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# Current Intelligence Report Circular

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## **Saudi Arabia relations with China heightened, as both sides agree to expand their fields of defense and bilateral military relations**

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A virtual meeting between the Chinese minister of National Defense, Wei Fenghe, and deputy Defense Minister for Saudi Arabia, Khalid bin Salman, was held on 26 JAN. Minister Wei said that the Chinese military will maintain their strategic communications with Saudi Arabia's armed forces, in line with the co-operation mechanism planned between the two militaries. Both men agreed to push for "practical co-operation" and "strengthen solidarity". Khalid bin Salman pressed to enhance their military connections to a "higher level". The Chinese minister also thanked bin Salman for Saudi Arabia's consistent efforts and support for prosecuting and deporting Uyghur Muslims from the Xinjiang province. Wei Fenghe praised Saudi Arabia's support for the recent policies on Taiwan and Hong-Kong. END

### **Analysis**

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Saudi Chinese relations are likely to further-develop from this meeting. There is a clear motive for a strong military alliance. With unstable ties with the United States, since the appointment of President Joe Biden and his condemnation of Saudi Arabia's human rights violations, China offers an effective alliance for the Kingdom. This meeting has further-strengthened the Chinese connections with the Middle East and is likely to reinforce tensions between Saudi Arabia and other Gulf states that are allied with the United States. This can be demonstrated through the United States' recent actions that point to a withdrawal of political and strategic commitments from the Middle East, as well as Saudi Arabia's purchase of Chinese drones for use in its military involvement in Yemen. China is now likely to be Saudi Arabia's main source of support in the Yemen conflict and is likely to lead to a deterioration of Chinese-Iran relations, despite their involvement in the 2015 Iran nuclear deal.

### **Sources**

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