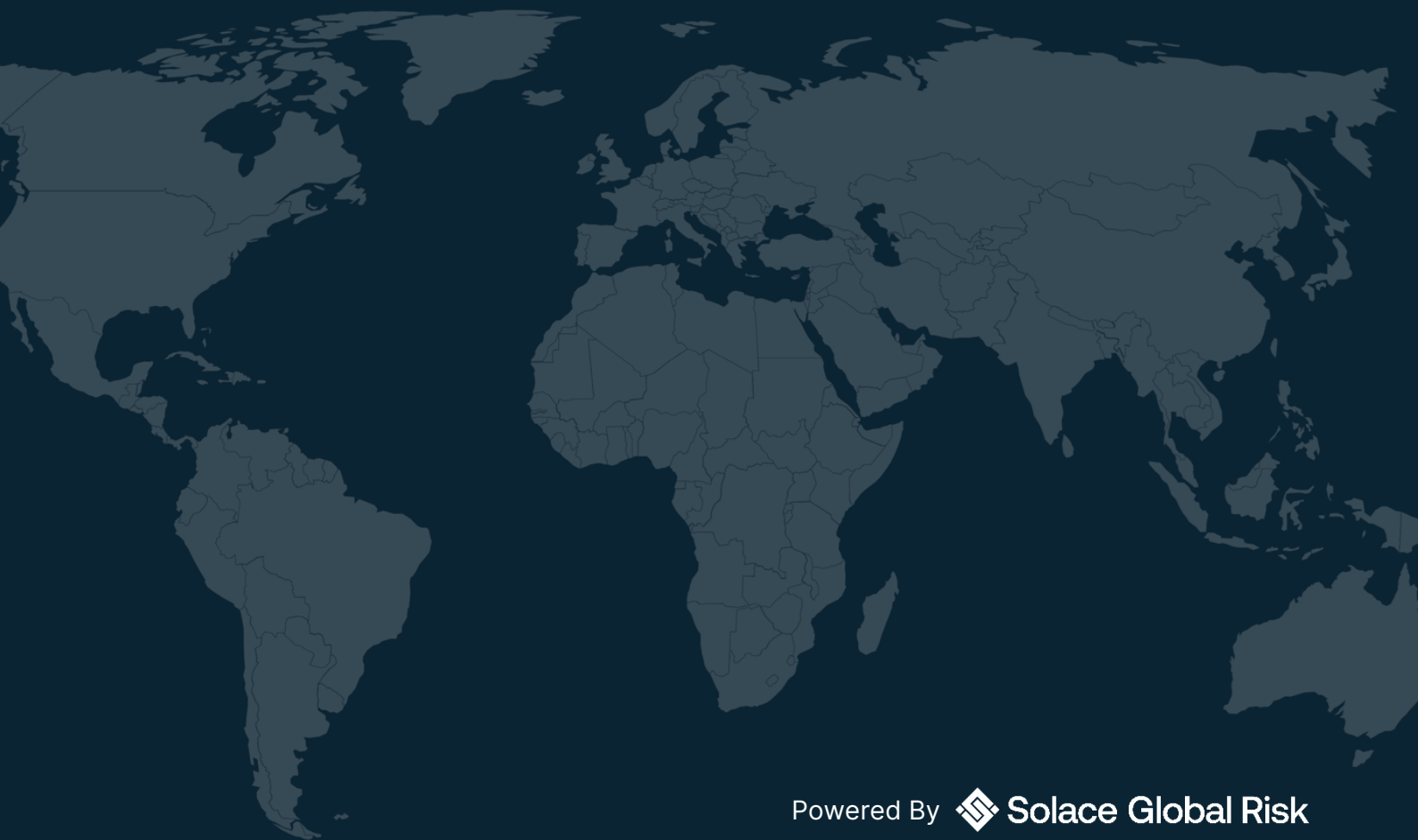




Global Intelligence Summary

REPORTING PERIOD: 26 APR – 3 MAY





Global Intelligence Summary

Week 17: 26 April – 3 May

Executive Summary

- **Ecuador's** declaration of a state of emergency in several provinces is **almost certainly** a response to the support for its security referendum and will lead to military deployments.
- The ongoing police operations in **Rio de Janeiro's** favelas are **unlikely** to damage the local crime syndicates, and will **most likely** worsen risks to civilians, journalists and humanitarian workers.
- There is a **realistic possibility** that a proposed ceasefire deal between **Israel** and **Hamas** will result in a momentary truce. However, a long-term settlement remains **unlikely**.
- A record-breaking heatwave in **Southeast Asia** will **almost certainly** result in heat-related illnesses and deaths across the region.



Figure 1: Significant activity identified during the current reporting period.

AMER

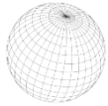
- 1 Ecuador:** Government prepares to take on gangs
- 2 Brazil:** Security services raid Rio's favelas
- 3 Argentina:** Milei scores first legislative win amid large protests

EMEA

- 4 Israel and Gaza:** Ceasefire proposal could pause war, university protests
- 5 Sudan:** Major Darfur city preparing for RSF offensive
- 6 The Sahel:** Juntas continue to pivot towards Russia

APAC

- 7 India:** Anti-Maoist operations intensify during election
- 8 South Korea:** Seoul warns of North Korean attacks throughout Asia
- 9 Southeast Asia:** Record-breaking heatwave engulfs the region.



Global Dates and Events

In this edition of the GIS, we are introducing a section that covers events of global importance, including international holidays and celebrations, as well as developments that have no specific regional “epicentre”, but still influence local risk levels and trends.

International Workers’ Day – also known as Labour Day – took place on **1 May**. The holiday is officially recognised in most countries, where it is often celebrated with public gatherings and events. Due to its political background, it is often met with left-wing demonstrations. Workers Day celebrations and protests are also common in countries that do not recognise 1 May as an official holiday, or that celebrate Labour Day on a different date. Protests on 1 May have been recorded in various cities in Europe, with some French urban centres – like Lyon – seeing riots and clashes with police forces. Labour Day protests and disorders have almost certainly been amplified by ongoing international crises, such as the Israel-Gaza war.

The **Orthodox Church** celebrates **Easter** on **5 May** this year. Due to the religious nature of the holiday, there is an increased chance of terrorist activity targeting Orthodox Churches, both in Orthodox-majority countries and in countries with large Orthodox Christian minorities. In particular, both Russia and Ukraine officially recognise the holiday, and there is a realistic possibility of increased military activity on this day, including increased strikes on civilian infrastructure. Lebanon, too, officially recognises the holiday, and the ongoing sectarian violence plaguing the country makes disorders likely on 5 May, especially in particularly religiously diverse urban centres.

Yom HaShoah – or Holocaust Remembrance Day – takes place on **6 May**. Due to the ongoing Israel-Gaza war, it is almost certain that the commemoration will see an increased level of civil unrest, with Jewish communities in Western cities very likely to stage public demonstrations and a high likelihood of counterdemonstrations by pro-Palestine activists. There is a realistic possibility of sporadic cases of antisemitic and inter-ethnic violence.

The number of **universities** seeing **pro-Palestine protests** continues to grow, with hotspots in the US East Coast, California, and France. In New York, Columbia University students have occupied much of the university campus, leading to hundreds of arrests and an almost complete shutdown of in-person academic activity. At the University of California Los Angeles (UCLA), on 1 May, clashes were reported between pro-Israel and pro-Palestine protesters. In France, students at Sorbonne and Sciences Po, two of the main Parisian higher education institutes, have blocked entrances to university buildings and disrupted traffic in some central streets of the capital. It is likely that, with an Israeli offensive on Rafah still possible despite ceasefire talks having resumed, protests will continue and possibly amplify in the coming weeks.



Americas (AMER)

Ecuador:

State of emergency introduced in Ecuador's coastal provinces.

On 30 April, President Daniel Noboa declared a state of emergency in five of Ecuador's coastal provinces, justifying the decree over an "internal armed conflict". Emergency measures will be implemented in the provinces of El Oro, Guayas, Los Rios, Manabi and Santa Elena and will last for at least 60 days. The decree will result in the combined deployment of the police and armed forces to conduct tactical combat operations against organised armed groups.

Assessment: The emergency measures introduced by President Noboa follow a nationwide referendum in late April which allowed citizens to vote on a series of measures aimed at tackling organised crime. The majority of Ecuadoreans approved the new measures, which included extraditing gang leaders to the US and a major expansion in the powers of both the police and military. The referendum almost certainly passed as a result of the deterioration in the security situation in Ecuador, which has seen the country go from one of the safest in Latin America to one of the most dangerous, where gang violence is endemic, and dozens of politicians have been slain by organised crime. The violence in the country is almost certainly linked to Ecuador's use by transregional drug cartels who continue to see value in the country as a major cocaine trafficking hub. This trend did not emerge until the early 2000s and in the past 20 years the cartels have strengthened their grip over the country. Successful anti-narcotic operations in neighbouring Peru and Colombia pushed the cartels towards Ecuador, who have exploited a relatively lax security environment and have used the country's banana exports to smuggle cocaine. The situation was made worse when Ecuador dollarised the economy, making international transactions and money laundering easier to achieve. Then in 2009, President Correa, who has been heavily linked to organised crime, shut down the US naval base at Manta, creating a blind spot in Ecuadorian waters, with the US previously being the primary interdictor of narcotics. With Ecuador now established as a major cocaine hub, with almost every major port and airfield being used to move narcotics, organised gangs escalated the violence to control and expand territory and even started a campaign targeting politicians against them. President Noboa, who is likely attempting to emulate the strategies of President Bukele in El Salvador, has calculated that expanded police and military powers will be required to curtail the violence. However, after decades of slowly infiltrating the country, the cartel's power and levels of corruption within the country are easy to underestimate. Noboa may likely have miscalculated, especially as the street-level which the security services will target first gangs are backed by the major Mexican and Colombian cartels with efforts to decrease the violence potentially leading to an escalation of violence and a renewed targeting of politicians.

Brazil:

War between police and gangs erupts in Rio favelas.

On 26 April, the Brazilian military police and Rio de Janeiro police force launched a joint crackdown on organised crime in one of the city's largest favelas, the Complexo do Alemão. The target of the operation was the Comando Vermelho (CV), or "Red Command", a faction composed of a network of organised crime groups and up to 30,000 members. More than 350 police officers were involved in the operation, which quickly led to chaos erupting in the overcrowded quarter, with cars being set on fire and makeshift barricades being erected. Further police operations are ongoing at the time of writing.

Assessment: Criminal enterprises often act as parallel structures of governance within Brazil's overcrowded favelas, maintaining a degree of informal legitimacy through a mix of terror and economic inducements. The Brazilian government continues to struggle to find a comprehensive approach to undermine their presence. Over the last two decades, Brazilian officials have increasingly adopted a violent stance, seeking to resolve the problem of gangs' presence by exterminating their members. The Bolsonaro government was a particularly strong proponent of violent repression and, while the new Lula administration has seemingly rejected its predecessor's approach, it is often local governors who play the crucial role in choosing which type of policies to implement. At the same time, efforts to address the economic systems fuelling the criminal groups' authority have been insufficient. Instead, projects such as the Cidade Integrada ("integrated City") strategy implemented in Rio advocate for quasi-military-style occupations of favelas by police forces. This has resulted, however, in repeated botched operations, often causing dozens of civilian deaths and negligible progress in dismantling criminal enterprises. In 2023, residents and civil society groups of São Paulo state made a formal request to the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) to demand the end of the local police's "Operation Shield", citing the arbitrary killings of unarmed civilians by police forces, often through summary executions. Rio continues to be a hotspot for such incidents, especially under the leadership of Governor Claudio Castro. In 2021, the Jacarezinho massacre resulted in 29 deaths following a police incursion against CV. Although civilians likely made up a large majority of the individuals killed during the shootout, the operation was received largely favourably by the Rio press, which likely demonstrates the ongoing support by more affluent metropolitan residents for the hardline approach. An Amnesty International report highlighted the Rio police operations' state of almost total impunity, with the local government officials repeatedly refusing to implement measures meant to decrease the risk of police brutality episodes and increase accountability, such as the use of body-worn cameras and microphones. It is likely that such an approach is increasing local crime networks' ability to retain their authority in the long term. Academic research shows that police action has a generally negative impact on favelas' residents' support for official institutions, fuelling anti-police sentiment instead. CV was reported as having expanded its regional control in the Greater Rio area between 2022-2023, despite the intensity of police operations in the favelas controlled by the group, and in 2023 approximately 18 per cent of the urban areas within the region were under criminal or armed groups' control. It is unlikely that the ongoing police operations will be successful in dismantling or reducing CV strength in the area.

Argentina:

Milei reforms pass in lower chamber, met with public protests.

On 30 April, Argentine President Javier Milei achieved his first major (yet partial) legislative victory, as his "omnibus" bill, which includes sweeping economic reforms, was passed by the country's lower chamber of parliament. The approved text is a heavily edited version of the original, which was rejected in February, and will now go to the Senate, where it is expected to face stronger opposition. During the entire legislative session, protests were held in much of Buenos Aires and other parts of Argentina.

Assessment: Milei's unorthodox economic reforms, which included, so far, the slashing by decree of tens of thousands of government jobs, the abolition of entire ministries, and the imposition of spending cuts on surviving ones, have led to massive demonstrations. Before the bill's approval, Argentina already suffered from a wave of student- and professor-led protests, reacting to government plans to slash academic institutions' budgets. The new legislation has added fuel to the fire, as the privatisation and lower taxation thresholds it includes have led to various unions, including the oilseed and maritime workers' unions, to join the protesting students. While the workers' strike was called off soon after its beginning, the overlapping demonstrations likely demonstrate a wave of discontent affecting different parts of Argentina's civil society. Milei, admittedly, has repeatedly warned that his reforms would inflict significant economic pain on the

population before their positive effects could be felt. However, with approximately six in ten Argentinians living in poverty, and inflation approaching 290 percentage points, it is likely that the government is fighting a battle against time to deliver its promises. In the meantime, the combination of the protests and the adverse economic effects of Milei's policies have worsened Argentina's overall risk profile. The public transport system in Buenos Aires and other urban centres has repeatedly faced paralysing strikes. In February, an aviation workers' strike, prompted by stagnating pay and soaring inflation, grounded more than 100 flights. Spurred by widespread poverty, significant upticks in crime have also started to be recorded in the country, which has historically struggled with organised crime syndicates. In the Santa Fe province, where Rosario is located, authorities have increasingly adopted measures reminiscent of the hardline approach popularised by El Salvador's President Bukele to curb a spike in drug-related killings and shootings. Yet, Milei's situation is likely improved by two factors. The first is the approval of the omnibus package. While there is a realistic possibility that the Senate may reject it, the lower house's approval likely granted the President a new wave of political capital for further reforms, resolving a stalemate that could have threatened the administration. Secondly, despite difficulties at home, Milei has rapidly solidified Argentina's place within the pro-West camp at the international level. The President's decision to withdraw his country's application to join the BRICS, followed by repeated attacks on China, was received well in Washington. Since taking office in 2023, three of the President's foreign visits have been in the US. Outside of a trip to Davos, the other two diplomatic visits have been to Italy and Israel – the former ruled by one of Europe's most staunchly pro-American leaders, and the latter taking place in the context of the Israel-Hamas war, which has heavily threatened Washington's global popularity. On 2 May, an Argentinian decision to refuse to resupply Cuban airline Cubana planes with fuel essentially closed the air route between the two countries, in another symbolic gesture separating Argentina from its left-wing-oriented neighbours and re-stating adherence to Washington's foreign policy. There is a realistic possibility that Milei sees closer political ties to Washington as a precondition for increasing levels of investment in the medium term, possibly leading to beneficial results at home, and aiding the transition away from a foreign policy more favourable to China. Milei likely also understands that it is in the US' interest to favour Argentina's stability and that its alignment with the West is a further bonus considering neighbouring Brazil's post-Bolsonaro left-wing shift.

AMER Summary and Forecast:

Politics, Economics and Civil Unrest.

The Senate of the **US** state of **Arizona** voted, on 2 May, to repeal an almost total abortion ban that had been passed by the state's Supreme Court last month. The vote represents the latest legislative battle between the pro-choice and anti-abortion fronts since the federal Supreme Court voted to repeal the landmark *Roe v. Wade* ruling of 1973. The vote, which is a victory for the pro-choice camp, will likely result in minor civil unrest within the state's main urban centres.

In **Haiti**, the Transitional Council appointed a Prime Minister and President on 1 May, marking a further step in the country's difficult journey towards stability. In the meantime, powerful gang leaders have called for the council to "listen" to them. While it is unlikely that the government will abide by the gangs' requests, armed groups now control most of the capital city of Port-au-Prince and will likely react to a refusal by intensifying attacks on government institutions.

Panama is set to hold a general election on 5 May, with the current leading candidate for the presidency, Jose Raul Mulino, being a last-minute stand-in who promises to lead the country back to its boom times. Mulino became a surprise frontrunner after former President Ricardo Martinelli was deemed ineligible following a money laundering conviction and many perceive Mulino as a puppet of the former leader. Whoever wins the election will have to grapple with several controversial issues, such as the closure of a huge Canadian-run copper mine, a drought that has affected the use of the Panama Canal and the use of Panama as a transit route for migrants heading to the US. Martinelli has previously objected to the closure of the mine and a Mulino

victory could set the conditions for an overturning of the ruling, which will almost certainly lead to civil unrest in the country.

Ecuador and **Mexico** are engaged in a legal battle at the International Court of Justice (ICJ) over Ecuador's raiding of the Mexican embassy in Quito. A host of nations have rallied around Mexico, condemning Ecuador's actions and leading to the further isolation of Quito in Latin America.

On 29 April, three opposition activists were arrested in **Venezuela** following campaign events by opposition leaders. The Maduro regime has ramped up arrests in recent weeks, likely in preparation for the July elections. Arrests have often been carried out with vague and unclear accusations, leading to prolonged detentions that are likely meant to intimidate critics of the regime. US officials have reimposed oil sanctions on Venezuela due to the lack of integrity in the country's electoral process, and Maduro is likely using this development to stoke nationalist sentiment in the country. With the elections approaching, it is almost certain that attacks on independent civil society actors, and on media, will increase, possibly posing a significant threat to travellers in the country.

Security, Armed Conflict and Terror.

On 30 April, **Colombian** President Gustavo Petro revealed that a significant amount of military weaponry, including over a million bullets, explosives, and missiles, is missing from bases, attributing the loss to corruption. The loss of military hardware has prompted efforts to dismantle corruption networks within the country's security services, with many assessed to have links to both organised crime and rebel groups. The news will likely be interpreted as another failure of the Petro administration's attempts to achieve total peace, with much of the weaponry likely landing in the hands of militant groups. Also in **Colombia**, the army has clashed with elements of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia – People's Army (FARC) splinter group, the National Liberation Army (EMC). The clash, which occurred in southwest Colombia near the Ecuadorian border, resulted in the deaths of at least 15 rebels and is likely further evidence of President Petro's failed bid to secure "total peace".

The **Chilean** Senate has approved an anti-terrorism law which will now move to the Chamber of Deputies and if successful will overturn regulations established in 1984. The law will redefine terrorism in Chile and the associated penalties, including the financing of terrorism. Critics have argued that the law will enable the government to act more aggressively against the Mapuche people, indigenous people who have fought the central government over their ancestral lands, often resulting in deadly clashes between the Mapuche and the security services.

Environment, Health and Miscellaneous.

Dozens of tornadoes devastated parts of the central **United States**, killing at least five people in **Oklahoma** and **Iowa**, with further damage reported in much of the Midwest and even as far south as Texas. A separate weather system caused dozens of tornadoes on 26 April, affecting much of Iowa and Nebraska. The severe weather conditions forced various flights to be rerouted and caused an American Airlines flight to Chicago to make an emergency landing due to a lightning strike. The intensity and frequency of extreme weather events, including tornadoes, continue to rise across the US. Hotter, more moisture-heavy air conditions in central US states, possibly favoured by anthropogenic climate change, are likely creating more opportunities for the formation of damaging storms, leading to tornadoes.

Health authorities in **Guatemala** have declared a national state of emergency in response to the ongoing Dengue fever outbreak with more than 15,000 cases reported across the country. Guatemala now joins an ever-growing list of Latin American countries that are suffering from the disease, almost certainly exacerbated by the conditions caused by El Nino that favour the spread of mosquitoes. Similar calls for a state of emergency have been echoed in neighbouring Honduras, sparking fears that the disease will spread across Central America and even into the Caribbean if infected people travel throughout the region.

At least 29 people have been killed, and more than 60 are reported missing following torrential rains that struck the **Rio Grande do Sul** state, in **Brazil**. In the last days of April, the state reportedly received around three-quarters of its yearly rainfall volume, leading to widespread flooding, damage to buildings and infrastructure, and transport disruptions. Poor infrastructure across the region has likely delayed rescue efforts, increasing the death toll of the floods. There is a high likelihood that the floods' impact will continue over the coming week.

Dozens of people in Buenos Aires, **Argentina** have fallen ill with a mysterious form of pneumonia, sparking fears over a new epidemic. Several cases are being linked to psittacosis, or "parrot fever", caused by bacteria found in bird excretions. The severity of the outbreak is yet to be determined and will be gauged by human-to-human transmission rates, with current estimates suggesting that these rates are negligible.





Europe, Middle East & Africa (EMEA)

Israel and Gaza:

More ceasefire talks as global universities see widespread protests.

After a month of stalemated talks, a leaked ceasefire deal, confirmed by Egyptian and Hamas officials, was released including a proposal for a 40-day end to hostilities, and a longer-term framework for establishing a lasting peace. On 3 May, Hamas officials announced that their delegation would return to Cairo, where ceasefire talks were previously held. In the meantime, a wave of protests has erupted across much of the Western world, increasing foreign scrutiny of Israel's handling of the conflict. In particular, the United States and France have been the two countries most affected, with many elite academic institutions being forced to close their campuses and suspend classes.

Assessment: If accepted, the ceasefire proposal would represent a major compromise for both the Israelis and Hamas. For the latter, it would amount to surrendering its major bargaining chip, the remaining Israeli hostages, as well as agreeing to not rebuild its military strength in the long term. This latter point is particularly worrying for the Hamas leadership, even outside of the Israeli threat. The targeted killing, in March, of the leader of the Doghmush clan demonstrates that Hamas continues to contend with local militias and groups that seek to take advantage of its weakness to gain political and economic dominance at a local level. Hamas' overwhelming military superiority within Gaza has likely deterred such groups from attempting to seize power within the major Gaza urban centres. However, a disarmed Hamas would likely appear to these militants, many of whom espouse a much more aggressive form of Islamism, as an increasingly desirable target. For Tel Aviv, the deal would mean the abandonment of what has so far been the main driver of the war for the Netanyahu administration: the destruction of Hamas as a political and military entity. However, with no victory over Hamas to show after months of fighting, the administration would likely face severe domestic opposition, possibly leading to a government crisis and a significant setback for the Likud party. Even sacrificing Netanyahu, who has become the "face" of the conflict and therefore a politically uncomfortable figure for many in the Knesset, may not be sufficient to appease an Israeli constituency which, for the most part, still favours a decisive resolution to the conflict. Finally, it is unlikely that the security dilemma between the two sides will be resolved without significant third-party oversight, a situation that Israeli officials would most likely reject. For these reasons, there is a high likelihood that the long-term part of the deal will fail to be implemented. This also makes it likely that, even if the 40-day end of hostilities were to be agreed on, clashes would resume soon after. Israeli officials likely assume that Hamas would take advantage of the truce to rebuild its strength in areas of Gaza currently occupied by units of the Israel Defence Forces (IDF) and will therefore be reticent to comply with requirements to retreat past the Netzarim corridor in the short term. The high likelihood of an incident – such as a lone actor attack targeting IDF forces – causing the breakdown of the truce also compounds these difficulties, making it inevitably precarious. While the calculations made by the Netanyahu administration most likely do not consider the requests made by students at Columbia University or Sciences Po, there is a realistic possibility that the mass arrests of student protesters are contributing to fuelling Western calls for a ceasefire deal. In the United States, for instance, the ruling Democratic Party, which benefits heavily from its popularity among university students and college-educated Americans, likely aims to avoid alienating a fundamental constituency in a presidential election year, and, in France, the Macron administration is almost certainly actively seeking to reduce the risks affecting an Olympic Games season that has been repeatedly described as a "security nightmare" due to the threat of Islamist terrorism.

The Sahel:

West continues to cede influence to Russia in VEO stronghold.

The US has begun withdrawing its troops from a French-run military base in Chad after the country's junta government demanded that they leave in April. The troops were part of the US Special Operations Task Force that conducted anti-jihadist operations across the Sahel. More than half of the troops based at the facility in Chad's capital of N'Djamena have now relocated to Germany, but a small detachment of troops will remain stationed at the US embassy in Chad. A spokesperson for the Pentagon stated that the withdrawal was part of a comprehensive review of US military operations in the region and will continue after Chad's 6 May presidential election. In neighbouring Niger, another military-run Sahelian state that has demanded the withdrawal of US forces, it was confirmed on 2 May that Russian troops have entered the country. The Russian military contingent is being housed at Airbase 101 in the capital Niamey, the same facility as the US forces.

Assessment: The partial US withdrawal from Chad follows a series of setbacks for Washington in the Sahel region, where junta governments have demanded an end to Western military operations and pivoted towards Moscow. Chad's incumbent ruler and former general, President Mahamat Deby, is the outright favourite to win the 6 May presidential election after being proclaimed head of state by the Chadian Army in 2021 and after a campaign stifling all credible opposition. Chad remains the only Sahelian country with a substantial Western military presence, with over 1,000 French troops stationed there. The loss of Chad to the West will almost certainly be a huge setback for its counter-violent extremist organisation (VEO) operations in the Sahel. France has recently bolstered its forces in Chad and Deby's current stance on a Western military presence in Chad remains inconclusive. However, the recent demand that US troops withdraw from the country may be seen as a precursor for Chad following the precedent set by Mali, Niger and Burkina Faso in favouring Russia over the West. There is a realistic possibility that Deby will reveal his country's trajectory if he secures the presidency on 6 May. Deby only met with President Putin in January 2024, who congratulated Deby for stabilising Chad and championed the opportunities for economic cooperation and bilateral ties. However, with the War in Ukraine ongoing and Russia likely to conduct a summer offensive, it is highly unlikely that Russia has the resources to simultaneously establish a major military presence across the Sahel. The Kremlin will likely prioritise the countries where anti-Western sentiment is highest and where the junta governments have already publicly courted Russian assistance, such as in Mali, Niger and Burkina Faso. Russia has already expanded its military presence in Mali and the limited deployment of troops to Niger will almost certainly be viewed as a major victory that sends a strategic message to Washington regarding Russia's intent and even success. The deployment follows the creation of Russia's Africa Corps- a paramilitary structure with a similar constitution to the Wagner Group but that falls directly under the Kremlin. The Africa Corps sent military advisors to Niger in April, which was likely shaping activity for the recent deployment which almost certainly involves elements of the Africa Corps. Russia will likely seek to use the Africa Corps to expand its influence in Africa at the expense of the West, by offering low-cost security in exchange for access to mineral wealth. Sahelian states have all demonstrated admiration for Moscow and have likely calculated that Russia's counter-VEO strategy will be more successful than the West's which is restricted to stricter rules of engagement. Moreover, a retrograde of Western forces will also entail less oversight, allowing junta governments to pursue a more brutal strategy, with recent reports from Burkina Faso indicating that military forces have slaughtered hundreds of civilians just weeks after the arrival of Russian forces. Western leaders likely assess that this strategy will be counter-productive in the long term by playing into the hands of the VEOs, several of which are linked to transregional groups like the Islamic State (IS) and al-Qaeda (AQ). The primary fear is that these VEOs will expand their operations into coastal West African states and potentially gain the influence and expertise to conduct external operations which target Western interests outside of the region, in a similar vein to AQ in Afghanistan. Consequently, France will attempt to maintain its presence in Chad and the US has already begun exploring options to establish a military presence in Benin, Togo and Ghana to contain the threat.

Sudan:

Capital of North Darfur preparing for RSF offensive.

The US ambassador to the United Nations warned on 29 April that the capital city of Sudan's North Darfur region, El-Fasher, is facing an impending "large-scale massacre" as troops from the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) and its allied militias approach the city. The city has to date been relatively unscathed by the fighting between the RSF and the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF), but recent reports indicate that the RSF have razed multiple villages west of the city and have gradually surrounded the city since 14 April.

Assessment: The RSF, established in 2013 and backed by the Sudanese government to combat rebel factions during the Darfur conflict (2003-2020), is estimated to have a force of over 100,000 troops, supplemented by allied militias. The paramilitary group is largely comprised of Janjaweed Arab nomads and has forged allegiances with other Arab militias who have traditionally competed for resources with many of the Darfur region's non-Arab tribes and ethnic groups, such as the Fur, Zaghawa and Masalit. As many as 400,000 of these groups were killed in the Darfur genocide, either through conflict or the indirect consequences of disease and famine. When the War in Sudan began in 2023, it was largely confined to the predominantly Arab areas of the country. However, as the fighting intensified there were fears it would spread to the Darfur region and provoke inter-ethnic violence. The RSF now control most of the Darfur region and has killed thousands, initiating the displacement of millions and raising concerns over a major humanitarian catastrophe. Recent estimates from the UK's Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) suggest that as many as 14 million children are in dire need of humanitarian assistance, almost five million have lost their homes and more than 70 per cent of hospitals in conflict areas are unable to function. The fall of El-Fasher will almost certainly compound the humanitarian situation as it serves as the main humanitarian hub for the vast western region of Darfur. Moreover, reports indicate that the RSF have control of the main supply routes in and out of the city, blocking aid from entering or exiting the city. SAF jets are also bombing RSF positions within the city, some of which are next to displacement camps within the city, leading to civilian casualties. Control of the roads to the west of El Fasher will also block refugees from heading towards Chad- the primary destination for displaced people, leaving those fleeing the violence few options and increasing the chances of a massacre. Control of El-Fasher will also likely enable the RSF to dominate the Darfur region. Without foreign intervention, it is unlikely that the advance of the RSF will be prevented. However, with a war in Ukraine and a conflict in the Middle East, international aid or military and diplomatic efforts are likely to be overstretched or prioritised elsewhere. This has likely emboldened the RSF who are likely to exploit the lack of oversight whilst this opportunity is afforded to them. Moreover, there are accusations that the RSF is being funded and supplied by the UAE in exchange for access to resources, allowing the RSF to procure advanced weaponry such as drones. The UAE has received some international condemnation for its role in the war in Sudan. However, it is concurrently playing a pivotal role in mediation efforts in the Israel-Hamas conflict, a conflict that has the potential to escalate, a factor that has likely decreased international pressure on the UAE, suggesting arms are likely to continue to flow into Sudan.

EMEA Summary and Forecast:

Politics, Economics and Civil Unrest.

The **United Kingdom** began checking EU fresh food imports on 30 April. There is a realistic possibility that the checks will cause increased delays at the Calais-Dover border crossing, with possible adverse effects on small producers, and rising prices for consumers.

In **London**, dozens of arrests were made as protesters sought to block the first transfer of asylum seekers to a floating barge in **Dorset**. The incident resulted in the postponement of the transfer

operations. The Sunak administration has made hardline policies to tackle irregular migration one of its electoral staples. It is likely that, following a disastrous showing at the local elections on 2 May, the ruling Conservative party will seek to invest in the migrants' issue to seek to build popular support in advance of the future general elections, scheduled to be held within a year. Further commitments to the Dorset barge transferrals, as well as the controversial Rwanda plan, may however result in an increased volume of anti-government protests, possibly leading to traffic disruptions in London and other urban areas where migrants are currently being housed.

The Eurovision Song Contest is scheduled to begin in **Malmö, Sweden**, on 7 May, with the final taking place on 11 May. The contest is one of the most-watched cultural events globally and, despite its "apolitical" position, is often a platform for more or less overtly nationalistic displays. This year, there is a high likelihood that Eurovision will see significant protests motivated by the Gaza-Israel conflict. Israel is one of the participant countries, and its submitted song had its lyrics altered due to containing references to the 7 October Hamas terrorist attack. Malmö has a large Muslim community, and there is a realistic possibility that the city will see protests and demonstrations meant to disrupt the Eurovision event, or possibly harass attendees. Due to the increased media presence, there is an increased likelihood of lone-actor terrorist attacks.

On 1 May, **Spain** narrowly avoided a government crisis as Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez announced, after days of speculation, that he would not resign. The Social leader reportedly considered resigning after revelations that a court in Madrid opened an inquiry into his wife regarding allegations of influence peddling. There is a realistic possibility that right-wing groups will stage protests against Sánchez in the coming days, possibly leading to some minor traffic disruptions in major urban centres.

Also on 1 May, approximately 1,500 neofascists staged a march in the streets of **Milan, Italy**, to commemorate the anniversary of the killing of an activist in the 1970s. Images of the demonstrations, which featured Roman salutes and an assortment of fascist symbols, quickly spread online and attracted criticism of the Italian government for not issuing an official condemnation of the event. Far-right groups are well-rooted in Italy, where they are often related to violent football supporters' ("Ultras") formations or crime syndicates. Demonstrations of this magnitude are not unusual, and at times result in clashes involving the police forces or left-wing counter protesters.

The second round of **North Macedonia's** presidential elections is scheduled to take place on 8 May. The first vote saw a dominant victory achieved by the opposition, led by Gordana Siljanovska-Davkova. Also on 8 May, a parliamentary election will be held. Siljanovska-Davkova is projected to win the runoff vote, and the parliamentary election polls see her party comfortably in the lead. While both major political blocs in North Macedonia are Europhiles, the opposition is markedly more nationalistic, rejecting, for instance, the country's 2017 name change, and a Bulgaria-sponsored proposed constitutional change. There is therefore a realistic possibility that a clear opposition victory may result in future diplomatic spats between North Macedonia and its neighbouring EU members, possibly extending the timeline for the country's accession into the EU.

Violence has erupted in **Georgia** in response to the security service's handling of a demonstration against a controversial "Russian law", resulting in tear gas and rubber bullets being deployed on the streets of Tbilisi and widespread disruption to transport. The bill requires organisations receiving over 20 per cent of their funding from abroad to register as foreign agents. Critics have argued that the bill echoes Russia's repressive measures to curtail dissent and has resulted in the EU and US urging Georgia to repeal the bill.

UAE officials have announced plans to move the **Dubai** International Airport (DXB) to a new facility over the next decade. The facility, Al Maktoum International Airport, would cost an estimated USD 35 billion, and almost double the number of runways servicing Dubai. The UAE has recovered quickly from the pandemic, and, like Saudi Arabia, it is increasingly taking measures to diversify its economy, heavily investing in tourism. Renders of the airport are heavily reminiscent of similar

regional “megaprojects” – like Saudi Arabia’s proposed 170km-long “Line” skyscraper (now scaled back to 2km) – and likely underscores Gulf countries’ commitment to rely on massive building projects as ways to attract foreign investment and tourism. Contrarily to Saudi Arabia’s megaprojects, it is likely that the Al Maktoum facility will be completed, resulting in a higher influx of foreign travellers in the UAE. At the same time, Gulf countries’ building projects – such as the facilities used for the Qatar-hosted 2022 FIFA World Cup – have attracted international criticism for poor workers’ rights and conditions. Consequently, there is a realistic possibility that the airport’s construction will have adverse effects on the UAE’s image.

On 6 May, **Chad** will become the first junta-led country of the Sahel region to hold an election. There is a high likelihood that the vote, which was preceded by a crackdown on opposition parties and movements – including the likely state-sanctioned killing of opposition leader Yaya Dillo – will be rigged in favour of interim President Mahamat Idriss Deby, who announced his candidacy despite previous reassurances that he would not run. Currently, Chad is following the lead of other regional junta governments in expelling Western forces from its territory. There is a high likelihood that Deby’s almost certain victory will further accelerate the process, likely leading to a pivot towards cooperation with Russia like those in Mali and Niger. The departure of Western forces may create a period of security vacuum, that may allow jihadists in the country to intensify their attacks and recruitment efforts.

In **Cotonou, Benin**, local police forces dispersed protests on 27 April by using tear gas. The demonstrations were called by local trade unions and were prompted by concerns over increased costs of living and stagnating wages. In Benin, the minimum salary has increased by approximately a quarter since 2023, up to the equivalent of USD 85 per month, not enough to match simultaneous increases in the price of food and fuel over the same period. The arrest of union leaders, and the brutality of police repression, will likely further fuel political instability and civil unrest. Benin is Africa’s leading cotton producer, and the government has recently invested in developing domestic processing facilities, thus boosting Benin’s export value. If they expand to industrial areas like the Glo-Djigbe Industrial Zone, the demonstrations could have a limited but notable impact on international trade and supply chains for the textile industry.

Security, Armed Conflict and Terror.

An Islamist demonstration in **Hamburg**, with around 1,000 attendees, raised eyebrows in the **German** parliament on 27 April. The event was staged by Muslim Interaktiv, a group which allegedly acts as the rebranded German chapter of the pan-Islamist organization Hizb ut-Tahrir (H-uT), which is banned in various countries including the UK. H-uT was founded in 1953 in Jerusalem and espouses a form of Salafism calling for the establishment of a global Caliphate. Although formally non-violent, several Islamist foreign fighters have been associated in some way with H-uT chapters in their respective countries, and some of its manifestos still available online include calls for the establishment of the Caliphate even if it leads to “millions” of deaths and a state of constant war. Muslim Interaktiv is part of a new wave of groups with a strong online presence, which aim at spreading Salafi ideology to global youth, often targeting diaspora communities. German policymakers, including Chancellor Olaf Scholz, have called for “consequences” following the rally. The demonstration will likely be used by right-wing and identitarian parties in Europe, and possibly even in the United States and India. In Germany, the Alternative for Germany (AfD) party is likely to benefit most from the rally, after a series of scandals and protests led to a decrease in its poll ratings over the last few months. During the last week, various German parties launched their election campaigns for the European Parliament elections, scheduled to be held on 9 June. So far, the major issue has been that of the Ukraine-Russia war, with the AfD suffering from its perceived pro-Russia stance. However, this Islamist rally may give breathing room to the right-wing party, by allowing for a shift in priorities towards a more identitarian and migration-focused electoral campaign.

In the early hours of 1 May, a synagogue in **Warsaw, Poland**, was targeted with a Molotov cocktail by an unknown assailant. The attack did not result in any casualties, and damage to the building was limited. A 16-year-old was arrested on the day of the attack. While no further details have emerged about the perpetrator’s motivation, it is almost certain that the attack was a case of

right-wing extremist “lone wolf” terrorism, as Poland continues to see elevated levels of antisemitic hate by actors affiliated with neo-Nazi and other identitarian groups. The likelihood of repeat attacks is low, however, there is a realistic possibility that further antisemitic incidents will take place around 6 May, Holocaust Remembrance Day, a particularly important commemoration in Poland due to the presence of numerous Nazi death camps in the country.

On April 29, A Houthi ship damaged a Malta-flagged bulk carrier in the **Red Sea**, near Mokha, **Yemen**. Over the previous weekend, Houthi forces had attacked a Panama-flagged oil carrier and claimed to have downed a US MQ-5 Reaper drone. The increase in attack followed a period of relative lull in military activity in the Red Sea and was followed by Houthi officials announcing the beginning of a “fourth phase” of escalation in their attacks. On 2 May, spokespersons from the shipping giant Maersk assessed that Houthi attacks-caused disruptions could last well into 2025, leading to a long-term impact on global supply chains and business operations.

A senior Islamic State Greater Sahara (ISGS) group commander, Abu Huzeifa, wanted for the deaths of US forces in **Niger**, was killed in an operation by **Malian** state forces. Huzeifa, known as Higgs, was believed to have helped carry out a 2017 attack on US and Nigerien forces in Tongo Tongo, resulting in eight deaths. The operation took place in northern Mali, led by forces allied with the state, amid ongoing security challenges in the region. The attack is likely to lead to reprisal attacks from ISGS, especially as Western forces continue to withdraw from the region.

In **Liberia**, President Joseph Boakai signed an executive order that had passed in both the parliament and the senate to establish a war crimes court to investigate crimes committed during the two Liberian Civil wars from 1989 to 2003. The court will be set up to investigate potential crimes against humanity which led to the deaths of up to 250,000 people. Boakai was elected president in just January 2024, and has already come under pressure to establish the court and address several ongoing issues across Liberia. The “Cry for Justice” pressure group has announced plans to hold nationwide protests across Liberia on 7 May to demand greater government transparency and an end to alleged police brutality and nepotism. The protests along with the soon-to-be-established court could potentially cause destabilisation and reignite tensions between groups that have been latent since the end of the civil war.

On 28 April, 23 civilian force members were killed in an improvised explosive device (IED) blast in **Borno** state, **Nigeria**. The attack was likely orchestrated by Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP) elements, who have recently increased attacks against Nigerian security forces and civilians in a general climate of growing instability in the Sahel region. The civilian force – officially the Civilian Joint Task Force (CJTF) – is a semi-independent anti-Islamist militia founded in 2013, currently mostly operating in the Borno and Yobe states. Despite government support, CJTF is likely outgunned by the terrorist and militant groups operating in Nigeria’s north. The day before the ISWAP attack, another 14 CJTF members were killed by members of a kidnapping gang in the northwestern Soko state.

The **Rwanda**-aligned M23 rebel group seized the city of **Rubaya**, in the **Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)** on 3 May. Rubaya is a key mining centre in the DRC’s eastern provinces, as it has large deposits of tantalum, a key component in the production of smartphones. Congolese minerals are often smuggled out of the country illegally, and then resold to foreign tech manufacturers, allegedly with the businesses’ full knowledge. The “blood minerals” market is the major fuel of ongoing conflict in the country, and the DRC’s neighbours likely benefit from continuing to support groups like M23. The DRC government, which is currently in the process of removing UN peacekeepers deployed as part of a decades-long mission, likely lacks the resources to contrast the rebel groups that operate at both its eastern and western borders. On the other hand, Rwanda, whose support of M23 has been repeatedly demonstrated by UN-commissioned investigations, is benefitting from tighter relations with Western powers, including the UK, allowing it more room for maneuver. Moreover, Kigali’s “military diplomacy,” involving heavy participation in regional peacekeeping missions, has likely helped deflect some international pressures over its foreign security operations. The M23’s takeover of Rubaya will almost certainly result in the increase of mining and smuggling operations there, increasing risks for the civilian populations, foreign aid workers, and media.

Environment, Health and Miscellaneous.

The **Greek** fire season officially began on 1 May, but firefighters have already started to tackle minor fires across the country throughout April. In a bid to tackle future fires, Greek authorities have increased the size of firefighting units and introduced new measures to curtail the spread of fires such as outflanking fires with airborne units and incorporating innovative technology to predict the path of fires. However, experts have voiced their concern suggesting that the new measures will not be enough, indicating delays to the arrival of innovative technology and vulnerabilities in the new strategies that are primarily adopted from the US and may not work in a country with such different topography.

Approximately 50 people are feared to have drowned after a boat carrying migrants sank in the waters south of the **Canary Islands**. The boat had reportedly departed from **Mbour, Senegal**, on a route that, albeit common, is much less reported on compared to other migrant routes in the Mediterranean. In 2024, most migrants arriving in Spain did so via the Canary Islands. It is likely that due to the Atlantic's relatively higher danger compared to the Mediterranean, an increase in the number of people choosing to take the western route will result in increases in similar incidents.

Kenya and Tanzania are facing extremely disruptive floods and torrential rains, that have already led to more than 200 confirmed deaths since March, and at least 90 missing in the former, and approximately 150 deaths in the latter. On 2 May, the government ordered Kenyans living near 178 dams and reservoirs to evacuate, as ongoing showers are threatening the structures to spill or bust. Numerous cases of infrastructure failure leading to catastrophic losses have been recorded, with 50 casualties following a mudslide that tore through villages near Mai Mahiu. Conditions across the region are likely to further worsen in the coming days, as local soils are now predicted to be fully saturated and have lost much of their capacity to absorb further rain. Moreover, the state of infrastructure across Kenya and Tanzania is extremely poor, which is almost certainly exacerbating the casualty rates and slowing down rescue and evacuation operations. Finally, cyclone Hidaya is projected to make contact with the eastern coast of Tanzania on 3 May, increasing rainfall volumes across the region.



Asia Pacific (APAC)

India:

Security forces increase anti-Maoist operations during general election.

Indian security forces have conducted their second major anti-Naxal operation in as many weeks. On 30 April, ten Maoist-Naxalites were killed in an encounter with security forces in a forest in the Bastar region of Chhattisgarh province assessed as being a Naxalite stronghold. The operation was initiated by a joint team comprised of the District Reserve Guard and the Special Task Force and led to the recovery of weapons, including small arms fire and explosive material. This operation follows another operation in Chhattisgarh province on 16 April which resulted in the deaths of 29 Naxalites and several smaller operations conducted throughout March and April. The state government within Chhattisgarh has stated that it wants to pursue a peaceful resolution to the issue and has attempted to initiate talks with the militants.

Assessment: The Naxalites, also referred to as the Naxals is a designation given to several Maoist-orientated extremist groups that derive their name from the Naxalbari village of West Bengal, where a Maoist uprising began during the 1960s. Whilst elements of the Naxalite movement participate in India's democratic system through the Communist Party of India, many of the armed factions linked to the movement, such as the People's Liberation Guerrilla Army (PLGA) are engaged in militant activity. The PLGA alone is assessed to have as many as 9,500 fighters and like most of the other factions is primarily armed with small arms that employ guerrilla-style tactics. The movement claims to represent the poorest and most marginalised people in Indian society, often from tribal areas and consisting of Dalits (formerly known as the untouchables) and has targeted security forces, landlords, businesspeople and politicians. Despite government efforts to counter the movement, the Naxalites hold a lot of influence in India's "Red Belt" or "Red Corridor". This region includes parts of eastern, central and southern India which includes the provinces of Chhattisgarh, Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Odisha, Telangana and West Bengal- areas rich in mineral resources. The Indian government, which the movement aims to overthrow, considers the Naxalites as one of the most significant internal security threats in India and has banned all factions associated with the movement. However, the Naxalites have established themselves in remote forested areas in which government forces have failed to exert control. Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi has promised to expunge terrorism and Naxalism from India and under his tenure the operating areas of the Naxalites have been greatly reduced. Several operations have been conducted to root out the militants from their hideouts and almost 100 Naxalites have been killed in 2024 alone. With the Indian general election underway, Modi has attempted to increase the vote share of his Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) Hindu nationalist party by increasing his anti-Muslim rhetoric. The increase in anti-Naxalite operations is unlikely to be coincidental, especially as they have not been conducted in response to Naxalite attacks but instead initiated by the government. There is a realistic possibility that the Modi administration, which has been praised for its handling of domestic security, is attempting to rally its base and deflect from other areas of political discourse that do not favour the BJP, and potentially win more votes in the areas of Naxalite operations where it traditionally doesn't perform as well. With the elections set to run into June, the government may seek to increase its anti-extremist operations- a tactic that will either coerce the Naxalites into negotiations or encourage them to increase their attacks on government forces and installations, thus provoking a rally around the flag effect benefitting Modi's re-election bid. With multiple other militant organisations operating in India, if the Naxalite strategy is successful, there is a realistic possibility that it may be employed against other groups spread throughout India.

South Korea:

Foreign Ministry warns of North Korean terrorist threat.

On 2 May, the South Korean Ministry of Foreign Affairs raised the terrorism alert levels to their second highest tier for five diplomatic offices in Southeast Asia. Ministry officials cited the risk of North Korean-sponsored terrorist attacks targeting physical assets and personnel. The National Intelligence Service corroborated the threat assessment by claiming to have evidence that North Korea "is preparing to carry out terrorist attacks against (South Korea's) diplomatic officers and citizens".

Assessment: Pyongyang is no stranger to using violence and terror tactics as part of its foreign covert operations. In 1970, North Korean agents made a failed attempt at the life of the South's then-President Park Chung-Hee, while he was on a diplomatic visit to West Germany. In 1983, another assassination attempt, in Burma, failed to kill President Chun Doo-Hwan but resulted in the deaths of several of Seoul's government officials. Other cases have more dubious attribution. In 1973, the South Korean foreign minister was assassinated in Seoul, allegedly by Pyongyang's agents. In 1997, a South Korean diplomat was shot and killed in Vladivostok, with the Kim regime again being the primary suspect. Importantly, North Korean agents have used firearms, as well as more indiscriminate weapons, such as explosive devices. In a notable recent case, dating to 2010, local intelligence forces uncovered a plot by North Korean agents to plant a bomb at the South Korean embassy in Myanmar, aiming to kill diplomats residing and working there. The botched terrorist attack of 2010 was carried out by operatives of the DPRK's Reconnaissance General Bureau, the agency responsible for covert operations abroad. The five locations where terrorism threat levels have been increased include Cambodia, Laos, Vietnam, as well as Russia and China. The first three are small regional powers that, albeit with different degrees of alignment, sit outside of the growing trans-Pacific partnership that includes the US, the Philippines, Japan and South Korea. While Vietnam continues to maintain warm relations with Washington, also in light of its historic strategic rivalry with China that is currently exacerbated by Beijing's claims in the South China Sea, Laos and Cambodia increasingly lean towards China both diplomatically and economically. Attacks – or simply threats – may be meant to restrict Seoul's diplomatic activities in these key countries within the broader Southeast Asian theatre. A North Korean attack in Russia and China is especially unlikely, as the latter remains Pyongyang's closest ally, and the former has massively increased its strategic partnership with the Kim regime since the beginning of Moscow's war in Ukraine. In these two countries, it is likely that North Korean operations will be mostly limited to espionage, possibly with the tacit support of the host governments. If an attack is carried out there, it will most likely use targeted and discriminate means, rather than explosives, to minimise the risk to Chinese or Russian citizens. In the possible Southeast Asian target countries, instead, possible attacks may be more severe in scope and intensity, possibly resulting in risks to the safety of civilians operating close to South Korean diplomatic facilities which are often in central, affluent parts of the host city often frequented by foreign tourists and business people.

Southeast Asia:

Record-breaking heatwave engulfs the region.

A heatwave in Southeast Asia has resulted in record temperatures in Thailand and the Philippines, with authorities warning of higher temperatures to come. In Thailand, almost half of the country's 77 provinces have seen records dating back to the 1950s surpassed, leading to surges in power usage, school closures, health warnings and at least 30 deaths. The Philippines has warned that excessive power usage may disrupt electricity supplies as the grid becomes overloaded. In Myanmar, temperatures of 48 degrees Celsius have been recorded, surpassing all previous April temperature records, and in Laos temperatures nearing 44 degrees Celsius were measured/

Assessment: Whilst temperatures exceeding 40 degrees are routinely recorded in areas like the Middle East, such temperatures pose far more danger in Southeast Asia. Meteorologists use the Heat Index, also known as the “feels-like” temperature to assess how hot it actually feels to the human body when relative humidity is factored in. For Southeast Asia, temperatures of 40 degrees Celsius plus often manifest the effects of when temperatures are into the 50s due to the high humidity. Heat is also contained within the moisture in the air and the area does not experience a major cooling at night unlike in the desert. When the humidity is high, it is much harder for the human body to cool down as it inhibits the evaporation of sweat, greatly raising the threats posed by exhaustion, heat stroke and death. These conditions disproportionately affect the elderly, infants, people with chronic health conditions, pregnant women and often low-income individuals who cannot assess things like air-conditioning. Millions of people who live in Southeast Asian megacities like Manila and Bangkok are at even greater risk due to the urban heat island effect, strain on infrastructure and the compounding effects of air pollution. In Thailand, a total of 37 people died in 2023 of heat-related illnesses. With at least 30 deaths recorded so far, it is almost certain that this number will be surpassed in 2024. In Myanmar, a humanitarian crisis brought on by the civil war has led to millions of people being displaced and has caused widespread disruption. Some reports indicate that as many as 40 people are dying each day in the country. Whilst schools across the region have been closed, many adults do not earn enough to cease working, a major risk to the millions of people who work in the largely manual primary and secondary industries across the region. Scientists are divided over the impact of the ongoing El Niño weather phenomenon, but many agree that the amalgamation of El Niño, global warming and industrialisation has contributed to the extreme weather, which may potentially get worse as the summer season continues.

APAC Summary and Forecast:

Politics, Economics and Civil Unrest.

Police in Colombo, **Sri Lanka** have deployed water cannons and tear gas in a bid to disrupt protests in the city. The protests have been triggered by the government’s decision to establish private medical colleges. However, the government is unlikely to reverse its decision given its current economic woes and huge debt burden.

The **Japanese** Yen has continued to slide and currently sits at around 160 Yen to one USD. The loss in value is likely to be bad news for Japan’s 125 million people who hugely rely on imports and could drive up inflation and even lead to a period of political volatility or socioeconomic unrest. However, the depreciation has caused a spike in tourism to Japan, with tourists potentially targeted by criminal elements if the currency continues to slide.

Security, Armed Conflict and Terror.

On 30 April, a terrorist attack took place at a mosque in **Herat** province, **Afghanistan**, resulting in at least six deaths. The Islamic State Khorasan Province (ISKP) claimed responsibility for the attack. ISKP remains one of the most active branches of the Islamic State (IS). In Afghanistan, they continue to pursue the destabilisation of the Taliban government, simultaneously seeking to attack non-Salafist Muslim sects. Herat province is mostly Shia, and neighbours Iran, which makes a sectarian dimension of the attack more likely.

China’s People’s Liberation Army Navy (PLAN) has conducted the first sea trials of its newest aircraft carrier, the *Fujian*, named after the Chinese province closest to **Taiwan**. China’s third carrier is less capable than the US Navy’s nuclear-powered carriers, which maintain advantages in power, size and speed. The trials of the *Fujian*, which will likely take at least a year, have nonetheless provoked fears over the continued militarisation in the Asia Pacific and resulted in India asking for France’s help to develop a nuclear-powered carrier for the Indian Navy.

In another incident in the **South China Sea**, **Chinese** vessels sprayed two **Filipino** ships with water cannons as the two approached the disputed Scarborough Shoal, a tiny coral atoll the Philippines’

Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) but claimed by China. The episode represents the latest one in escalating regional tensions between the two. Increased Chinese attacks on Filipino vessels likely reflect Manila's increasing closeness with Washington, Seoul and Japan, in a strategic partnership that aims at containing Chinese ambitions in the South China Sea.

As tensions escalate on the Korean peninsula, **South Korea** has levelled accusations against **North Korea**, alleging the placement of anti-tank and anti-personnel mines at several border crossings in the de-militarised zone and the destruction of infrastructure along key interconnecting roads. These measures follow Pyongyang's declaration in late 2023 that it is no longer pursuing reunification with the South but rather aiming to subjugate the South under its rule. On

Environment, Health and Miscellaneous.

Extreme weather in the south of **China** has continued to cause widespread disruption in the country's industrial heartland, with flooding and landslides ongoing. A tornado hit the city of Guangzhou on the weekend of 27-28 April, killing at least five people and damaging at least 140 factories, ceasing operations at many and potentially leading to supply chain disruptions.

In **Indonesia**, the **Ruang** volcano erupted again on 30 April, leading authorities on the neighbouring island of Tagulandang to evacuate approximately 12,000 people. Volcanic ash reached as far as eastern Malaysia, forcing the closure of seven airports at the time of writing. If the volcano continues to experience explosive eruptions leading to a collapse, there is a realistic threat of a tsunami, posing significant risks to nearby inhabited areas, as well as massive business and travel disruptions.