



Global Intelligence Summary

REPORTING PERIOD: 12 JULY – 19 JULY





Global Intelligence Summary

Week 29: 12 July – 19 July

Executive Summary

- The attempted assassination of Donald Trump in **Pennsylvania** is almost certainly reflective of political division in the **US** and will **likely** lead to increased political violence.
- An Islamic State-claimed attack in **Oman** against Shia worshippers marks the group's first attack in the country and is **likely** indicative of the growing importance of Islamic State-Yemen Province.
- The increased use of uncrewed surface vessels (USVs) by the Houthis is **highly likely** to increase the threat to merchant shipping in the **Red Sea** and **Gulf of Aden**.
- Mass student protests are **highly likely** to continue in **Bangladesh** during the coming weeks, following violent clashes which killed at least 39 people.



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

AMER

- 1 USA:** Trump survives assassination attempt
- 2 Argentina:** President Milei condemns Iran and seeks justice for 1994 bombing

EMEA

- 3 Israel & Palestine:** Mohammed Deif possibly killed in Israeli air strike
- 4 Oman:** Islamic State carries out first attack in the country
- 5 Red Sea & Gulf of Aden:** Houthis launch further attacks with USVs

APAC

- 6 Pakistan:** CTD detain al-Qaeda leader and associate of Bin Laden
- 7 Bangladesh:** Mass student protests lead to harsh government crackdown
- 8 Taiwan:** Trump states Taiwan should pay US for protection



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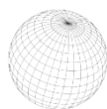
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Global Dates and Events

19 July - 26 July

The Buddhist festival of **Asalha Puja**, or **Dharma Day**, takes place on **20 July**. The celebration is one of the major ones for Buddhists and it commemorates the Buddha's first sermon. As with other religious holidays, there is an increased threat of targeted violence against Buddhist temples, especially in countries with large Buddhist minorities.

The **Shravana** month of the Hindu calendar begins on **22 July**. The month is important due to its symbolic connection with the monsoon season in the Indian subcontinent. For Hindus, the month is connected to the deity Shiva, and devotees carry out a series of religious practices, including fasting and pilgrimages. Whilst the festival is typically peaceful, there have been many instances of sectarian violence and heightened tensions in the past.

The **Olympic Games** are scheduled to begin in France on **26 July** and continue until **11 August**. More than 15 million visitors are expected to arrive in Paris alone during the Games, which have one of the largest audiences of any sporting event. More than three billion people reportedly watched the last Olympics in Japan. Due to their profile and media attention, there are important terrorism and civil unrest risks associated with the Games.



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Americas (AMER)

United States:

Former President Donald Trump survives assassination attempt during rally.

On 13 July, former President Trump was shot and wounded by a lone gunman while speaking at a rally in the battleground state of Pennsylvania. The would-be assassin managed to wound Trump's ear, as well as kill one attendee and injure a further two before being killed by law enforcement agents. It is unclear what the shooter's motive was, and US security and intelligence services initiated multiple inquiries to understand how the shooter managed to reach a vantage point from where he could take aim at Trump. Only two days later, Trump, who also selected Ohio senator JD Vance as his running mate for 2024, was endorsed at the Republican Party's Annual National Convention (RNC) as the party's official candidate.

Assessment: Very little information exists about the attacker, who had a negligible online footprint and unremarkable background, and it is difficult to say whether he was inspired by a particular ideology, or simply by a desire to obtain notoriety. As of the time of writing, no "manifestos", statements, or other perpetrator-generated material often associated with lone actor terrorists has been found, suggesting that the shooter did not fit within that profile, but may have been motivated by non-ideological factors. The large volume of conspiracy theories publicised on social media in the assassination attempt's aftermath suggests that foreign powers are likely seeking to conduct information operations to increase political instability in the US. The episode likely represents a possible driving factor of increased risks of domestic terrorism in the US, especially retaliatory action by self-proclaimed vigilantes. Any updates regarding the shooter's motive and background will almost certainly cause further division in the United States. Trump's announcement of JD Vance as his running mate ends speculation concerning the direction of his campaign. Vance represents the Republican right, particularly the rural, white working class that forms a core demographic base for Trump. Vance is a self-described nationalist and is expected to remain loyal to Trump's "MAGA" platform, and his nomination likely represents a key indicator of the tilt of the Republican party towards Trump's populist camp, matching a decrease of the influence of the centrist, neoliberal wing of the GOP. Moreover, Vance is a young candidate (only 39 years of age) and may represent an important asset in shaping a post-Trump GOP, as the former president cannot run again if he is re-elected. Finally, picking Vance as a running mate over other possibilities may foreshadow some of the foreign policy lines of a possible second Trump administration. Vance has repeatedly stated that he is uninterested in Ukraine and has questioned the American consensus for supporting Kyiv's war efforts. Trump, has announced that he would immediately end the war if back in the White House, possibly hinting at forcing Ukraine to the negotiating table by threatening the withdrawal of aid. Such a scenario would almost certainly create significant difficulties for the US' European allies, who are still struggling with procurement and support for Ukraine, and would likely be ineffective without American contributions.

Argentina:

Milei condemns Iran and seeks justice for Hezbollah-linked 1994 AMIA bombing.

On 18 July, Argentina's Jewish community marked the 30th anniversary of the 1994 Israelite Mutual Association (AMIA) Jewish center bombing in Buenos Aires which killed 85 people. President Milei pledged to rectify decades of inaction and inconsistencies in the investigation into the attack which was the deadliest terrorist attack in Argentina's history. Argentina's top criminal court has attributed blame to Iran for the attack and has suggested that the attack was conducted by Hezbollah militants under the operational command of Tehran. Milei has instigated plans to try suspects in absentia and has committed to improving Argentina's national intelligence to prevent future attacks. Iran continues to refuse to extradite the suspects and has repeatedly ignored international arrest warrants.

Assessment: Argentine prosecutors have also charged Iranian officials alongside members of Hezbollah for the 1994 AMIA attack as well as a separate attack in 1992 on the Israeli embassy in Buenos Aires that killed 22 people. In addition, in January 2024 Argentine police apprehended three men from Lebanon and Syria suspected of planning a terrorist attack in Argentina when it was hosting the Pan-American Maccabiah Games, which brings together thousands of Jewish athletes. Argentina is home to the largest Jewish community in South America at an estimated 200,000-300,000 and there are an estimated 50,000-70,000 Argentine Jews residing in Israel. Furthermore, President Milei is a staunch supporter of both the Jewish community and Israel and has publicly toyed with the idea of converting to Judaism. He has also taken a divergent path from most South American leaders concerning the Israel-Hamas conflict. In January he visited Israel, declared unwavering support for Tel Aviv and recently designated the Iranian-backed Hamas militant group as a terrorist organisation. These developments have likely made Argentina a target for Iranian-sponsored terrorism, particularly against its large Jewish community. Argentina has heightened surveillance and border controls to prevent the infiltration of Iranian agents from Venezuela and Bolivia where they are suspected of having a considerable footprint. Iran's most capable proxy force, Hezbollah is also known to have a strong presence within South America, especially in the lawless tri-border area between Brazil, Paraguay and Argentina- all countries that also have a large Lebanese diaspora where Hezbollah has likely been able to establish ties and exploit for cover. Hezbollah's main operations here entail the financing of operations in the Middle East through their connections to South American organised crime where Hezbollah are suspected of being involved in money laundering, drug trafficking and other illicit activity. The group likely sees Argentina's Jewish community as a legitimate target within the context of the current conflict and a deniable attack sponsored by Iran would help demonstrate Tehran's reach and operational capabilities. Milei's decision to strengthen intelligence and anti-terrorism measures will also likely put it on course for future conflict with Hezbollah, which Argentina has already designated a terrorist organisation. If the Milei administration attempts to dismantle Hezbollah's invaluable criminal operations, the group may be coaxed into reprisal attacks against the Argentine government, a course of action that may also be endorsed by Iran with indications that it too is involved and profits from illicit activity within South America.

AMER Summary and Forecast:

Politics, Economics and Civil Unrest.

US President Joe Biden tested positive for Covid-19 on 17 July. The development is likely to damage Biden's re-election bid further and continue to raise worries regarding the president's health and fitness.

Peru's judiciary has announced that it is extending the pre-trial detention of former President Pedro Castillo by 18 months while an investigation against him on charges of rebellion continues. His apprehension resulted in protests from his base and the judiciary's plans to sentence him to over 30 years in prison may ignite further unrest in the South American country.

Security, Armed Conflict and Terror.

CNN reported on 16 July that the **US** received intelligence regarding an Iranian plot to assassinate former President Donald Trump. This was almost certainly unrelated to the assassination attempt that took place in Ohio. However, the reports are likely to bring more scrutiny and criticism towards US intelligence and security service, considering the security gaps that allowed the Ohio shooter to get within range of Trump.

Former **US** President Trump has announced plans to designate **Mexican** cartels as foreign terrorist organisations should he secure victory in November. Under his plans, the Pentagon will be ordered to make proper use of US special forces who will be deployed to attack cartel leadership and infrastructure, as well as deploy the US Navy to enforce a blockade on the cartels. Such plans have almost no chance of being endorsed by the Mexican government; however, his plan to deploy US troops to the Mexican border is likely to rally his base as the election looms.

Opposition members in **Venezuela** have reported that the chief security officer for opposition leader Maria Corina Machado was arrested. Machado, alongside other opposition candidates, has been barred from competing at the 28 July elections on clearly untenable technicalities. Still, the decimated opposition retains a much higher support than the ruling government, as the few available polls show. It is highly likely that

further intimidatory gestures, and possible crackdowns, will continue over the next weeks. The vote is also almost certain to lack transparency, and the result will likewise highly likely be doctored to benefit the Maduro regime.

Environment, Health and Miscellaneous.

On 14-16 July, the **Midwest** of the **US** experienced extreme weather, with powerful storm systems causing tornadoes and heavy rainfall. Across the region, over 500,000 energy customers were left without power as a result of the storms. Illinois was particularly impacted, and Chicago suffered from major disruptions. The number of tornado warnings issued was abnormally high for the region, with one tornado even being recorded as touching down in Chicago.

The Governor of **New York State** declared a statewide State of Emergency on July 16, following severe storms and several tornado touchdowns. The storms caused major damage in the City of Rome and significantly impacted areas in Madison County, with one death reported. 110,000 customers lost power across New York State.

On 18 July, a 7.4 magnitude earthquake hit northern **Chile** near the Argentina border. The earthquake has not resulted in any immediate casualties but has led to multiple power outages in the wider region.





Europe, Middle East & Africa (EMEA)

Israel and Palestine:

Mohammed Deif, second in command of Hamas in Gaza, reportedly killed.

On 13 July, Israeli forces carried out an airstrike with multiple 2,000-pound bombs on a housing complex in Khan Yunis. The attack, which reportedly killed more than 20 Palestinians, also resulted in the death of Ali Hassan Salameh, the head of Hamas' Khan Yunis brigade, and, more crucially, possibly Mohammed Deif, the military leader of Hamas in the Gaza Strip and the second most senior Hamas leader in Gaza after Yahya Sinwar. The killing of Deif, which Israeli officials have not yet confirmed, would make this the most high-profile decapitation strike of the Hamas-Israel conflict so far. Further south, Israel Defence Forces (IDF) units are continuing operations in Rafah, as well as clearing tunnels near the Philadelphi Corridor. On 18 July, the Israeli Knesset voted to reject a recognition of a Palestinian state, even following a resolution to the current conflict.

Assessment: The recent developments in the Gaza Strip are likely to have concrete impacts on the future of the conflict, although they will likely not translate into a short-term change in the ongoing attrition stage of the war, where half-depleted Hamas cells continue to carry hit-and-run attacks on IDF forces that are operating in previously cleared areas. The killing of Deif is likely to impact the senior Hamas leadership in Gaza in terms of its effectiveness and organisational capability in the short-term. Deif is considered to be the main architect behind the development of the logistical and training system of Hamas over the last decades, and replacing him will not be easy. At the same time, Hamas has the advantage of having a decentralised structure, as ongoing Israeli operations have favoured the development of separate chains of command, also giving junior officials the chance to become familiar with operating in a warzone, which will make the immediate impact of Deif's loss more manageable. Both Hamas and Israel likely still consider their strategic objectives in the war to be attainable. The latter will have been encouraged by the recent decapitation strikes and the Knesset's refusal to recognise a future Palestinian state is likely sending a strong message to Hamas and its allies, Israel's international partners and dovish elements within Israeli society. In the short-to-medium term, IDF forces are likely to continue clearing operations in the Philadelphi corridor, seeking to further destroy the complex network of tunnels that is Hamas' main supply line into Gaza. Simultaneously, the decapitation strike on Deif highly likely corroborates early reports that the Hamas leadership in Gaza has relocated to Khan Yunis, rather than Rafah, and especially to the area of the city overlapping with the al-Mawasi humanitarian zone where they can hide within the civilian population and coax the IDF into causing high civilian casualties.

Oman:

Islamic State claims first-ever attack in Oman, in armed raid on Shia Mosque.

Islamic State (IS) operatives carried out an attack at the Muharram congregation in Mutrah, near Muscat, on 15 July. The attack coincided with the Islamic holiday of Ashura, which is particularly sacred to Shias as it commemorates the death of Husayn ibn Ali, the third Shia imam. Six people were killed and 28 injured during the shooting. Responsibility for the attack was claimed by the Yemeni province of IS (ISYP).

Assessment: The attack is notable as it was the first-ever IS operation in Oman. However, the country has long been a desirable target for multiple reasons. First, the country has close relations with other regional powers and with Iran, as it plays an important mediation role in the context of the ongoing Yemen and Red Sea crises. Attacking the Omani state and possibly reducing international perceptions of its stability could impact the progress of its mediation, leading to greater and more prolonged instability, one of IS' fundamental goals. Oman is also a relatively tolerant state compared to its regional neighbours, and much more multireligious. The majority are Ibadi and there are also significant Sunni and Shia minorities, the latter of which are deemed as heretics or *rafidi* by IS. It is highly likely that the simple availability of multiple

Shia targets, with little security to guard them, was the key driver of the attack. ISYP, like the other IS branches, has the ultimate strategic goal of toppling local regimes to restore an Islamic Caliphate, starting, in this case, from the south of the Arabian Peninsula. Notably, ISYP has likely increased its activity and gained relevance in recent years due to its closeness to the Somali province branch (ISSP), which, according to recent reports, could be headed by the group's current "caliph", who allegedly has personal ties to the Yemeni branch and has spent considerable time in Yemen. ISSP, which benefits from less pressure compared to the IS branches in the Middle East, continues to play a crucial role in channelling funds to the more active IS branches in Afghanistan (the Khorasan province, or ISKP) and the Sahel (the West Africa province, ISWAP). ISYP almost certainly benefits from a close connection to ISSP, both by guaranteeing the inbound and outbound transit of fighters, and even senior members of IS, between the Horn of Africa and the Arabian Peninsula, and by being the first step in rerouting funds and assets from Africa towards Asia. There is a remote possibility that the Oman attack is linked to a reported spike in IS attacks further north, in Syria and Iraq. A connection between the two theatres could signal a return in IS' planning and coordination capacity between different provinces, possibly hinting at a growing IS ability to carry out transregional complex attacks.

Red Sea and Gulf of Aden:

Houthis launch further attacks against merchant shipping with uncrewed surface vessels.

On 15 July, two merchant vessels were attacked by the Houthis in the Red Sea. The MT BENTLEY I, a Panama-flagged, Israel-owned and Monaco-operated tanker vessel transporting oil from Russia to China was initially attacked by one uncrewed surface vessel (USV) and two crewed small boats. The Houthis later launched an anti-ship ballistic missile (ASBM) towards the vessel. These attacks were unsuccessful in disabling the vessel, with no notable damage or any injuries reported. In a separate incident, the MT CHIOS LION, a Liberian-flagged, Marshall Islands-owned and Greek-operated crude oil tanker was impacted by a USV, causing damage. No injuries were reported. Additionally, on 19 July, the Singaporean-flagged MV LOBIVIA was reportedly struck by unknown projectiles in the Gulf of Aden. While the vessel suffered damage, no injuries have yet been reported.

Assessment: The increased use of USVs by the Houthis in their ongoing campaign against merchant shipping highly likely indicates an evolution in Houthi tactics, techniques and procedures (TTPs). On 12 June, the Houthis struck the bulk carrier MV TUTOR in the Red Sea with a USV, killing one crewmember and disabling the vessel. This marked a significant operational success for the Houthis. Since then, the Houthis successfully used USVs to attack the MV TRANSWORLD NAVIGATOR on 23 June, and the MV SEAJOY on 27 June. United States Central Command, who are engaged in military operations against the Houthis as part of Operation Prosperity Guardian, have additionally reported destroying 27 USVs since 12 June, compared to a prior total of 26 USVs since their first identified use by the Houthis on 4 January. This almost certainly indicates a significant uptick in the use of USVs by the Houthis, emboldened by their successful attack against the MV TUTOR. The Houthis pioneered the operational use of USVs when they attacked a Saudi frigate with a USV in January 2017, and currently maintain an arsenal of both uncrewed weaponised skiffs as used against the MV TUTOR, as well as purpose-built craft called Tufan or Blowfish that carry far more powerful warheads. The Houthis claimed the attack against MV Transworld Navigator was conducted with the largest of these Tufan USVs, the Tufan-3 which they claim carries a 1000-1500 kilogram warhead. The weaponised skiff USVs provide effective camouflage against countermeasures, amplified by the Houthi use of dummies as used in the TUTOR attack, ostensibly appearing to be ordinary crewed fishing vessels. The Tufan USVs, however, carry far more powerful warheads and travel at higher speeds. USVs are exceptionally difficult for merchant vessels to counter, and unless intercepted by naval forces, have proven to be more effective than ASBMs, anti-ship cruise missiles (ASCM) and uncrewed aircraft systems (UAS) at causing impacts. The main weakness of Houthi USVs, compared to those used by Ukraine in the Black Sea, is that they are not fully autonomous, relying on a human pilot for the initial line of attack, requiring the use of motherships. Merchant vessels, however, are not equipped to counter USVs and must rely on their hull strength to withstand impacts if naval forces are not successful in intercepting the USVs beforehand. While the sole use of a USV is generally incapable of sinking a merchant vessel (though this is not impossible), a good hit on a weak point, such as the engine compartment, can immobilise a merchant vessel which then makes the vessel far easier to hit with secondary strikes by missiles and drones. This TTP was used effectively against the

Tutor. It is highly likely that the evolution of Houthi TTPs to increasingly use USVs substantially increases the threat to merchant shipping in the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden.

EMEA Summary and Forecast:

Politics, Economics and Civil Unrest.

After the recent creation of the Patriots for Europe (Pfe) group by the far-right parties of countries including Hungary, France, Italy, Czechia and Austria, a further identitarian **EU** Parliament party, named Europe of Sovereign Nations (ESN), was officially constituted. The group, which, among others, includes smaller French, Bulgarian and Polish members, is centred on the leadership of the radical right Alternative for Germany (AfD). With 25 members (14 of which are AfD, following the party's record performance at the European elections), the group is the smallest in the European parliament. Politically, it is virtually indistinguishable from Pfe, and its existence is almost certainly only the product of AfD's "toxicity" for other European identitarians. The growth of various far-right parties has likely significantly destabilised the centre-right status quo centred on friendly relations between the centrist European People's Party (EPP) and the right-wing European Conservatives and Reformists (ECR) and may therefore further shift the EPP towards working with the left-wing groups in the EU Parliament. The recent re-election of EU Parliament President Roberta Metsola as part of a deal between EPP and the Socialists & Democrats (S&D) likely further signals this trend, as, more importantly, does Ursula von der Leyen's successful bid for a second term as European Commission President. On 18 July, von der Leyen was re-elected with the support of much of the EPP, S&D and Greens, with ECR showing only limited support. This is highly likely a serious issue for Giorgia Meloni's formation, which now finds itself at a real risk of becoming a minoritarian formation, "stuck" between a left-oriented EPP and two "unelectable" far-right groups.

The First Minister of **Wales**, Vaughan Gething, resigned on 17 July following controversies over his acceptance of GBP 200,000 as a campaign donation from a businessman convicted over environmental offences, and for sacking a government minister. The development may develop into an early challenge for the new **UK** Labour government, whose Welsh chapter will now have to elect a successor.

The parliament of **Poland** approved a law that allows border security and police forces to fire live ammunition to stop attempts by migrants to cross the border. The law specifically restricts the use of weapons to cases in which other deterrents fail. However, the law's allowance for "pre-emptive" uses of firearms creates a likelihood of abuses of power. Russia and Belarus are currently favouring migrants' attempts to reach the Polish border as a tool to destabilise Poland and the wider EU.

On 16 July, a group of 63 **EU** parliamentarians called for **Hungary** to have its voting rights rescinded following Prime Minister Viktor Orban's visits to Moscow and Beijing. Hungary holds the EU presidency for this month, and Orban has used the opportunity to launch an impromptu "peace tour" of Europe's geopolitical adversaries. The move has no legal basis and will not result in a tangible change. Its proposal is instead almost certainly an attempt to further put pressure on Hungary and continue distancing the bloc from its rogue member.

The **Russian** government has increasingly slowed down or restricted applications and websites including WhatsApp and YouTube, under the justification of preventing extremist groups' activities. UK intelligence sources state that Moscow will likely ban YouTube altogether in September. Compared with China, which has built an alternative online space separate from the World Wide Web, Russia relies on many European- and American-based companies and sites. The bans on mainstream sites like YouTube and WhatsApp will likely prompt Russia to increasingly adopt Chinese alternatives, thus increasing reliance on Beijing, or develop its own platforms, although it is unlikely that Russia has the indigenous assets to do so.

Lawmakers in **the Gambia** narrowly voted to uphold a ban on female genital mutilation (FGM), striking down proposed legislation that would have made the country the first to remove a ban on the practice, which affects an estimated 75 per cent of women between 15 and 50. While FGM is not religiously sanctioned, Islamic groups have pushed to remove the ban, which entails penalties for people carrying out or assisting in the practice. The vote is likely to continue helping civil society, state, and foreign humanitarian actors in the difficult fight against FGM in the Gambia.

As expected, **Rwandan** President Paul Kagame was re-elected with more than 99 per cent of the vote. Kagame has been Rwanda's leader for more than two decades, and his victory at this year's vote was guaranteed after prominent critics were barred from competing. Kagame's government is almost certain to continue its militaristic foreign policy in Africa, marked by formal troop deployments and support for paramilitary groups like M23, while also reaching out to Western states.

In **Kenya**, the arrest of an alleged serial killer, responsible for reportedly more than 40 murders, has driven localised civil unrest and has contributed to re-ignited protests in areas that saw severe anti-government unrest in the past week. Cases of violence targeting police forces have been recorded in Nairobi. It is highly likely that the case will drive further protests and discontent towards authorities in the short term. Kenya's President Ruto is set to address the nation on 19 July in a bid to curtail the anti-government protests. However, much of the nation is still demanding his resignation and his speech could help increase current tensions and translate to more unrest.

Security, Armed Conflict and Terror.

The new Labour government of the **UK** has launched a defence review as promised in its manifesto. UK Prime Minister Keir Starmer has promised to exceed NATO targets and increase national defence spending to 2.5 per cent of GDP by mid-2025. The review follows recent reports arguing that the British armed forces are currently unable to fight a conflict of any scale. Among various challenges, London's military is struggling to match its recruitment goals, faces pressures to modernise assets such as its nuclear-armed Vanguard submarine fleet, and ongoing issues with its support for Ukraine in the context of the Russian invasion.

Reuters reported that **Germany** is planning to halve military aid to Ukraine from EUR eight billion to EUR four billion in 2025. The plans underscore Berlin's expectations that the allocation of interest from frozen Russian funds, as well as other financial tools deployed to help Kyiv, will allow it to recoup the loss of direct military aid. If implemented, the plans are likely to increase uncertainty regarding the future of Ukraine's defence, as a possible future second Trump presidency may affect other funding pathways and sources.

Spanish and **German** police detained four individuals on 18 July on charges of trafficking drone parts to Hezbollah. The scheme reportedly involves the use of Lebanese-owned companies registered in Spain, trading large quantities of technology some of which can be repurposed for use by military drones. While details of the trafficking system are yet to emerge, the case likely demonstrates ongoing difficulties in moderating and preventing the proliferation of cheap and easily manufactured electronic goods that can be used for lethal means. As the ongoing conflicts in Ukraine, Myanmar, Palestine and the Lebanon-Israel border show, cheap commercial drones and their parts can be easily converted into deadly systems.

An overnight drone attack on **Tel Aviv, Israel** on 19 July that killed one and injured several has been claimed by the Houthi Movement in **Yemen**. A drone attack from such a distance that managed to elude air defence radars and bypass the Iron Dome will likely challenge the security of Israel. The Houthis have claimed that the drone was a new Yafa drone which cannot be detected by radar. Whilst this statement is likely indicative of Houthi propaganda, if the militant group has obtained this capability and it is proliferated to other Iranian proxies, it could hugely increase the risk to Israel. There is also a realistic possibility that the Houthi drone diversified its flightpath and flew west over Egypt and across the Mediterranean to evade Israel air defence.

Al-Shabaab operatives carried out a car bombing in **Mogadishu, Somalia** during the finals of the European Cup, killing nine people. There is a high likelihood that the action was a retaliation for the killing of at least five al-Shabaab detainees during a prison riot in the days prior, which broke out after the members were sentenced to the death penalty.

Also in **Somalia**, unidentified militiamen attacked a military convoy carrying weapons from Ethiopia on 16 July, killing at least five. The convoy, which was attacked near the central Somali town of Abudwaq, was transporting heavy machineguns, anti-air weapons, and rocket-propelled grenades. There is a high likelihood that part of the arsenal will end in the hands of al-Shabaab. In the medium term, there is a realistic possibility that further cases of proliferation will lead to international organisations reconsidering the December 2023 lifting of a three-decade-long ban on weapons sales and transfers to Somalia.

Environment, Health and Miscellaneous.

The government of **North Macedonia** declared a state of crisis on 14 July due to ongoing wildfires that have damaged or destroyed hundreds of hectares of woodland. The threat posed by the fires also forced authorities, on 17 July, to close border crossings to Greece. With temperatures forecasted to remain high, there is a high likelihood that the fires will continue. Outside of increasing their speed and making it difficult to extinguish them, high heat can facilitate the reignition of wildfires, thus posing a protracted danger.

On 16 July, **Greek** authorities ratified a partial ban on outdoor work as temperatures in the country continue to exceed 40 degrees Celsius during the hottest areas of the day. Service sector workers, who play a crucial role during the high tourism season in Greece, are especially at risk due to the extreme temperatures, and the ban is especially likely to aim at safeguarding them in particular. The threat posed by increasingly high temperatures is likely to have a long-term impact on the feasibility and risk of tourism to Greece during the hot summer months.



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Asia Pacific (APAC)

Pakistan:

CTD detain al-Qaeda leader and former close associate of Bin Laden.

On 19 July, Pakistan's Counter Terrorism Department (CTD) announced the arrest of Amin ul-Haq, a prominent al-Qaeda (AQ) leader listed on a United Nations sanctions list. Ul-Haq, described as a close associate of the late Osama Bin Laden, who orchestrated the 9/11 attacks, was apprehended during a major counter-terrorism operation in the city of Gujrat in the Punjab province. Intelligence indicated that ul-Haq was planning on sabotaging critical national infrastructure (CNI) across the Punjab province.

Assessment: The arrest of ul-Haq marks Pakistan's first major AQ arrest in several years. Haq, originally from Afghanistan, headed Bin Laden's Black Guard which provided personal security for the leader of AQ and fled to Pakistan after the 2001 battle of Tora Bora, where he was apprehended in 2008 but released in 2011 due to insufficient evidence. Reporting indicates that he has risen through the ranks of a weakened AQ to command hundreds of fighters. Ul-Haq returned to Afghanistan in 2021 following the Taliban's recapture of Kabul. His relationship with Bin Laden and his role within AQ likely made him a pillar one target for the US. There is a realistic possibility that this operation was coordinated by US intelligence who fear a resurgent AQ in the Afghanistan-Pakistan region capable of conducting external operations way beyond their centre of gravity. For Pakistan, the arrest of a major figure within AQ will be sold as a win for its counter-terrorism operations. However, the apprehension of ul-Haq is likely to provoke reprisal attacks from AQ. This is a potential development that Pakistan may struggle to deal with as it is plagued by a host of resurgent militant groups such as the Pakistani Taliban and several Baluch separatist groups. Moreover, AQ may be attempting to exploit the current overstretching of Pakistani security services to undermine the government, gain publicity and increase recruitment. AQ's plans to sabotage Pakistan's CNI would likely help them achieve these goals and the failed operation may be an indicator of a future increase in AQ operations in the country.

Bangladesh:

Mass student protests over public sector job quotas result in harsh government crackdown.

Large-scale ongoing unrest in Bangladesh this week led to at least 39 deaths and hundreds more injuries. The student-led protests arose following a 5 June High Court decision to reinstate a quota system for public sector jobs. While notable disturbances initially followed, major demonstrations were delayed due to Eid and summer holidays, beginning in earnest from 1 July. On 10 July, the Supreme Court suspended the High Court order, upholding the prior status quo. However, the student protests, self-styled as the "Bangla Blockade" movement, continued, with protest leaders vowing to continue protests until the quota system is permanently overturned. The most major confrontations took place on 15-16 July, with police forces reportedly using rubber bullets, teargas, baton charges and stun grenades. Several of the deaths were attributed to rubber bullets. In addition to the severe police response, protestors clashed with pro-government groups who were reportedly armed with machetes, bamboo rods and hockey sticks. The government has closed schools and universities indefinitely, and multiple Bangladeshi internet providers restricted access to social media platforms.

Assessment: In 1972, after the 1971 Bangladesh Liberation War when Bangladesh gained independence from Pakistan, the founding father of Pakistan, Sheikh Mujibur Rehman, introduced a quota system that reserved 56 per cent of government jobs for specific groups. Most of these reserved jobs were for the offspring of the "freedom fighters" who fought in the 1971 war. In 2018, mass student protests led to significant reform of the quota system, with the freedom fighters' reservations being abolished. The recent High Court decision, however, overturned these reforms, which led to the current wave of unrest. Although the Supreme Court decision has enforced the post-2018 status quo, the protests have continued, which has highly likely been conditioned by the wider context for the unrest. The protestors are mainly students, and government jobs are the primary reasonable prospect for their future employment. Bangladesh has

undergone substantial economic growth in recent years, but this has been largely predicated on the expansion of readymade garments (RMG) exports, an industry which has not provided adequate employment for educated Bangladeshi youth. Out of a total population of 171 million, 32 million young Bangladeshis are not in work or education, according to a prominent Bangladeshi think tank. Bangladesh has a particularly young population, with 67 per cent being working age, and over 25 per cent being aged 15-29. Considering the unemployment crisis, the anticipated return of the quota system for government jobs almost certainly provided a major threat to the already limited future job prospects of many Bangladeshi students. Additionally, protestors are frustrated with the prolonged repression of the ruling Awami League party. Sheikh Hasina, the daughter of Pakistan's founder, Sheikh Rehman, has been the Prime Minister of Bangladesh since 2009. The government was re-elected in January 2024 following an election that was widely criticised as undemocratic, and the main opposition party, the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP), boycotted the vote. The ruling party has seized the opportunity to further suppress the opposition, blaming the BNP for the protests. In the aftermath of the recent unrest, police raided the BNP headquarters, making several arrests. Hasina referred to the protestors as "razakars", a highly derogatory term for traitors who collaborated with Pakistan in the independence war, prompting outrage. While Hasina has since condemned the "murder" of protestors, on 18 July, protest leaders vowed to continue and the civil unrest will highly likely continue over the coming weeks. While predominantly in Dhaka, particularly in the vicinity of the University of Dhaka, Jahangirnagar University, and other universities and colleges, unrest has also been reported in Chattogram, Khulna and Rangpur. Furthermore, there is a realistic possibility that instability and government repression may increase the threat of terrorism in Bangladesh – the BNP was historically in government with the banned Islamist Jamaat-e-Islami party, and multiple terrorist groups, including Islamic State – Bengal Province, are active in Bangladesh.

Taiwan:

Trump states Taiwan should pay US for protection, prompting substantial chip stocks selloff.

In an interview released on 16 July, Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump stated that Taiwan should pay the US for its defence. Trump's comments sparked anxiety regarding the strength of future US support for Taiwan against China. This prompted a dramatic fall in the price of chip stocks, with Wall Street's semiconductor index losing over 480 billion USD in stock market value on 17 July.

Assessment: Taiwan, officially the Republic of China, has been claimed by the People's Republic of China (PRC) as a de jure territory since the nationalist Kuomintang (KMT) government fled the mainland to Taiwan during the Chinese Civil War in 1949. While de facto a separate state, Taiwan's status as an independent nation is only recognised by a handful of nations. In recent years, tensions have increased dramatically, particularly following a 2022 white paper published by the PRC which called reunification an "indispensable" goal and has held a series of large-scale military drills around Taiwan simulating invasion. Although ambiguous, the US's role as a guarantor of Taiwan's security is highly likely a crucial deterrent against the PRC. While Biden has sought to affirm this role, Trump's comments have raised doubts about the strength of US support, with polls currently projecting Trump to likely be the next US president. In his previous presidency, Trump employed distinctly anti-PRC rhetoric and aggressive trade policies, and he recently chose JD Vance, a China hawk, as his running mate. Trump's comments, therefore, have come as a surprise to some, with speculation that Trump is giving Taiwan the "Ukraine treatment". On the one hand, Trump's comments may reflect an isolationist foreign policy which threatens the reduction of US deterrence against future PRC military actions against Taiwan. It is highly likely, however, that these comments are instead part of Trump's transactional diplomacy. The key point of contention raised by Trump was Taiwan's dominance of the "chip business", with Taiwan producing 92 per cent of the global supply of advanced microchips. It is unlikely that a second Trump administration would seriously consider abandoning, albeit ambiguous, commitments to Taiwan's security. Trump is instead, likely attempting to leverage the US' vital defence role for Taiwan to pressure the Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Company (TSMC) into committing to build more chip fabrication plants in the US, should he win the November election.

APAC Summary and Forecast:

Politics, Economics and Civil Unrest.



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The government of **Pakistan** has announced that it will move to ban the Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party of former Prime Minister Imran Khan, who is currently imprisoned. TPI still retains massive popular support, and a recent Supreme Court ruling made it the largest force in the Pakistani parliament. Alongside banning PTI, the government has also announced that it will press treason charges against Khan. It is almost certain that if the move to ban PTI moves forward, it will translate into extremely severe and widespread violent civil unrest. There is a high likelihood that the government, which has recently further expanded the military's powers by granting the Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) the authorisation to intercept calls and messages for reasons of national security, is betting on provoking large protests to quash dissenting voices and organisations.

Nepalese Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal lost a confidence vote, leading to the creation of a new government on 12 July, led by K.P. Sharma Oli. The government crisis was initiated by Oli's party, the liberal Communist Unified Marxist Leninist (UML) party, which struck a government deal with the centrist Nepali Congress (NC) party. UML is considered a pro-Beijing party, and Oli has flirted with the idea of reopening territorial disputes with India. In turn, Delhi has pressured Nepal not to begin projects under China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI).

On 14 July, **North Korean** media reported the sacking of multiple senior officials for their "irresponsible" handling of the construction of Samjiyon, a mega-project consisting of a city in a mountainous part of the country's north. The building of Samjiyon was reportedly slowed down by North Korea's economic difficulties, and authorities used dissidents as "slave labour" during the construction works. The announcement of government divisions in the highly controlled North Korean media is extremely rare. There is a realistic possibility that the announcement is a prelude to a major government purge, with the Samjiyon project acting as a convenient justification.

Security, Armed Conflict and Terror.

On 15 July in **Bannu**, in northwestern **Pakistan's** troubled **Khyber Pakhtunkhwa** province, a suicide bomber and armed insurgents attacked a military facility, resulting in the deaths of at least four soldiers and injuries to numerous others, including civilians. The attack, which involved a vehicle-borne explosive and subsequent gunfire, was quickly suppressed by security forces, with all five attackers reportedly killed. On 19 July, a demonstration was organised in Bannu to protest the rising insecurity in the region. However, the protest was fired upon by with conflicting reports as to whether or not it was militants or government troops.

In the **Uttar Pradesh** state of northern **India**, police reportedly demanded that restaurant owners display the names of their employees at the beginning of Shravan month. The demand is likely meant to single out Muslim-owned or -staffed businesses at a period of high influx of Hindus, and possibly seeking to inflame sectarian violence. Religion-driven violence, especially targeting physical assets and storefronts, is extremely common in India and is often a response to direct calls from local politicians. Despite their anti-Muslim rhetoric backfiring at the recent elections, Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) politicians, especially at the local level, have continued calls for anti-Muslim violence.

Environment, Health and Miscellaneous.

At least 40 people have been killed, and 250 injured, by floods in eastern **Afghanistan**. The entire region is currently experiencing severe flooding coinciding with the height of the monsoon season. The severity of the current flooding is partly anomalous, and reports link it with ongoing anthropogenic climate change. In Afghanistan, the death toll from floods is likely to increase due to insufficient infrastructure and the precarious stability and lack of resources of the Taliban regime.

On 16 July, six individuals, four Vietnamese and two US nationals, were discovered dead at a luxury hotel in **Bangkok, Thailand**. Further analysis of the bodies showed that all died from cyanide poisoning. Currently, the most discussed hypothesis is that of a dispute over debts leading to the killings.

16 people died as a result of a fire at a shopping centre in the city of **Zigong in Sichuan province, China**. The 14-storey building is located in the high-tech district of Zigong, and the entire structure was engulfed in flames leading to a major firefighting and rescue operation. Official national sources reported that 75 people were rescued. According to an official source, China has suffered from 947 fire-related deaths between

January and May 2024, indicating the continuing risk of fire hazards in China. The majority of these fires are caused by issues with gas or electrical lines, as well as “carelessness”. China will likely continue to experience sporadic major fires, due to widespread poor and cost-cutting construction practices.



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