



Global Intelligence Summary

REPORTING PERIOD: 28 JUL – 4 AUG 2023



Global Intelligence Summary

Week 32: 28 July – 4 August 2023

Executive Summary

- The volatile situation in **Niger** is almost certain to continue with no foreseeable conclusion to the coup. Should other nations intervene militarily it is highly likely to instigate a prolonged period of violence.
- The violence in Ein el-Hilweh refugee camp in **Lebanon** is likely to persist meaning there is a realistic possibility that security forces enter the location for the first time in history. This would almost certainly intensify the fighting.
- It is likely that sectarian tensions will remain heightened throughout **India** as the ruling Hindu nationalist party, Bharatiya Janata Party does little to alleviate the situation.
- In **Pakistan**, it is highly likely that another terrorist attack is carried out in the next reporting period with the Islamic State Khorasan Province and Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan the most likely perpetrators.

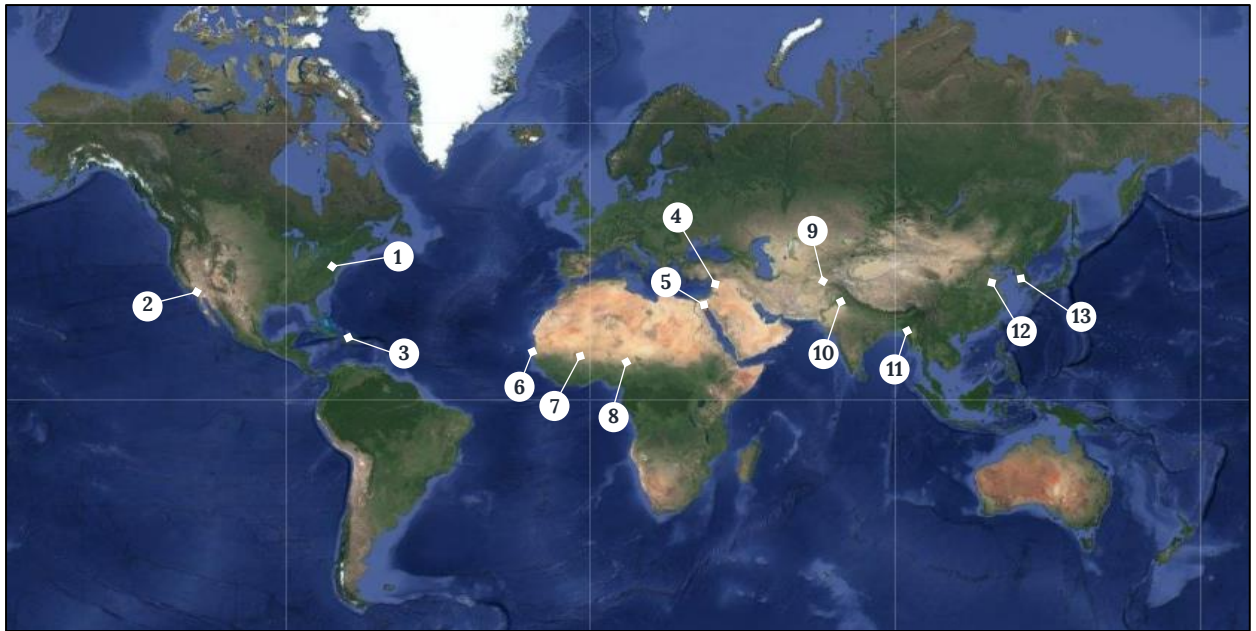


Figure 1: Significant activity identified during the current reporting period (28 July-04 August 2023)

AMER

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Americas (AMER)

United States:

Trump indictment.

On 3 August Donald Trump appeared in a Washington DC courtroom and pleaded not guilty to charges that he used unlawful means to undermine the results of the 2020 US Presidential Election. The indictment against the former President charges Trump with conspiracy to defraud the United States; conspiracy to obstruct an official proceeding; obstruction; and conspiracy against the right to vote and to have one's vote counted, with the next hearing scheduled for 28 August. Should Trump be found guilty then he could be sentenced for up to 20 years. Unlike previously empty courtrooms, police officers who were attacked on 6 Jan were in attendance, as were journalists who were in the Capitol during the 2021 attack. Trump faces a separate charge brought against him by special counsel Jack Smith. This charge accuses Trump of mishandling the nation's secrets since leaving the White House.

Assessment: Although this is not the first time a United States President, or indeed Trump himself, has been charged, it is likely that this indictment will have the greatest implications for American democracy than any previous indictment as it sets the benchmark as to what extent can a sitting United States President manipulate the truth in order to maintain power. Trump stands accused of promulgating disinformation about a "stolen election" that likely led to the violence that erupted on Capitol Hill as well as several other lesser events. Nevertheless, polls indicate that Trump has managed to persuade three out of ten Americans that the US 2020 Presidential Election was rigged and has cultivated a personality of victimhood. The indictment will almost certainly rally Trump's base who will undoubtedly perceive it as a politically motivated campaign against the former president and will certainly ask questions as to why Trump is receiving so much judicial scrutiny whilst President Biden's son Hunter is largely managing to elude charges against his multiple alleged misdemeanours. Trump's base is likely so influential within the Republican Party, that even rival Republican Presidential candidates are actively condemning the indictment or simply refusing to publicly comment on it. Trump's trial will almost certainly continue through next year's presidential campaign and is largely expected to solidify his base, making him favourite for the Republican nomination. However, in light of all the indictments, Trump will have a tall order of persuading moderate Republicans and independents to his cause if he is to succeed in the 2024 election.

Two United States Navy sailors arrested for conducting espionage for China.

On the 3 August, two United States Navy sailors were arrested for alleged spying in aid of Chinese military intelligence collection. Petty Officer Wenheng Zhao was arrested for conspiracy and bribetaking after taking nearly USD 15,000 in exchange for supplying photographs and videos of sensitive US military information, whilst US Navy sailor, Jinchao Wei, was charged for conspiring to send national defence information in exchange for thousands of dollars. Information divulged to China as a result of their actions included plans for US military exercises in the Indo-Pacific region, technical diagrams of a US radar system, and security details for US military installations in California.

Assessment: It is almost certain that China's long-term strategic priority is to establish a multi-polar world and erode the hegemony of the United States, whilst in the short-term establishing itself as the dominant power in the Indo-Pacific. Despite the significant and ongoing efforts towards the modernisation and expansion of the Chinese military, it is widely acknowledged that China still falls short of the United States in terms of overall military capabilities. The United States maintains an extensive military infrastructure, has a network of global alliances, but most importantly, has allocated substantial resources to research and development, culminating in technologically advanced weapon systems. China, in an attempt to address these imbalances, is doubtlessly conducting extensive intelligence operations on the United States and her allies in order to aid future Chinese military development, of which the acquisition of technical information relating to US weapon systems is likely salient. United States countermeasures against Chinese cyber-attacks



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and signals intelligence are likely robust, however its susceptibility to human intelligence operations remains a critical vulnerability. Although the extent of Chinese human intelligence penetration into United States defence is probably unknown, Chinese human intelligence handlers will disproportionately target Chinese Americans in a bid to exploit cultural ties and challenge their target's allegiance to the United States, whilst also providing generous compensation.

Haiti:

Significant step forward in proposed deployment of international taskforce.

On 29 July, Kenya announced that they were willing to lead a multinational force into Haiti as the situation in the Caribbean nation continues to deteriorate; the government in Nairobi committed to contributing at least 1,000 police officers. United Nations (UN) Secretary-General Antonio Guterres welcomed the decision and encouraged other nations to join the effort, particularly regional partners, as the United States and Ecuador stated that they would draft and introduce a UN Security Council (UNSC) resolution to approve the deployment as soon as possible. A couple of days later the Bahamian government indicated they would support a UN taskforce led by Kenya by contributing at least 150 personnel.

Assessment: Whilst still in its infancy, this proposed taskforce is a significant step that will highly likely help in guaranteeing security in Haiti. The security situation in Haiti has been deteriorating for several years, however, over the last 12 months the situation has deteriorated markedly. An escalation of violence by Haiti's armed gangs has exacerbated an endemic humanitarian crisis that has displaced tens of thousands of people. Due to the urgency of the situation, it is almost certain that the UN are taking on this issue as a priority. Guterres has already stated that he hopes for a proposal to be in front of the UNSC by the middle of August, and it is highly likely that this will pass unanimously as the UN has consistently adopted resolutions regarding Haiti. The only previous pushback had come from Moscow and Beijing regarding who would lead the taskforce, with their concerns about a United States led intervention appeased by Kenya's command of the group. It is almost certain that other nations will follow The Bahamas and commit support to the force, as many regional partners have done so in the past 12 months, mainly Jamaica and Canada. The United States will likely support the mission, as improving Haiti's security situation will also ease the migration pressure the United States is facing in Florida and on the border with Mexico, an issue that will be high on the domestic agenda ahead of, and during, the 2024 Presidential campaign. The recent high-profile cases of American citizens being kidnapped in the Caribbean nation also adds credence to the idea of American action, however, it is unlikely they will put boots on the ground.

AMER Regional Forecast. Political developments in the Americas during the next reporting period will focus on Ohio, United States where a special election will take place on 8 August with voters deciding whether to raise the threshold for constitutional amendments from a simple majority to 60 percent. The vote is being viewed as a "proxy war" over abortion rights, and so civil unrest and large rallies will almost certainly disrupt the city in the run up to, and following, the vote. Elsewhere, geopolitical pressure on Brazil from BRICS countries will only intensify in the coming weeks as Brasilia has become the only holdout against the group's expansion as they believe the group will lose stature if other nations are let in.

Civil unrest is almost certain to occur in Peru and Colombia in the coming week. In Peru, protests, led by the indigenous population, continue to call for the resignation of President Dina Boluarte. There is a realistic possibility that violence occurs at these events as tensions remain high over the deaths of at least 60 people since protests began in December 2022. In Colombia, taxi drivers are set to strike over the price of fuel on 9 August, causing significant travel disruption across the country. The news surrounding the arrest of President Gustavo Petro's son for corruption and election funding will also likely illicit protests in cities across Colombia in the coming days.

This upcoming reporting period will see the National Liberation Army (ELN) and Colombian governments ceasefire commence, highly likely leading to a reduction in clashes and violence where the guerrilla groups strongholds are located. Despite this it is highly likely that fatal clashes between other groups and Colombian security forces will continue in the near future, and these will almost certainly be in the nation's rural regions, where dissident groups and organised crime tends to be disproportionately located. Expect renewed clashes between security forces in El Salvador and Brazil too. In Cabanas department, El Salvador,



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a security force of at least 8,000 have set up a perimeter to prevent gang members leaving, increasing tensions, and in Brazil, shoot outs between police and criminal gangs are increasing in frequency, with 25 killed in the last week. In the United States, the state of Montana's Pride event is to be held on 5 August in Helena and is a possible target for lone wolf attackers of both Islamist and far-right ideologies.

The Panama Canal continues to suffer from drought and water shortages, and authorities have had to limit daily traffic to 32 vessels. There is unlikely to be a significant impact on international supply chains and shipping at this time, but further restrictions could be put in place if required.



Europe, Middle East & Africa (EMEA)

Lebanon:

Violence breaks out in refugee camp between rival Palestinian factions.

At least 13 people have been killed and dozens injured after violence erupted at the Ein el-Hilweh refugee camp in Lebanon during the last reporting period according to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA). The camp, which is on the outskirts of Sidon, is the largest Palestinian refugee camp in the country and is reported to be home to at least 60,000 refugees. The trigger for the violence was a suspected assassination attempt on a Junud al-Sham Islamist militant, Mahmoud Khalil, by a member of Fatah, whose brother had recently been killed by Islamists within the camp. Khalil was only injured in the attack but one of his companions was killed and several others were injured. In response, militants attacked the Fatah headquarters within the camp and conducted an ambush on the head of the Palestinian National Security Forces in the camp, killing him and four of his aides. Fighting quickly escalated within the camp, with reports of small arms fire, rocket-propelled grenades, mortars and hand grenades all being used within the confines of the densely populated camp. Nearby residents fled the area due to the scale of the fighting and one Lebanese soldier injured as a result of a mortar landing outside of the camp.

Assessment: The Ein el-Hilweh refugee camp is the scene for regular violence as elements of Fatah and Islamist groups such as Hamas contest for power and influence. Tensions within the camp have almost certainly been further strained in recent years due to an increase in refugees from neighbouring Syria. This has led to the emergence of new factions within the camp's ecosystem, especially ones opposing both the Syrian regime and Hezbollah, the latter of which doubtlessly commands respect from large swathes of the Palestinian population for its strong stance on Israel and unconditional support for Palestine. Lebanon, despite being a country of less than six million people, is home to almost 500,000 Palestinian refugees and thousands of Syrian refugees and is granted very little external assistance to deal with this problem. It is almost certain that Lebanon's ability and resources to deal with the refugees has been severely strained, leading to overcrowded camps beset with terrible living conditions. To further compound the issue, under the Cairo Agreement signed between the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) and Lebanon in 1969, the Lebanese security services have no jurisdiction within the camps and would likely be reticent to enter the camp for fear of escalating tensions. This has led to a self-contained environment with no official power structures that is prone to in-fighting between rival Palestinian factions. A further trigger for the violence was likely the meeting of rival Palestinian leaders in Egypt over the weekend who have come together with the view of establishing an intra-Palestinian reconciliation committee aimed at ending the almost two-decade rift between Fatah and Hamas. Should the fighting continue then there is a realistic possibility that Lebanon may have to renege on the Cairo Agreement and send in troops to quell the fighting.

Egypt:

Militants conduct attack on Egyptian Police facility in North Sinai Province.

On 31 July, four Egyptian police officers were killed, and multiple others were injured after militants attacked the National Security Agency (NSA) headquarters in El Arish, the capital of Egypt's North Sinai Governorate. The heavily fortified compound also houses the North Sinai security directorate, the governorate administrative building, the General Intelligence Services headquarters and the North Sinai Criminal Court. The headquarters is known to have robust entry procedures; however, unconfirmed reports suggest that the incident may have originated as an uprising from within the compound.

Assessment: At the time of writing, no terrorist actor has claimed responsibility for the attack, however it is highly likely that the perpetrators were from the Islamic State's Sinai Province who have been active in the region since 2014 and are estimated to have at least 1,000 fighters within their ranks. The attack occurred just two days after a visit to the province from the chief of United States Central Command



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(CENTCOM), General Michael Kurilla. General Kurilla's visit was the first ever visit of a senior United States military officer to the province and was in aid of preparation for Exercise Brightstar 23, a biannual military exercise led by Egyptian and US forces and held in Egypt. This year's iteration of the exercise is forecasted to take place in North Sinai in close proximity to Egypt's border with Gaza and will likely feature the containment of terrorist groups as one of its main training objectives. It is likely that the group responsible purposefully timed their attack close to CENTCOM's visit and decided on such a fortified target in order to project their strength in the region and undermine the authorities' ability to guarantee internal security. Additionally, the Human Rights Watch and the Sinai Foundation for Human Rights have both been alleging a campaign of detainment and abuse of women related to IS at the hands of the local authorities which would have likely acted as a further catalyst for the attack. The attack is unlikely to produce any immediate effects on tourism in Sinai, as the majority of tourist hotspots are hundreds of kilometres away in the far south of the peninsula, however there is a realistic possibility of an increased security presence at major resorts.

Senegal:

More civil unrest after opposition politician detained and his party dissolved.

Opposition politician, Ousmane Sonko, was detained on the evening of 28 July following an incident with security forces stationed outside his home, before then being charged the next day with plotting an insurrection, criminal conspiracy and other offenses. By 31 July Sonko's supporters had blocked the highway into Dakar, burning tyres and trucks, before Senegal's Interior Minister then announced that Sonko's political party, PASTEF, had been dissolved. This intensified the protests with clashes with police reported, and tear gas utilised to disperse those gathered, with the government also restricting internet access and banning access to the TikTok app.

Assessment: Developments this week are just the latest in a long-running tussle between President Macky Sall, and his ruling Alliance for the Republic Party (APR) and Sonko's PASTEF. In June 2023 Sonko was charged with corrupting youth and handed a suspended two-year prison sentence. Sonko's supporters accuse Sall of trumping up charges to sideline the opposition politician from the February 2024 elections. Given the frequency that Sonko is targeted, his current favourable support in opinion polls, and his strong performance as an outsider in the 2019 election, this is likely the case. In the run up to the election, it is highly probable that Senegal will experience frequent episodes of civil unrest associated with Sonko's treatment, and there is a significant likelihood of violence erupting on the streets. In May and June 2023, deadly riots erupted across the country which resulted in the deaths of at least 16 people. The catalyst for the riots was the trial of Sonko, who faced allegations of raping a 23-year-old masseuse. Many of his supporters vehemently disputed these charges, asserting that they were politically motivated and baseless. The fear of further riots prompted by this week's events has led to the managers of Total Energies petrol stations closing forecourts across Senegal due to petrol stations being vandalised in previous times of civil unrest. It is highly likely that Senegal will witness an increased police presence in the upcoming reporting period, particularly in major cities where a significant portion of Sonko's youthful supporters are concentrated. As a result, clashes between his supporters and the police are very likely to occur and access to social media and the internet is likely to remain restricted.

Niger:

Tensions remain high ahead of ECOWAS deadline.

Tensions within Niger remained high this reporting period with no foreseeable conclusion to the 26 July coup. The new military junta and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) have traded threats of military action throughout the last week, with the ECOWAS 6 August deadline for the restoration of democracy still extant. Western countries have also continued to place sanctions on those involved in the coup. In the capital, Niamey, Nigeriens gathered in support of the coup in their thousands, whilst they also expressed anti-French and pro-Russian sentiment. The demonstrations did however pass peacefully. Then on 4 August, Niger's ousted President Bazoum explained in an opinion piece in the Washington Post that he is being held hostage and has called on the international community to restore order, mainly the United States. Conversely, the leader of the coup, Abdourahamane Tiani, revoked a raft of military cooperation agreements with France.

Assessment: It is almost certain that the ECOWAS 6 August deadline for the restoration of democratic governance in Niger will pass without the demands being met. The group has threatened military action if their demands are not satisfied but it remains to be seen whether they will execute this ultimatum. If ECOWAS does intervene, there is a realistic possibility that the United States, France, and other Western nations will support the military force, although it is highly unlikely that this would be in the form of boots on the ground. If ECOWAS fail to intervene, it is highly likely that the current military junta will prevail and become Niger's new government. This will have several consequences, with early actions almost certainly including ordering the French military to leave the country, and this would highly likely be followed by the United States being forced out soon after. This would be a significant setback to the West's fight against Islamic extremism in the Sahel, as their largest operational bases are in Niger. As a result of a French exodus, Paris would likely lose a key source of uranium for its nuclear based power supply which accounts for nearly 70 per cent of electricity production in the country. Global uranium prices have already increased after the coup, and this is likely to increase electricity costs in France and potentially across other parts of Europe. The removal of French and American troops would also highly likely be a precursor to the arrival of the Russian Private Military Company (PMC), the Wagner Group, with it reported the new Nigerien regime have already approached the PMC. Despite a recent strain on relations between Wagner and the Kremlin, this would strengthen Russian presence in the region, another cause for concern for the West.

Nigeria:

Security volatility across the country's north.

On 31 July it emerged that in Nigeria's northern state of Borno, ten farmers were beheaded after Islamist militants attacked their farms. This incident came after two raids in the last reporting period which saw at least 25 villagers killed across two villages in the state. Local residents have claimed that Boko Haram were behind the attack. Meanwhile, in the country's north-eastern state of Adamawa, the governor, Umaru Fintiri, imposed a 24-hour state of emergency on 30 July. This was imposed after local youths broke into shops to steal food and other goods. This curfew later eased on 31 July from 18:00 to 06:00 but would run "until further review".

Assessment: Northern Nigeria has struggled for over a decade with insecurity, with the region home to both Boko Haram and Islamic State West Africa (ISWAP). Whilst Boko Haram is believed to be behind the latest attack, it is reputed that the prior attack that killed 25, was carried out by ISWAP. There has been a marked uptick in violence targeting farmers in the region, almost certainly as a result of the state government in June 2023 launching a campaign to encourage farmers to return to their fields, having previously abandoned their farms due to the threats posed by insurgent groups. The unrest in Adamawa has been driven by recent developments in the country's politics, with the state the home of Atiku Abubakar who was one of the presidential candidates defeated by recently elected Bola Tinubu. Across the country, Nigerians have increasingly been complaining and protesting about rising prices after Tinubu scrapped a popular petrol subsidy and removed currency restrictions. Given that Adamawa is the home state of a rival political candidate and the economic situation in Nigeria is unlikely to improve in the short term, unrest, rioting and looting, are likely to continue in the state and in other parts of the country. Unrest and anti-government protests will likely be concentrated in regions of the country known to be strongholds of rivals to President Tinubu and the ruling party, such as Adamawa.

EMEA Regional Forecast. In the United Kingdom, the government has issued new oil and gas licences in the North Sea and watered down its carbon emission policy. Resultingly, it is almost certain the country will see an increase in environmental protests. Occupations, street protests and disruption of high-profile events, such as the start of the football season or the Edinburgh Fringe Festival, are likely. Protests are set to continue in Israel regarding the controversial judicial reform law. The country's Supreme Court is set to hear arguments against the law; if the court rules against the law, the government have said they would not respect the decision, further deepening the country's constitutional crisis; and if the court allows the law to stand, then protestors will extend their campaign of civil disobedience, triggering major protests, strikes, and demonstrations. Expect groups arranged against the state of Israel such as Hezbollah and Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) to seek to take advantage of the current volatility. In Kenya, political volatility will almost certainly drop in the short-term as a result of the news that the government and opposition will set up a team to resolve their differences. It is likely that it will subdue the country's protests, however, it should be



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recalled that the current iteration of the protest movement began after the prior round of talks earlier this year failed.

It is likely that the forthcoming reporting period will see the Swedish and Danish governments continue discussions regarding their famed openness to free speech and expression. This comes as both countries are being exploited by members of the far right and other elements hostile to Islam, to burn the Quran and incite religious tensions globally. The security implications have been manifested through attacks on the Swedish embassy in Iraq, and this reporting period also saw a local national worker at the Swedish consulate in Izmir, Turkey injured during a gun attack. Such legislation would likely help to reduce these risks, but would also serve to lower the tensions both countries now find defining their diplomatic relationships with majority Muslim countries.

In the Middle East, Saudi Arabia has announced that it will extend its unilateral cut of one million oil barrels per day until September 2023 in an effort to boost oil prices. The cuts will undoubtedly lead to a decrease in international supplies and cause an increase in international oil prices. On 5 and 6 August, a summit to examine how to implement Ukraine's 10-point peace programme will be held in Jeddah. Diplomats from over 30 countries are expected to attend, with representatives from Ukraine, United Kingdom, United States, European Union and a host of developing countries likely to attend, but with the noticeable absence of Russia. The summit is being heralded as a preliminary step before a proposed summit later in the year that will reportedly include world leaders at an undetermined location. This summit will be touted as a further example of Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman's attempt to position himself as a world leader and project Saudi diplomatic influence outside of the Middle East. In Lebanon this reporting period has seen the governor of the Central Bank, Riad Salameh, step down with no successor appointed. In the interim, Wassim Mansouri has been appointed the acting governor and he has promised sweeping reforms and ended the unauthorised financing of the Lebanese government. These reforms, alongside other ideas such as exchange rate unification and removing the currency peg, if successful, may enable talks to restart with the IMF and international partners on an economic bailout and debt relief.

It is likely the taxi strike in South Africa will continue and cause significant travel disruption. The strike is concentrated in the Western Cape and will predominantly affect Cape Town. The city's bus services and those driving for ride-hailing apps such as Uber are almost certain to be targeted for arson and disruption, whilst major highways around the city may be blockaded by protestors and "go-slows". There is a high likelihood that protests are met with a robust response from security forces which may lead them to turn violent.

In Sierra Leone, the police have announced that they have arrested several people including high-ranking soldiers in Sierra Leone. They have been accused of "working to undermine the peace and tranquillity of the state". This news, following on so quickly from events in Niger, highlights how coups in West Africa have become "endemic" and follows on from the Sierra Leone general election in June. Expect political instability to persist across the country as the opposition continue to boycott the country's parliament and the government seek to make sure that Freetown does not witness similar scenes as Niamey.

In Syria, reports indicate that the latest leader of ISIS, Abu al-Hussein al-Husseini al-Qurayshi has been killed by the Turkish-backed and formerly Al-Qaeda-linked group, Hayat Tahrir al-Sham. An ISIS spokesperson announced that Abu Hafis al-Hashemi al-Qurayshi has been named as the terror group's new leader. It is likely that ISIS' new leader will seek to demonstrate his power by conducting retaliatory attacks against those believed to be behind the death of al-Qurayshi.





Asia Pacific (APAC)

Pakistan:

Suicide bomber kills 54, injures 200 in attack on political rally.

On 30 August, a bomb targeted a rally of the Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (JUI-F), a hardline Sunni Muslim party, run by the hardline Islamist cleric, Maulana Fazlur Rehman. The gathering was taking place in Bajaur district, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK) province, close to the border with Afghanistan. At least 54 people were left dead and more than 200 were left injured as a result of the blast. On 31 August, Islamic State Khorasan Province (ISKP) claimed responsibility for the attack, stating it was part of their war against democracy as a system of government. Pakistani officials have stated that they have arrested at least three people suspected of being involved in the attack.

Assessment: This attack represents a significant escalation in the capacity of ISKP in KPK province, and potentially Pakistan more widely. Since the breakdown of the ceasefire between the Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TPP) and the Pakistani government in November 2022, the country has seen a rise in the number of terror attacks. However, it was highly unlikely that the TPP were behind this attack as the JUI-F share a similar Sunni Islamic fundamentalist platform and Reham is also widely known to be pro-Taliban. Pakistan is scheduled to hold elections sometime between August and November 2023, and as such this attack will almost certainly bring security to the forefront of the minds of politicians and officials. Between 2008 and 2013 militant groups in Pakistan frequently attacked political rallies, and this attack potentially marks the resumption of such methodologies. A further ambition for ISKP targeting the JUI-F rally may also be that the latter are a member of the country's current coalition government and are seen by the former as sponsoring democracy. With the election looming, it is almost certain Pakistan will see further ISKP attacks in the coming weeks.

It should also be noted that this attack took place on the tenth anniversary of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) project, a multibillion-dollar part of China's Belt and Road Initiative. CPEC projects have been undermined by the ongoing increase in insecurity in Pakistan and some have directly been targeted. This high-profile attack, coming after several other examples this year, such as the Peshawar Mosque attack, the assault on Karachi's police headquarters, and the increase in attacks in Balochistan where many CPEC projects are located, will likely only exacerbate tensions in this area.

India:

Tensions strained between Hindus and Muslims as sectarian violence engulfs India.

During the recent reporting period, there have been several instances of sectarian violence in India, leading to fatal clashes between factions of the Hindu and Muslim populations. On 31 July, in Nuh District, Haryana State, violence was incited when a Hindu religious procession, led by Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) and Bajrang Dal, two far-right Hindu organisations aligned with the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), entered a Muslim-majority neighbourhood. The procession was met with outrage from residents who responded by pelting the march with stones. The resulting violence claimed the lives of at least four individuals, including two police officers. Subsequently, elements associated with the Hindu far-right targeted Muslim neighbourhoods in the area, leading to reports of multiple businesses falling victim to arson. In neighbouring Gurugram, a city just southwest of New Delhi that hosts several multinational companies including Deloitte and Google, further violence erupted when a Mosque was set ablaze, resulting in the death of a 22-year-old Imam. Fears of an escalating crisis prompted the deployment of troops to Haryana state, accompanied by the blocking of internet and SMS services by the authorities. Lastly, aboard a train bound for Mumbai from Jaipur, a Railway Protection Force officer shot his Muslim superior officer and three Muslim passengers in an incident that many are deeming a hate crime. Since the 2 August, hundreds of members of the Hindu extremist right-wing Bajrang Dal group have taken to the streets in several cities, including Delhi, burning effigies and chanting slogans against Muslims.



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Assessment: Although sectarian violence is relatively common in the Hindu majority country that is home to nearly 200 million Muslims, it is highly likely that Hindu nationalist leaders within the central government are emboldening elements of the Hindu far-right in wider Indian society. Prime Minister Modi has long been affiliated with the Hindu far right and critics have bemoaned the marginalisation of non-Hindu minorities under his tenure and his pattern of failing to publicly condemn sectarian violence. It is almost certain that the far-right's march into a Muslim-majority neighbourhood was a predetermined move aimed at exploiting sectarian tensions. It seems plausible that they were aware of the potential for this event to not only instigate violence in the immediate vicinity but also to contribute to escalating tensions across the country, and that the measures employed by the authorities would generate even more publicity. This is likely the reason why the authorities decided to block most forms of communication, for fear of the tensions being amplified through social media and to curb any potential disinformation. The timing of the violence is unfortunate for Modi who is due to host multiple world leaders at the G20 Summit in Delhi in early September. It is likely that Modi wants to project an image of a confident and stable developing superpower and that this depiction will be challenged by a nation troubled with sectarian violence that is arguably the product of the BJP's nationalist policies and is likely to continue in the near term.

Myanmar:

Contrasting political developments suggest military junta is under pressure.

On 31 July, the military junta currently ruling Myanmar extended the nationwide state of emergency for another six months, officially postponing an election that was promised by August 2023. The following day, the junta pardoned the democratically elected former leader Aung San Suu Kyi on five of the 19 offences for which she was convicted, reducing her sentence by six years.

Assessment: When the military junta staged their coup in February 2021, they pledged elections by August 2023, stating at the time that they believed in elections but that the 2020 vote was won fraudulently, hence their need to intervene. This suspension of elections by the military junta however is not a surprise, with their actions since the coup almost exclusively being authoritarian, evidenced by executing democracy activists, arresting political rivals, and continually extending their powers. It is highly likely the military will continue to extend the state of emergency and suspend any form of elections, in a bid to maintain power for as long as possible. The timing of the pardoning of Suu Kyi, as well as more than 7,000 prisoners, including former president Win Myint, is highly likely linked to the election postponement, as the junta in Naypyidaw likely hoped to divert attention from the controversial move and present the idea that the regime was softening to some extent. It is also likely symptomatic of an attempt by the junta to relieve the pressure being placed on it by both Western countries and their neighbours in Southeast Asia. The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) members have been debating how to best deal with Myanmar, with Thailand actively trying to re-engage with the junta. However, this course of action has not been emulated by other members of ASEAN with Indonesia refusing to host Myanmar's military-appointed foreign minister at a Jakarta based ASEAN summit earlier this year. It is likely that the pardoning of Suu Kyi is a goodwill gesture by the junta aimed at demonstrating to the other ASEAN members that they are open to negotiation and is likely an attempt to project the idea that the junta is tempering its authoritarian ways despite the suspension of elections.

China:

Typhoon Doksuri continues to wreak havoc across mainland China.

As wind speeds decreased, Typhoon Doksuri was downgraded from a typhoon to a severe tropical storm but has continued to batter northern China with extreme rain. The storm has broken all rainfall records since China began recording them 140-years ago, leading to swollen rivers, flooded streets and many reservoirs exceeding their storage capacity by two-fold. The effects have been particularly bad in China's capital, Beijing, in nearby Tianjin, and in the northern Hubei province, where entire cities have been inundated with water. To date, reports indicate that over 20 people have been killed and many more are missing, with hundreds of thousands evacuated from the most severely affected areas.

Assessment: It is highly likely that the severity of Typhoon Doksuri and the subsequent storm has been caused by climate change, with environmental scientists declaring that warmer sea surfaces are generally providing more energy for storm development and thus producing more intense typhoons. It is almost certain that the rapid urbanisation of China has led to the paving over of flood plains, which has decreased natural drainage and significantly increased the chances of severe flooding. With swollen rivers, lakes and reservoirs, there is little chance for water to discharge, and it is highly likely that many of inundated towns and cities will remain flooded in the coming weeks. This will result in the prolonged closures of schools and businesses, the suspension of transportation, interruption to tourism and the continued disruption of mobile communications. The extent of the flooding and the expectation of equally or more severe storms in the future will likely force China to re-evaluate its flood control measures and contingency plans. In rural areas, it is almost certain that agriculture will be acutely affected by flooding, with waterlogged fields resulting in crop failures. The government has already allocated around USD 60 million to agricultural communities affected by the storm. However, this is unlikely to provide adequate relief for farmers, with outbreaks of pest and crop diseases anticipated as a secondary effect of the storm.

South Korea:

South Koreans shocked by wave of lone wolf attacks.

On 3 August South Koreans were left shocked after a man rammed his car into passers-by then leapt out to stab victims in a nearby shopping mall in the commuter town of Seongnam, on the outskirts of the capital, Seoul. Reports indicate that at least one victim died and over a dozen were injured by the surprise attack. So far, the suspected assailant has only been identified as a man in his twenties, with a delivery job and who suffered from mental illness. Then just a day after on 4 August, another man was arrested for stabbing a high school teacher in the South Korean city of Daejeon. These attacks have further shocked Koreans in the wake of another rare attack in Seoul on 26 July, which killed one person and left three injured.

Assessment: These attacks, occurring shortly after another mass stabbing incident, have undoubtedly left South Koreans shocked, given their typically low crime and murder rates. It is highly likely that South Koreans are apprehensive of potential copy-cat attacks, particularly considering the attention these unusual incidents have garnered on social media, with reports already suggesting multiple online threats being circulated. As an immediate response, it is likely that the South Korean authorities will revise their security measures, with increased security patrols and extended CCTV almost certainly implemented. These attacks are unlikely to be grounded in any political ideology, with mental health already being posited as the cause. South Korea has some of the highest rates of mental illnesses in the developed world, yet the subject of mental health largely remains a taboo in the Asian nation. In order to mitigate against future attacks, it is likely that South Korea will have to revise its attitudes towards mental health and increase access to treatment.

APAC Regional Forecast. In Australia, there is a growing possibility that the country will hold early elections as the upper house of parliament threatens to block the government's housing bill for the second time. This second blocking triggers a constitutional right for the government to dissolve parliament and call for early elections. The opposition are blocking the bill due to disagreements around spending and rental caps. Elsewhere in Canberra, the news that China's Ministry of Commerce will drop anti-dumping and anti-subsidy tariffs on Australian barley imports will be seen as a welcome sign that tensions between China and Australia have eased somewhat. If this easing of economic tensions is set to continue, then it is likely other Australian products such as wine may also see tariff reductions. For Beijing, there is a realistic probability that the 2022 drought and heatwave, combined with the heavy rains of early 2023 have lowered China's domestic harvests, and as such China has needed to resolve this dispute or face a possible barley shortage.

The United States has announced that it will be sending a weapons aid package worth up to USD 345 million to Taiwan although the formal announcement did not include a list of weapon systems being provided. This news will likely cause anger in Beijing and as such expect heated rhetoric from China on the subject. There is also a realistic possibility that China's Peoples' Liberation Army (PLA) will seek to carry out exercises around Taiwan as a demonstration of Beijing's strength. More widely in defensive matters, New Zealand has released its first national security strategy and the first stage of a defence review. This strategy states that the nation is facing its most challenging strategic environment in decades amid a great power rivalry, whilst



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admitting that its military is not fit for future challenges such as the great power rivalry and climate change. As such, expect to see Wellington seek to increase its defence spending, and strengthen defence and security ties with allies both in the Indo-Pacific and internationally. There is an increasing possibility the country may seek to ascend to join AUKUS or at least its non-nuclear components.

In Thailand, 10 August sees the expected return of Thaksin Shinawatra to Thailand, more than fifteen years after the former Prime Minister entered self-imposed exile. The return of Shinawatra is a sign that Pheu Thai, the Shinawatra affiliated party, has reached a possible agreement with the military on forming a government after efforts to form a coalition by the pro-reform, anti-military, Move Forward party failed. In Bangladesh, expect continued political volatility and deadly civil unrest as a result of the country's ongoing crisis around opposition led demands for the election of a caretaker government in the lead up to the country's general elections in January 2024.

China is forecasted to receive further heavy rain during the next reporting period which will almost certainly compound the flooding issues and continue to disrupt services. China also looks like it will be impacted by Typhoon Khanun, which will be the third typhoon in three weeks to impact the country and has already caused significant disruption in Japan and Taiwan. After deadly monsoon flooding in July, India is likely to suffer from below average rainfall over the period of August, as a result of El Nino. In South Korea, heatwaves that have already led to several deaths and thousands of heat-related illnesses are forecasted to endure and South Korea will likely raise the heat alert to its highest level throughout much of August.



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