country's defence readiness must not be a mere concept or a plan; it must be ensured with designated resources (materials and personnel) and must be practiced and experimented with. The same applies to allies – agreements alone do not enable decisive support. Allies must be integrated. Since a state cannot be 100 percent prepared for military threats at all times, it is necessary to identify warning signs and decisions based on which the state can be brought to a higher state of readiness. A small state can defend against military threats only with citizens who have a high will to defend, are equipped and trained, and whose actions are supported by integrated allies.



## Bashir Saade

Lecturer in Politics and Religion at the University of Stirling, United Kingdom. He holds a PhD in War Studies from King's College, London. He previously held posts at the University of Edinburgh and the American University of Beirut. His teaching and research interests bridge political anthropology and social theory. He studies contemporary Islamic politics with focus on the increasing importance of media technology. He also engages in a genealogical reading of premodern Arabic scholarship showing their relevance to the modern condition. His book *Hizbullah and the Politics of Remembrance* (Cambridge University Press, 2016) focuses on the cultural and artistic production of the Lebanese political party.

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### The Resilience of Hezbollah's Islamic Resistance

In the past few months, our attention has been taken by the formidable information breach Israel accomplished when it assassinated the secretary general of Hezbollah, along with the majority of its military commanders; maimed a significant number of Hezbollah members by targeting the pager and talkie-walkie technology in use; and struck strategic weapon stockpiling locations. But despite these formidable disruptions that could plausibly have led to a capitulation, Hezbollah, now leaderless, has continued to withstand Israeli air and ground military operations without stopping its rocket attacks in the north of Palestine. What can explain Hezbollah's resilience in such context, and to what extent has it achieved its strategic goals? While several aspects can be explored, this paper focuses on the importance of martyrdom – not just in fostering a certain religious identity or culture but also in instilling very practical, logistical, and military implications.



## Viacheslav Semenenko

Professor at the Military Academy of Ukraine. He graduated from several military institutions, the last of which was the National Defence University of Ukraine (Strategic Level) in 2017. He obtained his PhD in Technical Sciences in 2012 [OA1] and his associate professorship in 2015. His main areas of research are national resistance, hybrid war, defence policy, and military strategy, logistic, and armament. He was the co-chair of the international project "SAS-161: Military Aspects of Countering Hybrid Warfare: Experiences, Lessons, Best Practices".

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### Ukraine: Warfare in the Land and Air Domains

This research paper delineates strategies for mitigating Russian superiority in both land and air operations, as well as for conducting focused multi-domain operations, drawing upon insights from the 2014-2024 Russian War on Ukraine. As the smaller, defending party in that war, Ukraine faced major challenges on land, at sea, and in other domains. In the land domain, this analysis addresses the complexities of manoeuvre warfare under current conditions, providing a comparative assessment of positional defence versus manoeuvre-based operations. It also investigates the impact of the widespread use of unmanned aerial vehicles (UAV) on ground force tactics. The author highlights effective tactical adaptations and operational innovations implemented by a select elite of Ukrainian Armed Forces units, exemplified by the 3rd Separate Assault Brigade. Within the air domain, the study examines the challenges of transitioning to Western-manufactured aircraft and advanced weapon systems, particularly in the presence of robust adversary air defence networks. Emphasis is placed on the operational constraints and specific risks associated with employing F-16 aircraft in contested airspace during modern warfare. The conclusion underscores the advantages of conducting operations within a multi-domain framework and underscores the importance of multi-domain manoeuvre capabilities. Illustrative examples are provided of successful multi-domain operations that integrate land and air forces in coordination with special operations forces.



## Margarita Šešelgytė

Director of the Institute of International Relations and Political Science at Vilnius University, Lithuania. She holds a PhD from the Institute of International Relations and Political Science (IIRPS), with a dissertation on the common EU defence identity. She is an Honorary Fellow at Baltic Defence College, member of the Ares Group board, and member of Editorial Board of the *Baltic Security and Defence Review*. She worked as Deputy Director of Studies at Vilnius University IIRPS, Baltic Defence College (Tartu, Estonia), Jonas Žemaitis Military Academy of Lithuania, and European Committee under the Government of the Republic of Lithuania. Her main research interests are the EU foreign and security policy, security and defence studies, international relations, and foreign policy analysis.

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### Guarding the Frontline: Lithuania's Defence Policy in the Context of Russian Geopolitical Assertiveness

This paper examines the security and defence strategies of Lithuania as a small state, emphasizing the interplay between its geopolitical context, partnerships with allies, and the enhancement of internal defence capabilities. Since regaining independence in the 1990s, Lithuania has navigated a shifting European geopolitical landscape, marked by integration into NATO and the EU and efforts to reduce dependencies on Russia. While these developments have strengthened Lithuania's security, the increasing assertiveness of Russia's foreign policy, culminating in the 2022 invasion of Ukraine, has necessitated a strategic recalibration. Lithuania's contemporary defence agenda balances continuity with innovation, prioritizing increased defence spending to 3.5 percent of GDP, the development of division-level capabilities, the establishment of a German-led brigade by 2027, and sustained military and humanitarian support for Ukraine. This analysis highlights Lithuania's focus on air defence, total defence, and expedited procurement processes to address emerging threats. Collaboration with NATO allies, notably Germany and the United States, plays a pivotal role with initiatives such as expanded troop deployments and a €1 billion infrastructure investment underpinning Lithuania's strategic alignment and resilience.





## Bilal Shalash

Historian and PhD candidate in the social sciences program at Birzeit University. He is also a Researcher at the ACRPS, where he is responsible for the Palestine Memory Project, and Palestine Coordinator at the Countries Committee of the Encyclopedia Arabica. His research focuses on the history of the Palestinian armed resistance, with special emphasis on the period 1947-1970. His recent publications include: *An Ephemeral Event, Nablus under Occupation (June 1967/March 1968): Memoirs and Documents of Hamdi Taher Kanaan* (ACRPS, 2023) and "'They Met in Captivity': Fighters of Occupied Palestine (June 1967-September 1970)," in *Conceptualizing Modern Palestine: Exemplars of Liberating Knowledge* (Institute for Palestine Studies, 2023).

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### "A History-Making Vanguard": Palestinian Resistance Organizations as Smaller Forces (1965–2025)

This paper presents a historical approach to Palestinian resistance, tracing its trajectory from its revolutionary resurgence in 1965 to its most recent experiences within the Occupied Territories over the past three decades. It examines Palestinian resistance organizations as smaller powers across three levels. The first level is theoretical. Although most Palestinian resistance groups have not explicitly engaged with the concept of smaller powers, their early literature – despite ideological and organizational differences – reflected a self-perception rooted in their role as smaller forces confronting the colonial project in Palestine. These writings articulated their short- and long-term objectives as well as their operational roles within this framework. This perspective also shaped their practical experience, which the study next explores. The second level is strategic, focusing on force generation and formation, including organizational structure, mobilization, recruitment, and their limitations, as well as the transnational alliances these groups have forged. The third level is operational-tactical, examining how these organizations adapted their military performance to evolving field conditions – both temporally and spatially – while compensating for their limited military capabilities as smaller actors. This section also highlights their critical reassessments of past Palestinian militant experiences, leading to the innovation or adoption of specific tactics that reflect their self-conception as smaller powers.



## Hanna Shelest

Director of Security Studies and Global Outreach Programmes at the Foreign Policy Council "Ukrainian Prism" and Editor-in-Chief at *Ukraine Analytica*. She is also a non-resident senior fellow at CEPA (Washington, DC) and Head of the Supervisory Board at the Ukrainian Institute. She had served for more than ten years as a Senior Researcher at the National Institute for Strategic Studies under the President of Ukraine, Odesa Branch. In 2014, she was a Visiting Research Fellow at the NATO Defense College in Rome. She was an adviser of the Working Group preparing Ukrainian Navy Strategy 2035 and was involved in working groups developing the Foreign Policy Strategy of Ukraine.

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### Can Alliances Protect in Times of Crisis? Comparing Ukraine and Armenia

Conflict management theories usually pay significant attention to the establishment of military alliances and security guarantees, and membership in the different military or security organizations as an important brick in the wall of defence. Still, we can argue that this element, first, plays a role of deterrence rather than building upon the assurance of protection in times of crisis. Political will and rationality will always leave a window of uncertainty in allies' actions. One example is the case of Armenia: since 2020, the CSTO has not been able to act in support due to Russia's increased security dialogue with Azerbaijan and other political considerations. Another example is Ukraine's reliance on (and long hesitation toward joining) NATO. Still, Ukraine has signed security agreements as a (temporary) alternative to NATO membership. Therefore, there are two questions: what is the primary difference between such arrangements and deterrence through alliance membership; and can it be an example for the South Caucasus states to build their defence architecture?



**Ong Wei Chong**

Senior Associate Fellow and Head of the National Security Studies Programme (NSSP) at the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies (RSIS) in Nanyang Technological University (NTU), Singapore. He is also adjunct faculty in the Military Studies Programme at the school's constituent unit, the Institute of Defence and Strategic Studies (IDSS). In national service, he is a Functional Specialist Support Staff Officer (Army) with the Singapore Armed Forces. He received a PhD from the Centre for the Study of War, State and Society at the University of Exeter, UK. His areas of expertise cover national security, military history, strategic studies, insurgency/counterinsurgency, hybrid warfare, and grey zone conflict. He is the author of *Malaysia's Defeat of Armed Communism: The Second Emergency, 1968-1989* (Routledge, 2014).

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## **Singapore's Total Defence at 40: An Evolutionary Response to Hybrid Threats and Grey Zone Ambiguity**

How a nation responds in times of crisis and disruption is critical for the survival and success of vulnerable small states such as Singapore. The use of indirect strategies such as hybrid warfare to influence outcomes is not new. However, such indirect strategies are tricky to combat as they seek to exploit perceived vulnerabilities and fault lines that are often difficult to protect. As such, it is important to focus on strategies that enhance national resilience. Singapore has done so most prominently through Total Defence (TD) introduced in 1984. This paper addresses how TD in Singapore has evolved over the last 40 years to address hybrid threats and adversaries that thrive in the ambiguity of the grey zone.



## Mikael Weissmann

Senior Lecturer in Systems Science for Defence and Security at the Swedish Defence University, Stockholm. He co-convenes the Hybrid Threats Research Group (HTRG) and is the Principal Investigator of the project "Building Resilience and Psychological Defence". His expertise lies in security, strategy, influence, and intelligence, with a focus on modern warfare, hybrid threats, foreign influence, and intelligence analysis. He is an expert on China, the Indo-Pacific, and the Balkans, and he has extensive experience with Staff Rides and Wargames. His work has appeared in leading journals such as *International Affairs* and *The Washington Quarterly*, and he is the lead editor of the *Russia's War in Ukraine and Modern Warfare* (Oxford University Press, forthcoming), *Advanced Land Warfare* (Oxford University Press, 2023), and *Hybrid Warfare* (I.B. Tauris, 2021), and the co-editor of *Russian Warfare and Influence* (Bloomsbury Academic, 2024).

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### Sweden's Alliance and Defence Transformations: Strategic Shifts in the Wake of Russia's 2022 Invasion of Ukraine

Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022 has profoundly reshaped the security landscape of Northern Europe, prompting small states like Sweden to undertake significant strategic reassessments. This paper examines the impact of the new security environment on Sweden, leading to its historic decision to abandon its policy of military non-alignment – maintained in various forms for 200 years – and become a member of NATO. This paper examines the context and motivations behind this strategic shift, including perceived threats and geopolitical considerations. It also analyses how Sweden's NATO membership has necessitated changes within its armed forces, including tactical adaptations and operational innovations to meet Alliance standards. By assessing these defence transformations, the paper provides insights into how small states can effectively respond to evolving threats through strategic alliances and military reforms.

# Chairs

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## Abdelwahab El-Affendi

President and Provost of the Doha Institute for Graduate Studies (DI), where he previously served as Dean of the School of Social Sciences and Humanities (2017-2020) and Head of the Politics and International Relations Program (2015-2017). He was founder and coordinator of the Democracy and Islam Program at the University of Westminster (1998-2015). He previously worked as a pilot, as London-based Sudanese diplomat, and as a journalist and magazine editor in the UK. He was visiting fellow/professor at the Christian Michelsen Institute, Bergen (1995 and 2003), Northwestern (2002), Oxford (1990), Cambridge (2010-2012), and the International Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilization (Malaysia, 2008). He has delivered keynotes at major universities in the US, UK, Asia, Africa, and South America. He is the author of *Who Needs an Islamic State?* (Grey Seal Books, 1991); editor of *Genocidal Nightmares: Narratives of Insecurity and the Logic of Mass Atrocities* (Bloomsbury Academic, 2014); and co-editor of *After the Arab Revolutions Decentering Democratic Transition Theory* (Edinburgh University Press, 2023).

## Aicha Elbasri

ACRPS Researcher and former international UN staff. She was a researcher at Le Centre de Recherche sur l'Imaginaire at the University of Savoie (1993-1998), France, where she earned a PhD in French Literature. She held various positions in the UN Department of Public Information in New York (2000-2005), the UN Development Programme in Sudan (2005-2009), and the UN Assistance Mission for Iraq (2010-2012). She served as the Spokesperson for the African Union-United Nations Mission in Darfur (2012-2013) and as Regional Communications Advisor for the UN Population Fund in Cairo (2013-2014). Her current research focuses on the United Nations and international relations. She has published numerous peer-reviewed papers and a book titled *L'Imaginaire Carcéral de Jean Genet* (l'Harmattan, 1999).

## Rashid Hamad Al-Naimi

S/Major General (Dr./Air) and Commander of the Strategic Studies Center of the Qatari Armed Forces. He holds a PhD in Political Science. He has previously served in several positions, including Director of the Office of the Air Force Commander and Liaison Officer to the GCC. He has participated in many local and international conferences and workshops, and published several studies and books, including *Media Globalization and Security Policies* (Arab Scientific Publishers, 2019); *GCC Countries: Toward a Strategic Vision* (Khotot w Thelal, 2021).

## Hani Awad

ACRPS Researcher, holding a PhD in International Development from the University of Oxford, UK. His research interests focus on comparative studies, political institutions, authoritarianism, political and social mobilization, Islamic movements, and social movements in the Middle East. His studies were published in several journals, including the *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* and *Middle East Critique*. He is the author of *The Dilemma of Authoritarian Local Governance in Egypt* (Edinburgh University Press, 2022) and *Transformations of the Arab Nationalism Concept: From the Material to the Imagined* (Arab Network for Research and Publishing, 2012). His upcoming book, *Why Do Dictators Form Parties? Evidence from Two Regional Cases*, will be published by ACRPS.

## Ghassan Elkahlout

Director of the Center for Conflict and Humanitarian Studies (CHS) in Doha and an Associate Professor of Conflict Management and Humanitarian Action at the Doha Institute. His work focuses on peacebuilding, humanitarian diplomacy, and mediation, with a particular emphasis on the MENA region and Palestine. He is Chief Editor of the *Journal of Peacebuilding and Development* and has contributed to leading academic journals, including *Third World Quarterly* and the *Journal of Disaster Risk Reduction*. He has also edited key volumes such as *Gaza's Cycle of Destruction and Rebuilding* and *Forced Migration in the Arab World*. His Arabic-language book on humanitarian action provides a critical analysis of the sector's challenges and evolving role in conflict settings. His forthcoming book with Hurst, *From Gulf to Global: Qatar's Rising Role in Conflict Mediation*, explores Qatar's expanding influence in international diplomacy and crisis resolution.

## Ayat Hamadan

ACRPS Researcher and Editing Director of *Ostour* for historical studies. She received her PhD from the Institute of Arab and Islamic Studies at the University of Exeter, UK, where she served as an assistant lecturer in Political Science. She was also awarded a fellowship at the Refugee Studies Centre at the University of Oxford. She edited *Jerusalem: Ethnic Cleansing and Forms of Resistance* (ACRPS, 2023).

## Saban Kardash

Research Professor and Program Coordinator at the Gulf Studies Center, Qatar University. He received his PhD in Political Science from the University of Utah, United States, a master's in International Relations from Middle East Technical University in Ankara, and a master's in European Studies from the Center for European Integration Studies at Bonn University, Germany. He previously worked at the Middle East Technical University, Sakarya University, and TOBB University of Economics and Technology. He has published articles and book chapters on Turkish domestic and foreign policy, energy policies, and international security, and contributed to international media.

## Christina M. Paschyn

Assistant Professor of Journalism at Northwestern University in Qatar. She is an award-winning documentary filmmaker and multimedia journalist. She is the director of the acclaimed documentary *A Struggle for Home: The Crimean Tatars*, which chronicles the rich and tragic history of the Crimean Tatar people, the Muslim-Turkic indigenous population of the Crimean Peninsula, from ancient times to the aftermath of Russia's invasion and illegal annexation of the peninsula in 2014. She has reported for top international news outlets, and her writing and video work has been published by *The New York Times*, *Chatham House*, *Euronews*, and *The Markaz Review*, among others. She is currently researching media portrayals of Ukrainian woman soldiers.

## Haider Saeed

Head of the Gulf and Arabian Peninsula Studies Unit at the ACRPS, and Editor-in-Chief of *Siyasat Arabiya*. He holds a PhD in Linguistics from Baghdad's Al Mustansiriya University (2001). His research interests focus on Iraq, divided societies, and critical analysis of political discourse. His published works include *Arab Shiites: Identity and Citizenship* (2019), *The Politics of the Symbol and the End to National Culture of Iraq* (2009) and *The Status of Social Sciences in Iraqi Universities* (2008). He contributed three chapters to the ACRPS book *The Islamic State Organization, 'ISIS'* (2018), and supervised the completion of a study on "Islamic Civil Society in Iraq" (2010) with a research team. He contributed to writing the "National Report on Human Development in Iraq" for the years 2009 and 2014.

## Adham Saouli

Professor of Political Science and International Relations at the Doha Institute and Professor of International Relations at the University of St Andrews, UK. His disciplinary interests are in Comparative Politics and International Relations, with a focus on the Middle East. His research focuses on state formation, politics and international relations of the Middle East, and social movements. He is the author of *The Arab State: Dilemmas of Late Formation* (Routledge, 2012); *Hezbollah: Socialisation and Its Tragic Ironies* (Edinburgh University Press, 2019); editor of *Unfulfilled Aspirations: Middle Power Politics in the Middle East* (Oxford University Press, 2020); and co-editor of *The War for Syria: Regional and International Dimensions of the Syrian Uprisings* (Routledge, 2019). He is the Founding Editor of *Disruptions*, a book series on social movements and revolutions published by Edinburgh University Press.