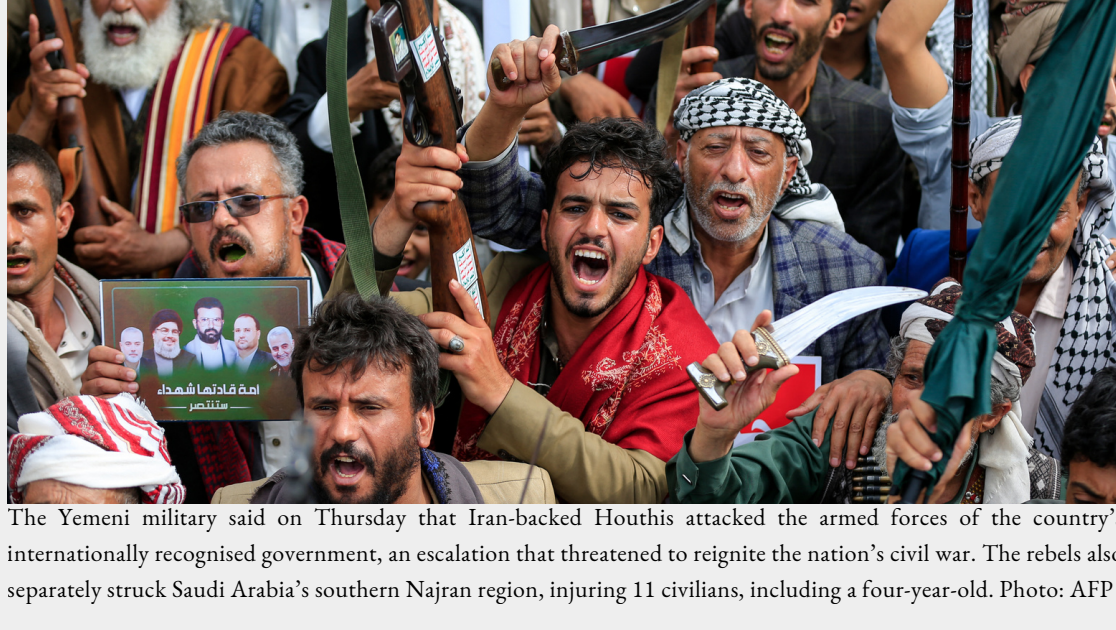


# MEIWeekly.



The Yemeni military said on Thursday that Iran-backed Houthis attacked the armed forces of the country's internationally recognised government, an escalation that threatened to reignite the nation's civil war. The rebels also separately struck Saudi Arabia's southern Najran region, injuring 11 civilians, including a four-year-old. Photo: AFP

## WHAT'S HOT: MEI PUBLICATIONS, PODCASTS, & MORE

**READ:** Associate Professor at Zayed University in the UAE Jonathan Fulton explores how the Iran war exposed a fragmented Gulf and the limits of China's economics-first strategy. To read, click [here](#).

**READ:** As US costs and casualties mount, Senior Fellow for Geopolitics at the Observer Research Foundation Middle East Clemens Chay examines whether Tehran's long game can force Washington to blink. Read this piece in MEI's Heard@theSouq by clicking [here](#).

## WHAT'S NEWS: THE BIG HEADLINES THIS WEEK

### Saudi Arabia Braces for Attacks By Iraqi Factions and Houthis

Saudi officials cited multiple intelligence reports indicating that Iraqi militias, in coordination with the Houthis and under Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps guidance, are planning an imminent attack. Shortly after, Riyadh reported that the Houthis struck Saudi Arabia's southern Najran region.

### Netanyahu: Israel Did Not Agree to US-Backed Gaza Plan

Despite assurances that an Israeli withdrawal would only happen after Hamas disarms, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said Tel Aviv did not agree to Washington's plan. He said that US President Donald Trump's team believes it can ensure Hamas disarms and Gaza is demilitarised.



Pressure has been growing on the premier from the right flank of his ruling coalition to reject the deal. Two Israeli far-right ministers requested a new vote on the plan, saying it does not reflect what had originally been discussed. Photo: AFP

### Iran Agrees Deal With Oman on Hormuz Shipping Route

Iran said Tehran and Muscat agreed on the coordinates of a navigable channel, adding that a joint statement on a provisional arrangement was "in the final stages". However, it added that this deal alone would not guarantee safe passage for ships as long as the US maintained a naval blockade.

## CALENDAR: MEI EVENTS

## ICYMI: China's Digital Silk Road in the Middle East

China's technology footprint in the Middle East — particularly across the Gulf — is expanding rapidly, turning the region into a key testing ground for Beijing's digital ambitions. This MEI webinar examined how firms such as Huawei and Alibaba are growing their presence through cloud services, artificial intelligence (AI) deployments, data-centre investments, and partnerships with regional governments and businesses. Missed the discussion? Watch the video or listen to the podcast [here](#).

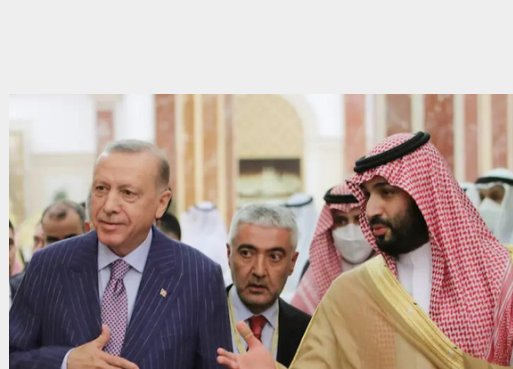


This webinar also examined Beijing's strategic goals, including securing long-term connectivity and setting digital standards in the Middle East region. Photo: AFP

## LOOK AHEAD: WHAT TO KEEP A WATCH ON

### Ankara, Riyadh, Islamabad to Sign Joint Defence Agreement

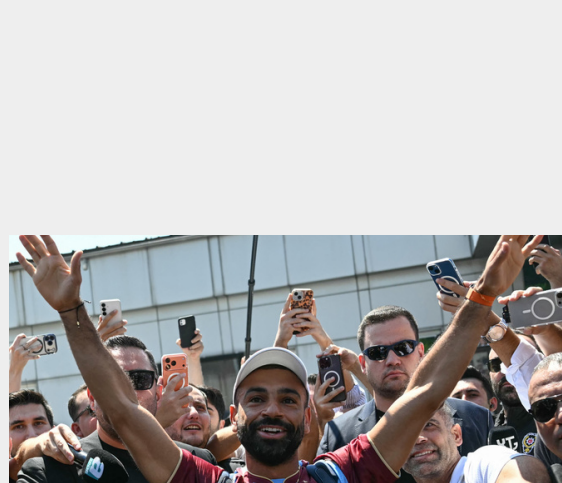
Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan is in Saudi Arabia for talks with Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman and Pakistani Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif as cooperation among the three regional powers continues to deepen. While Ankara did not disclose a meeting agenda, the three leaders were expected to focus on regional security, maritime threats, the Iran war and defence cooperation. Mr Erdogan's visit comes a week after Saudi Arabia unveiled a multinational maritime defence coalition aimed at protecting commercial shipping and energy routes in the Red Sea, the Bab el-Mandeb Strait and the Gulf of Aden.



Turkey seeks to increase defence exports and expand joint production with Gulf monarchies. Photo: AFP

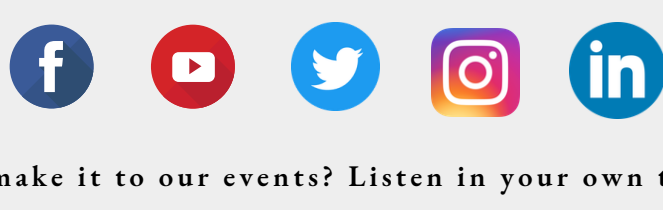
### Mo Salah Joins Trabzonspor

The Liverpool legend agreed a two-year deal with Turkish side Trabzonspor on Thursday after his contract at Anfield expired, in a move that surprised many. Saudi Arabian clubs had long viewed the Egyptian as a priority target, with Al-Ittihad making a late approach, while Sporting Kansas City were among the US' Major League Soccer clubs interested. Both could have offered more lucrative deals, but Salah chose to remain in Europe. Trabzonspor said his deal includes a salary of US\$19.5 million per season and a 20% share of revenue from Salah-branded merchandise.

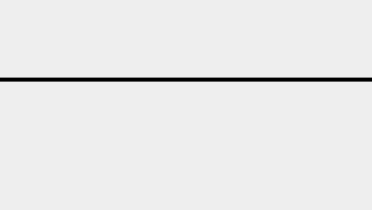


The Egyptian's move is the latest sign of Turkish football's growing appeal to established stars. Photo: AFP

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