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# Global Intelligence Summary

REPORTING PERIOD: 29 SEP - 06 OCT 2023



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Week 42: 29 September – 06 October 2023

## Executive Summary

- The UN Security Council has approved the deployment of the Kenya-led task force to police **Haiti**. The task force is likely to help curb gang crime in the country but concerns regarding human rights abuses are likely high.
- In **Slovakia**, a pro-Kremlin party has won the most seats in parliamentary elections, almost certainly presenting the EU with multiple challenges as a growing dissident bloc emerges in Eastern Europe.
- A terrorist attack in **Turkey** will almost certainly result in an increase of Turkish operations against Kurdish militants across the region, despite Western grievances.
- Militants in the **Sahel** are almost certainly exploiting the withdrawal of Western forces and will continue to challenge the military led governments with sustained attacks.



Figure 1: Significant activity identified during the current reporting period (29 September – 06 October 2023)

### AMER

- 1 Haiti:** Kenyan police intervention approved
- 2 El Salvador:** Presidential campaign launches
- 3 Colombia:** Army forced to apologise for thousands of extra-judicial killings

### EMEA

- 4 Poland:** Huge protest march ahead of parliamentary election
- 5 Slovakia:** Pro-Kremlin party wins most votes in parliamentary elections
- 6 Turkey:** Ankara strikes Kurdish militants throughout Middle East
- 7 Syria:** Drone swarms kills 100 at military graduation
- 8 Israel:** Ultranationalist settlers storm the Al-Aqsa Mosque
- 9 Sahel:** Rebels and extremists continue to exploit security vacuum

### APAC

- 10 Pakistan:** Government orders all undocumented Afghans to leave country
- 11 India:** Flash floods in Sikkim kill dozens
- 12 Maldives:** Pro China candidates wins



## Americas (AMER)

### Haiti:

#### UN security council approves the Kenya led intervention.

On 2 October, it was reported that the UN security council has voted to send the proposed Kenyan led multi-national task force to the country. This is to help combat the country's longstanding gang problem which has driven the country to near collapse. The task force has been authorised for twelve months but will be reviewed after nine. The force will be led by Kenya and the US has offered at least USD 100 million financial aid and logistical support, whilst Jamaica, the Bahamas, Antigua and Barbuda have offered to send officers to join the taskforce.

**Assessment:** The taskforce has been much talked about and its approval will be seen as welcome sign that the international community is finally beginning to tackle the problems in Haiti. However, doubts persist as to the suitability of the Kenyan police force to lead it, given the Kenyan police's own controversial record on human rights and other abuses. The task force is expected to guard critical sites such as airports, ports, hospitals, and various other places. They will also coordinate with the local police to carry out anti-gang patrols. If the task force is successful in curtailing gang activity and returning stability to the country it will no doubt lead to a resurrection of the country's teetering economy and will provide the necessary security environment in which the country can hold general elections, which were originally meant to have been held in 2019.

### El Salvador:

#### Presidential campaign commences.

On October 3, the presidential campaign season in the country officially began, and it will continue until January 2024. This upcoming election has stirred controversy as the current president, Nayib Bukele, is pursuing re-election despite facing allegations of violating the constitution. Thirteen political parties and six executive candidates have declared their participation in the 2024 general elections, which will also determine members of the Legislative Assembly, the Central American Parliament, and municipal councils.

**Assessment:** Nayib Bukele came to office in 2019, and since then has dramatically clamped down on the country's gangs. The apparent success of his war on gangs has won him high approval ratings, and the admiration of policy makers across Latin America. Under his militarised response to the gangs' extrajudicial killings, mass arbitrary arrests and other abuses have become common, and over 100,000 suspected gang members are now in jail. Bukele has also sent the military to storm congress and fired all judges aged over 60 replacing them with younger loyalists. As a result of these factors, whilst the country's crime rate has fallen and security has improved, it has also slid to partly free on various political indices. It is almost certain Bukele will win another term, and given his use of the state of emergency for governing and the vague constitutional changes he has supported there is a realistic possibility that he may continue in office into a third consecutive term.

### Colombia:

#### Colombian army forced to apologise for thousands of extra-judicial killings.

The Colombian army has issued a formal apology for its role in the killing of over 6,000 civilians between 2002 and 2008, falsely presenting them as left-wing guerrillas in a practice known as "false positives." Most victims were young men from poor neighbourhoods who were promised jobs but were instead executed in rural areas. This strategy aimed to exaggerate the military's

success in countering the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) guerrilla group. Soldiers testified that they faced pressure from superiors to increase their "kill rate" and were promised rewards like promotions. Families of victims have long sought the truth about their loved ones. Colombia's Minister of Defence and former rebel President Gustavo Petro issued public apologies during an event in Bogotá. However, some victims' families believe the apology should have come from past leaders, including former President Álvaro Uribe and Defence Minister Juan Manuel Santos, under whose leadership most "false positives" occurred.

**Assessment:** The Colombian army's formal apology for the "false positives" killings is a significant step in acknowledging past human rights abuses and seeking justice for victims. Allegations suggest that it is probable that thousands of civilians were falsely portrayed as guerrillas, with some estimates nearing 7000. These killings were almost certainly part of a strategy to project the success of counter-FARC operations and for ordinary soldiers to gain promotions and vacation time. It is highly likely that the investigation and subsequent apology was a result of Colombia electing its first leftist president, Gustavo Petro. It is likely that Petro is attempting to distance his regime from crimes committed in the recent past and by doing so he will be in a better position to negotiate with rebel groups like FARC, with a peace negotiation scheduled for 8 October. It will also likely enable the new government to build trust with poor and rural communities, enabling Petro to consolidate his power base and encourage future generations to work with the regime and not join one of Colombia's many rebel groups. The apology, if part of a sustained break from past transgressions, will also help Colombia improve its international reputation which could afford it a range of benefits, including increased foreign investment, enhanced diplomatic relations, and greater opportunities for international cooperation on various fronts such as trade, security, and development.

**AMER Forecast.** Political volatility is almost certain to persist in the US, following the ousting of the Speaker of the House, Kevin McCarthy. It remains to be seen if the Republicans can agree on a new candidate, whilst in early November the country could once again see a government shutdown looming. US and Mexican officials are likely set to announce new cooperation measures on combatting both drug cartels and illegal immigration. Both topics have become major policy issues in Washington and Mexico City, with officials meeting to discuss possible options. In Guatemala, electoral uncertainty looks set to continue after footage of fight scenes emerged between police and the justices of the country's electoral tribunal. The police were seeking to seize the tally sheets of votes from the August presidential elections as part of continued attempts by the authorities to overturn or tarnish the electoral results from the August presidential election. In Colombia, officials will meet FARC dissident rebels from Estado Mayor Central on 8 October as they seek to restart peace negotiations. This comes as the government faces regional elections, and it is possible the timing has been shaped to help shore up the governments waning popularity.

In the United States, anticipate ongoing disruptions in the country's healthcare sector during the upcoming weekend as more than 75,000 workers at Kaiser Permanente prepare to go on strike. Kaiser Permanente, the largest not-for-profit healthcare organisation in the country, operates hospitals in all major US cities. This marks the largest healthcare strike in US history. Employees at Kaiser have indicated their intention to strike again if negotiations fail, while workers at 11 Tenet Healthcare facilities have announced plans to strike later this month. In Mexico, there is news that control of Mexico City Airport is set to be transferred to the Navy as part of a broader initiative by the Obrador administration to transfer civilian infrastructure to the military. Ostensibly, this latest move aims to combat corruption; however, there are allegations that the change is an attempt to redirect air traffic to the newly constructed Felipe Ángeles International Airport, which is currently underused. Authorities at the Panama Canal have announced further reductions in the number of daily shipping movements permitted. This decision coincides with ongoing water shortages at the canal. Additional restrictions on movement are likely to disrupt supply chains at a time when global supply chains in the West prepare for the Christmas season.

There is a high likelihood that Southern Canada and the northeastern states of the US will experience the impact of Tropical Storm Philippe. Landfall is expected on 8th October, and it is

probable that the storm will bring heavy rain, strong winds, and flash flooding to the broader region. Large swells are also anticipated in the surrounding areas of the Atlantic Ocean.



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## Europe, Middle East & Africa (EMEA)

### Poland:

#### **One million march in Warsaw ahead of tense parliamentary elections.**

On the 1 October, Poland's most extensive opposition coalition, led by Donald Tusk, the former President of the European Council, staged an opposition rally in the heart of Warsaw. The event, known as the "March of a Million Hearts," was scheduled just two weeks ahead of a parliamentary election that polls indicate is extremely tight. Tusk called upon his supporters to gather in central Warsaw at midday for this "march of strength," intending to demonstrate their commitment to a better Poland. In an interview broadcast on the Polish station TVN, Tusk emphasised the historical significance of this gathering, asserting that it would be among the most substantial demonstrations in recent European history and one of the largest political events in Poland since regaining independence in the 1980s. It is estimated that around one million people attended the protest in the country of approximately 38 million. As the election campaign reaches its conclusion, it has grown increasingly intense. Tusk's bid for the position of Prime Minister faces formidable challenges, including disunity within the opposition and a vigorous government-led campaign portraying him as an unpatriotic collaborator with Germany.

**Assessment:** Poland's ruling Law and Justice (PiS) party, in power since 2015, leans right-wing populist, gaining support through increased social spending and rural outreach, yet facing criticism for undermining democratic norms and marginalising groups like the LGBT and migrants. Although Poland's tension with Western allies has eased due to its support for Ukraine, domestic polarisation persists. Donald Tusk's return to Polish politics ahead of a pivotal election has energised the opposition, aiming to replicate the success of a June rally that kickstarted their campaign. Polls suggest PiS may secure more votes than Tusk's Civic Coalition, but alliances, small parties, and the complex electoral system could sway the outcome either way. Leftwing parties and the Third Way coalition hovering near the parliamentary threshold, along with the far-right Confederation party, are likely to play key roles. Both sides are using fear-based campaigns, with PiS highlighting migration concerns and Tusk emphasizing democratic erosion and the risk of a Polish EU exit, intensifying polarization and likely leading to emotionally charged election campaigns. Protests and rallies across Poland, possibly causing travel disruptions, are expected, and a PiS victory, potentially with a far-right coalition, could spark civil unrest.

### Slovakia:

#### **Pro-Kremlin party achieves the most votes in parliamentary election.**

On 30 September, Slovaks went to the polls and the pro-Kremlin SMER party, led by Robert Fico, secured more votes than expected, winning 22.9 per cent of the vote. Fico, a former prime minister, is now in a position to seek coalition partners to regain the job as his party didn't secure enough votes to govern independently. Slovakia's President Zuzana Čaputová has asked Fico to form a government, a common political custom in Slovakia. Fico has stressed the importance of peace talks between Russia and Ukraine and has pledged to end Slovak military support for Ukraine, potentially impacting Slovakia's until recent strong support for Ukraine. Fico has also promised to block Ukraine's potential accession to NATO. Hungary's pro-Kremlin Prime Minister, Viktor Orban, was quick to congratulate Fico, referring to him as a fellow "patriot".

**Assessment:** The composition of the new Slovakian government remains uncertain, with a lengthy period of negotiations between rival parties expected to take weeks to months before compromises are made and a government is formed. With only 22.9 per cent of the vote, the SMER party is by no means guaranteed the right to form a government. If opposition parties ally



together, there is a realistic possibility that a more pro-European Union and anti-Kremlin leaning coalition can assume control, with the Progressive Slovakia party achieving almost 18 per cent and a further five parties securing at least five per cent of the vote, the minimum amount required to enter a coalition government. However, should the SMER party be successful in forming a government, it is likely to have serious consequences for the region and within Slovakia. The SMER party have become increasingly sceptical of the EU and have often aligned with fellow sceptics like Hungary's Orban. Should Poland's Law and Justice (PiS) party secure a third term in office then it is almost certain that a right-wing and more Kremlin leaning dissident bloc will emerge in Eastern Europe with all three countries having the power to block both EU and NATO policies. Irrespective of the composition of the new coalition government, the contentious nature of the situation suggests a high likelihood of demonstrations.

A populist government in Slovakia, critical of migration and LGBT issues, could strain relations with Brussels and have implications for minority groups. SMER's populist sentiment is echoed by the public, with polls showing distrust of the USA and scepticism about Russia's role in Ukraine. Concerns arise from social media companies' failure to combat Russian misinformation, which the Kremlin may exploit for European disunity. Slovakia's Eurozone membership and reliance on EU recovery funds may limit its capacity to challenge Brussels. The election results may reflect shifting opinions in Eastern Europe, potentially accelerated by lower grain prices due to Ukrainian exports. While Ukraine may experience minimal impact from Slovakia's reduced military support, the political shift could complicate the diplomatic landscape in Eastern Europe, influencing regional dynamics and indirectly affecting Ukraine by altering EU and NATO member state positions.

## Turkey:

### Turkey expands anti-Kurdish operations after attack in Ankara.

At approximately 09:30 local time on 1 October an explosion occurred outside the Turkish Interior Ministry building in Ankara. Videos widely circulated on news channels and social media showed the attackers attempting to breach a security perimeter in a car before self-detonating an explosive vest. The perpetrators died in the explosion and two Turkish police officers sustained injuries. A group linked to the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) has claimed responsibility for the attack. This was the first explosion in Ankara since 2016 and came on the day as a new parliamentary session was beginning in Turkey. The following day Turkey increased its military operations against the PKK by conducting airstrikes on suspected PKK infrastructure in both Syria and Northern Iraq. The Turkish Defence Ministry have since claimed to have destroyed 58 PKK targets in northern Iraq alone from 1-5 October. On 5 October, a weaponised Turkish drone operating in vicinity to US forces based in northern Syria was shot down by the US near Al-Hasakah. Domestically Turkish security forces including counterterrorism units have conducted multiple targeted PKK raids resulting in the detainment of dozens of suspected PKK militants and suspected collaborators.

**Assessment:** Since the PKK insurgency began in 1984 at least 40,000 fatalities have been recorded. This latest attack is the most significant since the spate of violence in 2015-16 that included the March 2016 attack in Ankara that resulted in 37 civilian deaths. On the domestic front, Turkey will likely increase its crackdown on PKK activities both in hidden cell networks in the larger cities of Istanbul and Ankara but also in their main areas of operation in southeastern Turkey. Pro-Kurdish political parties including the Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP) will also likely see increased scrutiny and limitations on their activities.

Turkey has been most proactive in their anti-PKK crackdown outside of Turkish borders since the attack in Ankara. The airstrikes conducted in both Syria and northern Iraq on PKK infrastructure is a clear indication of Turkey's willingness to operate outside its own borders. Whilst the extent of Turkish operations so far in northern Syria has been largely isolated to air strikes on PKK positions, this recent attack in Ankara has perhaps set a precedent for a possible ground offensive

as indicated by a Turkish defence ministry official on 5 October. The anti-PKK operations by Turkey have not been without its criticism. In northern Syria several NGOs have since left the al-Hasakah refugee camp due to the ongoing risks from the Turkish airstrikes. Any ground invasion will also likely result in a territorial power vacuum and condemnation from Turkey's Western allies. The People's Defence Units (YPG), the reported Syrian wing of the PKK, is the primary component of the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) who have been responsible in the containment of Islamic State (IS) in much of northern and central Syria. Should a Turkish ground invasion occur, the SDF will likely have to shift resources to repel the Turkish military incursion. This would almost certainly be exploited by IS to regroup and gain a stronger foothold in the region. For now, it is likely that the West can apply enough pressure on Turkey to prevent a ground invasion and Turkey will rely almost entirely on air strikes. The shooting down of a Turkish drone by US forces is an unprecedented incident whereby the US has intentionally engaged another NATO member's aircraft. This incident will undoubtedly flare up tensions between the US and Turkey and was almost certainly a warning to Turkey to not operate in parts of Syria where the US are operating with their largely Kurdish allies to contain terrorist threats. To avoid further escalation, it is likely that Turkey will limit its strikes to parts of Syria where there is no US presence. However, should the PKK or any affiliated group sustain their attacks in Turkey, there is a realistic possibility that Ankara will expand the scope of its strikes and potentially even sanction a limited ground offensive into northern Syria, despite warnings from the US and its allies.

## Syria:

### Drone swarm kills over 100 at military graduation ceremony.

On 5 October, a mass drone attack struck a military college in Syria's Homs province during a graduation ceremony, resulting in a death toll of at least 100 individuals and injuring around 240 more, according to the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights (SOHR). A spokesperson for the Syria Health Ministry anticipates that the death toll will increase due to the serious condition of many casualties. The majority of the victims were junior officers or their family members celebrating their graduation, reports indicate that the Syrian Minister of Defence, top officers of the Syrian Arab Army and several guest officers from other countries were also present. Early indications are that the senior military officers left before the attack while graduates poured onto the ceremony square to celebrate. To date, no group has claimed responsibility for the attack. However, Syria's military stated that drones carrying explosives targeted the graduation ceremony and accused fighters "backed by known international forces". The Syrian military has since heavily bombarded several towns and villages in the militant held Idlib Governorate with heavy artillery and rocket strikes.

**Assessment:** This attack represents a significant security breach and a blow to the Syrian regime that has not suffered an attack on this magnitude for several years within government-controlled territory. It is highly likely that the attack was an assassination attempt and that the main target was the Syrian Defence Minister and the accompanying senior military officers. The scale of the attack and the number of casualties involved will almost certainly provoke a brutal response from the Assad government, who has previously used chemical weapons and barrel bombs on civilian areas. While no group has claimed immediately responsibility for the attack it is likely that the Syrian government suspects the Islamist group Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS). HTS, which has links to Al-Qaeda and is openly backed by the Turkish government, has been in control of large swathes of the majority Sunni Idlib province since 2017. The group has used drones in the past to good effect but not with this degree of sophistication and not on this scale. The Syrian military's allusion to fighters backed by international forces is likely in reference to their suspicion that HTS is being enabled by Turkey, which would account for the increase in attack sophistication. The attack also demonstrates the degree of penetration into government-controlled Syria and freedom of movement HTS is afforded with. These factors combined with the success of the attack suggest that it is highly likely that such an attack methodology will be repeated by whatever group was responsible and will likely be emulated by other violent extremist organisations. Given the ubiquity and cheapness of commercial off the shelf drones and the



difficulties associated with detecting and engaging them, it is almost certain that drone swarm attacks will become a mainstay of extremist targeting methods.

## Israel:

### **Ultranationalist Jewish settlers storm the Al-Aqsa Mosque during Jewish holiday.**

Israeli settlers have entered the Al-Aqsa Mosque complex in East Jerusalem multiple times during the ongoing Sukkot holiday. These incursions follow several days of provocative tours by thousands of settlers, encouraged by ultranationalist Jewish groups. Jewish law typically prohibits Jews from entering any part of the Al-Aqsa Mosque compound, also known as the Temple Mount by the Jewish community, due to its sacred nature. Settlers began to perform Talmudic rituals within the confines of the Mosque and in a move to prevent escalation the police banned young Palestinians from entering the area. The Israeli Defence Forces (IDF) also ordered Palestinians to shut their stores in parts of the Old City in Jerusalem to allow Jewish prayers to take place. In separate events, multiple arrests were made in the Old City after ultranationalist Jews reportedly spat on Christians or at churches in what is being described as a developing campaign targeting Israeli Christians.

**Assessment:** The incursion into the Al-Aqsa Mosque complex is part of a broader trend of provocative actions by ultranationalist Jewish groups and settlers. These actions have almost certainly raised tensions in the region, particularly in East Jerusalem, which is a sensitive area due to its religious significance for Jews, Muslims, and Christians. The Israeli government's policies and the influence of ultranationalist elements have contributed to growing harassment and intimidation of non-Jewish communities in the Old City of Jerusalem, including Christians, which previously was incredibly rare as they make up only 15,000 of the city's inhabitants and do not have a tradition of clashing with Israeli forces. It is highly likely that the ultranationalist Jewish groups have become emboldened since the hard-right Israeli coalition government, led by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, came to power and are also likely exploiting the chaos caused by the plans to overhaul Israel's judiciary. The storming of the highly sensitive Al-Aqsa Mosque is likely to provoke more attacks against Israeli security services or civilians in either Israel or the West Bank, which will invariably be met with a swift and violent response from the IDF who are conducting almost daily raids into the West Bank to disrupt militant operations.

## The Sahel:

### **Militant violence erupts as Western influence wanes in Mali, Niger and Burkina Faso.**

Throughout the reporting period there have been a number of attacks on security services throughout the Sahel region by both rebel groups and violent jihadists. In Mali, Tuareg rebels have claimed to have seized another of the country's military bases in the north in the city of Bamba, adjacent to the river Niger and on the RN-33 highway, between the strategically significant cities of Timbuktu and Gao. In Niger, hundreds of jihadi militants ambushed the Nigerien Army on motorcycles near the border with Mali during a clearance operation aimed at neutralising the threat posed by Al-Qaeda and Islamic State linked groups. Using small arms fire and improvised explosive devices (IEDs), the jihadists managed to kill 29 Nigerien soldiers in what is being described as the worst jihadi attack since the coup in July. Additionally on 5 October, France has released a statement suggesting that it will begin to withdraw troops from Niger this week after being repeatedly asked to by the country's junta government.

**Assessment:** In the wake of multiple coups across the Sahel and the withdrawal or expulsion of Western forces, it is almost certain that militant groups, whether Islamist or nationalist in their nature, are exploiting the current security vacuum in the region. The impending withdrawal of approximately 1500 French troops and advanced Western capabilities from Niger will doubtlessly provide such groups with even more freedom of movement. It is likely that extremist and rebel groups will escalate the scale and frequency of their attacks to further undermine the current military juntas in Niger, Mali and Burkina Faso. It is likely that the respective juntas will respond

by conducting more anti-terrorist operations that will increase in brutality with less Western oversight. It is also highly likely that they will use the deteriorating security situation as an excuse to postpone the democratic process within the countries. There is a realistic possibility that these factors will only serve to enhance extremist recruitment. In Mali, it is likely that the Tuareg rebels are trying to isolate the regime in Bamako by seizing key terrain such as main supply routes in the north and central parts of the country and are exploiting the withdrawal of UN peacekeepers earlier this year. Should they continue to advance then there is a strong likelihood that they will effectively dislocate northern Mali from the south and significantly curtail the freedom of movement of government forces. Tuareg success will likely embolden jihadist groups in Mali, who will likely access that government forces are fixed with the Tuareg rebels. In Niger, it is almost certain that jihadist organisations will increase their attacks in the aftermath of the French withdrawal and will likely conduct operations closer to Niamey.

The tri-border area of Niger, Mali, and Burkina Faso has historically acted as a facilitation hub for extremists who likely exploit the porous borders, weak state presence and ethnic or tribal tensions to recruit, coordinate attacks, smuggle illicit goods and identify safe havens for fighters and operation centres. Now that all three countries have fallen to juntas and expelled Western forces, it is highly likely this region will serve as ungoverned space used to increase extent and intensity of operations.

**EMEA Forecast.** In Armenia, political instability continues following Azerbaijan's retaking of Nagorno-Karabakh, causing around 100,000 ethnic Armenians to seek refuge in Armenia. In response to Russia's lack of assistance, Yerevan has decided to join the International Criminal Court, meaning it now has a responsibility to arrest President Putin should he enter the country. Russia, aiming to enhance security in Central Asia and its near abroad, held talks with a Taliban delegation in Kazan resulting in Russia condemning the West for its complete failure in Afghanistan. In the UK, BAE Systems, Rolls Royce, and Babcock have received contracts for building the new AUKUS class submarines.

Liberia is scheduled to hold general elections on 10 October, with incumbent President Weah expected to secure a second term. Mozambique will conduct local elections on 11 November, likely leading to violence, occurring less than a year before delayed general elections due to constitutional revisions. Egypt's President Sisi has declared his candidacy for a third term in December's snap elections. He is expected to win after spending years consolidating his power.

Strike action in Nigeria has been temporarily postponed following agreements between major trade unions and the Federal Government, including a wage increase for government workers and subsidies for poor households. Saudi Arabia confirmed that it will maintain a production cut of 1 million barrels of oil a day through the end of the year. The announcement could further prop up oil prices, which are hovering around USD 90 a barrel with Riyadh hoping high oil prices will allow Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman to fund Vision 2030 and completely overhaul the Saudi economy.

In Italy, preparations are underway for potential mass evacuations around the Campi Flegrei super volcano near Naples, as increased seismic activity raises eruption concerns. Despite Europe being well into its autumn season, meteorologists predict an early October heatwave across Western Europe as a heat dome settles in, resulting in high temperatures in Spain, the UK, and Poland.



## Asia Pacific (APAC)

### Pakistan:

#### **Pakistan threatens to expel Afghan refugees after surge of terrorist attacks.**

Pakistan's Interior Ministry announced on Tuesday that nearly 2 million undocumented Afghan residents in the country must depart by the end of the month or face deportation. The move follows the Pakistani government's claim that Afghan nationals have been responsible for the majority of suicide bombings in the country this year, with 14 out of 24 incidents attributed to them. Interior Minister Sarfraz Bugti, who currently serves in a caretaker role, stated that approximately 1.73 million Afghan nationals residing in Pakistan lack legal documentation. Those who do not leave voluntarily will face deportation, although it remains unclear how the authorities will monitor departures and locate those who do not comply. Bugti warned that if individuals do not leave voluntarily, all law enforcement agencies at the provincial and federal levels will be deployed to enforce deportations. An unidentified government source even suggested a phased expulsion plan, starting with illegal residents, followed by those with Afghan citizenship, and concluding with individuals possessing proof of residence cards. Pakistan also announced that from 1 November, Afghans entering Pakistan will require valid passports and visas for entry.

**Assessment:** It is almost certain that the increasingly harsh stance against Afghan refugees correlates with a surge in violence attributed to the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), an insurgent group linked to the hardline Taliban Sunni militants who resumed control of Afghanistan two years ago. The TTP's main objective is to overthrow the democratic government of Pakistan and implement its own strict interpretation of Sharia law. Additionally, Pakistan faces an endemic threat from the Islamic State Khorasan Province (ISKP) which has traditionally operated within Afghanistan. Despite efforts made by Pakistani forces to secure its mountainous border region and contain extremist threats from Afghanistan, it is almost certain that the border remains porous and is acting as a major facilitation route for militants, illicit goods and arms. There is a high probability that Pakistan fears that both groups could exploit Afghan refugees within Pakistan for operations or hide among the refugee population. Many are almost certainly highly impoverished and stigmatised by the local population, and are thus susceptible to radicalisation, with western Pakistan likely proving to be a fertile recruiting ground for extremists. Pakistan also likely fears that ISKP is seeking to conduct more operations outside of Afghanistan after being heavily degraded by the Taliban and that Pakistan will be high on their agenda. There is also a high likelihood that many Afghans that have fled to Pakistan did so to flee the Taliban due to their previous associations with the previous Afghan government or foreign powers. Consequently, it is highly likely that many of these returning refugees will be persecuted or even executed by the Taliban.

### India:

#### **Flash flooding in Sikkim leads to dozens of deaths.**

On 4 October heavy flooding was reported in the north of Sikkim state following a cloudburst, consisting of sudden, very heavy rainfall, usually local in nature and of brief duration. The Indian Meteorological Department recorded over 101 millimetres of rainfall in the region in the first five days of October. The unprecedented rainfall resulted in the overflow of the glacial Lhonak Lake that caused record flash flooding in the lower altitude Lachen Valley. Local officials have also noted that the flooding was further exacerbated by water released from state-run National Hydroelectric Power Corporation's (NHPC) Teesta V dam. At the time of writing the death toll from the flooding is at least 40 with dozens of people still missing including 23 Indian soldiers. Significant infrastructure damage to the region has been reported with at least 15 bridges having

been destroyed. This current flooding remains one of the worst natural disasters in the region in over 50 years.

**Assessment:** The fatalities from the flooding are almost certain to rise in number and the cost related to the damage to infrastructure in the region is anticipated to be in the tens of millions of dollars. The main highway that connects Sikkim to the rest of the country has collapsed due to the ongoing floods. Due to the isolation of Sikkim from the rest of India rescue and rebuilding efforts are likely going to be slow and disjointed. Sikkim's economy is also heavily reliant on agricultural and ecotourism. The floods have destroyed thousands of acres of agricultural land that will take years to rejuvenate. Over 3,000 tourists also had to be evacuated from the towns of Lachen and Lachung. With both these important sectors of Sikkim's economy suffering significant damage, it is highly likely that the region will struggle for years to come. Civil discontent is not as common in Sikkim as it is in many other parts of India. However, local Sikkim officials have called out the Indian government with regard to their lack of preparedness for natural disasters in the region. Officials noted that the level of death and destruction could have been a lot less had the Indian government heeded the advice of scientists who had advised on implementing an effective early warning system for such disasters. Going forward the Indian National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) will be obligated to take greater notice of the water levels in glacial lakes in order to prevent any future occurrences of such widespread disasters in Sikkim or other Himalayan communities under their administration.

## The Maldives:

### Pro-China candidate wins presidential election.

On 30 September, voters in the Maldives went to the polls to vote in a Presidential run-off election. The two candidates were incumbent Ibrahim Mohamed Solih, seen as pro-India, and Mohamed Muizzu, seen as being pro-China. After the results were tallied up, Mr Muizzu had won over 54 percent of the vote. Mr Solih will serve as caretaker president until the inauguration of Mr Muizzu on 17 November.

**Assessment:** This outcome is likely to be viewed as a significant diplomatic setback for New Delhi, and by extension, Washington. During Mr. Solih's leadership, the Maldives had shifted away from the pro-China stance advocated by Mr. Muizzu in a previous government. Mr. Solih was elected five years ago amid growing discontent with escalating authoritarianism under former President Abdulla Yameen, as well as concerns about the country's increasing debt to Beijing through the Belt and Road Initiative. Mr. Yameen is widely recognised as Mr. Muizzu's political mentor. It is highly probable that the efforts made by Mr. Solih to align the Maldives more closely with India will be reversed. In fact, the president-elect has already pledged to withdraw Indian military personnel stationed in the archipelago state. The geopolitical positioning of the Maldives is of global significance as the strategic rivalry between Beijing and Washington intensifies. This is due to the country's strategic location in the middle of the Indian Ocean, intersecting one of the world's busiest east-west shipping routes that link the Middle East, Asia, and Africa.

**APAC Forecast.** Tensions will likely be strained in the Asia-Pacific region as North Korea turned off the nuclear reactor at its main atomic complex. It is likely the reactor has been turned off to extract plutonium that could be used for weapons by reprocessing spent fuel rods, which will ultimately be used in North Korean ballistic missile warheads. Japan has committed to buying US Tomahawk cruise missiles this week in a sign of its remilitarisation which will likely increase and diversify in response to both Chinese and North Korean threats. In the South China Sea, the Chinese Coast Guard has blocked vessels from the Philippines from resupplying disputed islands in the Second Thomas Shoal. China will likely continue to aggressively assert its territorial claims and there is a chance of escalation should the Philippines reject China's demands and respond in kind. On 6 October, authorities in the Philippines placed 42 airports on high alert after an anonymous tip that aeroplanes leaving Manila could explode. Airports in the Philippines will likely have advanced security protocols in place for the upcoming days, including more security

personnel, the deployment of specialist K9 units and more thorough searches of baggage. Long queues at airport security and delays are to be expected in the immediate future.

On 6 October, Taiwan has reported at least one fatality and recorded the world's third most powerful wind gust ever as Typhoon Koinu crashed past the island nation, causing waves over 7m high to crash into much of the coast. The typhoon has weakened but is not heading towards the densely populated province of Guangdong in southern China. It is almost certain that the typhoon will lash southern China with heavy rain, likely resulting in serious flooding across parts of the region. Much transport disruption is expected and it is likely that flights will be disrupted. Japan has begun its second release of treated radioactive water from the Fukushima nuclear plant. The second release is expected to last around 17 days and will entail the release of approximately 8000 tonnes of treated water. Despite Tokyo Electric's best efforts to curtail fears, it is almost certain that the release will spark tensions with neighbouring countries and provoke consternation amongst environmental groups, especially as the entire release process is forecasted to last around 30 years.