



# Global Intelligence Summary

REPORTING PERIOD: 15 – 22 NOVEMBER

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Week 47: 15 – 22 November

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- There is a **realistic possibility** that the consecutive severing of undersea internet cables in the **Baltic Sea** is indicative of Russian sabotage.
- There is a **realistic possibility** that the current **French** government is heading towards a political crisis in late December or January, as multiple factors threaten its stability.
- It is **likely** that anti-government protests will continue into at least the next few weeks in **Georgia**, although the opposition will **likely** struggle to overturn the October election results.
- In **Pakistan**, if Imran Khan's call to protest is heeded by his supporters, incidents of violent civil unrest are **highly likely**.

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## Americas (AMER)

### Haiti:

#### Humanitarian flights limited in response to targeting of aeroplanes.

In response to the deliberate targeting of aircraft with small arms fire by Haitian gangs, the US Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) banned all flights to the Caribbean nation on 12 November. On 20 November, the ban was amended, allowing flights to resume to the northern part of Haiti but with flights to Port-au-Prince banned until 12 December 2024. The UN Humanitarian Air Service (UNHAS) also resumed flights to northern Haiti on 20 November, focusing on areas outside the capital to continue supporting humanitarian efforts.

**Assessment:** The ongoing targeting of planes with gunfire highlights the failure of Haiti's internal security forces to effectively combat gang activity. Despite the critical need for security around Toussaint Louverture International Airport, authorities have not implemented a basic security cordon of only a few hundred metres to prevent small arms fire from reaching aircraft. The partial suspension of flights will almost certainly lead to a deterioration of the humanitarian situation and will play into the hands of the gangs, who are increasingly controlling the limited resources that are in high demand by the wider population. Despite the resumption of flights to northern Haiti, it is unlikely that aid agencies will be able to provide adequate aid to the capital area, where approximately 30 per cent of Haitians live. The gangs have established roadblocks and control many of the key access points. The humanitarian situation has been further compounded by the suspension of operations from Doctors Without Borders (MSF), who have ceased operations in Port-au-Prince and its surrounding areas in response to increasing gang violence and threats made by the Haitian police. MSF is one of the largest providers of healthcare in Haiti after increasing its presence after the 2010 earthquake. The cessation of MSF operations will have a major effect on the provision of healthcare in the capital region, with less than a quarter of medical facilities remaining operational. These attacks are likely part of a wider gang strategy to curtail foreign influence and help gangs extend control in the capital region. On 20 November, the UN Security Council largely supported the conversion of the Multinational Security Support (MSS) mission in Haiti into a formal peacekeeping operation, despite opposition from China and Russia. This shift in approach likely reflects growing international recognition of the need for a more structured peacekeeping presence in Haiti and acknowledgement that the Kenyan-led task force has failed to address the security concerns.

### Colombia:

#### FARC dissidents split amid government ceasefire negotiations.

On 20 November, one of the largest dissident groups of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), the Segunda Marquetalia, announced that it was splitting in response to internal division. The split comes at a time when elements of Segunda Marquetalia are engaging in ceasefire talks with the Colombian government, headed by President Gustavo Petro. However, Segunda Marquetalia's parent faction has stated that it will remain committed to peace talks but admitted that there had been a "clear breakdown in unity" within the group.

**Assessment:** The Segunda Marquetalia was formed in 2019 by former FARC members who accused the Colombia government of failing to comply with the 2016 peace agreement, citing insufficient protection for former guerillas and sustained violence against leaders and ex-combatants. The group's split likely indicates that elements are still committed to the revolutionary cause and remain

hostile to the government. However, the Segunda Marquetalia has become entrenched in both illegal mining and the trafficking of narcotics in its stronghold in the mountainous jungle terrain of northeastern Colombia. Tactics employed by the group include armed attacks, assassinations, extortion, hostage takings and attacks on critical infrastructure. The fracture of the group could have significant consequences for the security in northeastern Colombia. Internal divisions may escalate violence, with competing factions attempting to exert control over narcotic routes and illegal mining operations. This could also result in increased attacks, particularly as the absence of the former leadership's control may remove prior constraints. Additionally, the smaller faction of the group may seek to strengthen its relationships with other militant groups, organised crime networks and even the Venezuelan government to help sustain their operations.

## AMER Summary and Forecast:

### Politics, Economics and Civil Unrest:

#### **Western far-right groups meet in Tennessee for 2024 American Renaissance Conference.**

The meeting is held every two years and is sponsored by US-based white supremacist political figures and think tanks. While normally mostly aimed at coordinating and favouring networking between US-based far-right groups, this year the conference will be attended by key figures in the European identitarian movement, including the Italian neofascist "Casapound" and the Austrian chapter of the pan-European "Generation Identity".

#### **Argentina orders arrest of Brazilian participants in 2023 Brasilia insurrection.**

In January 2023, supporters of former Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro stormed various government buildings in the centre of Brasilia with the aim of toppling the government. In the failed insurrection's aftermath, dozens of participants escaped to Argentina to avoid imprisonment. As not complying with Brazil's extradition requests would put further outside pressure on Milei's position for likely minimal political gain, Buenos Aires is likely to continue efforts to arrest the rioters.

### Security, Armed Conflict and Terror:

#### **FBI arrests man for allegedly planning bombing of New York stock exchange.**

The arrest occurred on 20 November in Florida. According to available information, the suspect allegedly sought to carry out the attack during the Thanksgiving celebrations, thus seeking to maximise casualties while also targeting a highly visible location. The suspect, moreover, was allegedly a supporter and possibly member of far-right, anti-government militant groups operating in the US, and intended the attack to result in the collapse of the US government.

#### **Brazilian authorities uncover previous plot to assassinate President Lula.**

Brazilian police have uncovered a past military plot designed to kill President Lula before his 2023 inauguration. The 2022 coup plot allegedly planned to use explosives or poison to kill Lula and other political figures before the appointment of retired generals to leadership roles, with most implicated individuals either being current or former members of the military. Investigators have also suggested that former President Bolsonaro was implicated in the plot. Such an accusation will almost certainly increase political tension in Brazil and will likely scuttle Bolsonaro's attempt at a comeback, especially as the public discovery of the plot follows from a failed bomb attack on Brazil's Supreme Court which has been linked to far-right extremism.

## Environment, Health and Miscellaneous:

### **Ecuador declares state of emergency in response to wildfires.**

Authorities in Ecuador have declared a 60-day state of emergency due to widespread forest fires that have been exacerbated by a three-month drought. Thirteen active wildfires and nine controlled ones have been reported, with the provinces of Azuay and Loja being the hardest hit. The local rugged terrain has complicated relief efforts, denying ground access to firefighters who, however, cannot be replaced via air due to the lack of aircraft suitable for firefighting.



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## Europe, Middle East & Africa (EMEA)

### The Baltic Sea:

#### Two undersea fibre optic cables damaged in close succession.

On 17 November, the Lithuania-Sweden undersea fibre optic internet cable was damaged at approximately 10:00 local time. On the following day, the C-Lion1 Cable, which runs from Helsinki, Finland, to Rostock, Germany, was also damaged at approximately 04:00 local time near the Swedish island of Öland. In response, Finland and Sweden have planned to set up a joint team to investigate the incidents as potential sabotage. The German Defence Minister, Boris Pistorius, has stated that the incidents were “hybrid” action and that it must be assumed that this was an example of sabotage, dismissing the possibility of legitimate anchor snags but without presenting any credible evidence.

**Assessment:** The areas in which the two cables were damaged are both within major shipping lanes and the Baltic Sea is an area of dense fishing activity, increasing the likelihood of accidental damage from anchors or fishing equipment responsible for most subsea cable incidents. Moreover, the Baltic Sea is an incredibly shallow body of water, with average depths of approximately 55 metres, suggesting that it could be accidental damage caused by a ship not used to operating there. However, damage to two separate undersea cables in close succession is highly suspicious and there is a realistic possibility that these incidents were acts of deliberate sabotage. Both locations are near Kaliningrad, home to much of Russia’s Baltic Fleet and where many Russian survey ships operate from, which have a history of surveying sensitive areas of the Baltic. However, these ships are extensively monitored by NATO military assets. If Russia were responsible, it is more likely that Russian intelligence services like the Main Intelligence Directorate (GRU) would have repurposed a civilian ship to drag its anchor over the cables. Speculation suggests that a Chinese ship, captained by a Russian, may have been involved, and the Danish Navy has seized the vessel.

This tactic would be highly deniable and if the vessel had its automatic identification system (AIS) turned off, it is unlikely that NATO can effectively monitor all Russian-linked civilian flagged vessels. An act of state-sponsored undersea sabotage by Russia would fit within the wider picture of Russian sabotage across Europe. Russia has created a gig economy for disaffected Europeans to conduct low-level sabotage in exchange for remuneration, resulting in damage to warehouses, factories and transport infrastructure linked to the facilitation of lethal aid to Ukraine. There is a realistic possibility that Russia has migrated these tactics to the maritime domain as part of an expansion of its sabotage campaign. Russia may be attempting to send a strategic message to Europe aimed at deterring it from supporting Ukraine. With the Trump administration likely to suspend aid to Ukraine, Europe will be forced to assume greater responsibility, indicating that the scale and frequency of Russian sabotage in Europe is likely to increase.

### France:

#### Le Pen trial and 2025 budget near end, increasing the risk of a political crisis.

The end of the embezzlement trial involving multiple National Rally (RN) members, including the party’s leader Marine Le Pen, is scheduled to end next week. The trial’s verdict, which could bar Le Pen from running in the 2027 presidential election if she is found guilty, is due to be issued in early 2025.

Also next week, the contentious 2025 budget of Prime Minister Michel Barnier heads to the Senate after a revised version of it, proposed by the populist left-wing France Unbowed (LFI) party was rejected at the National Assembly. Barnier’s budget seeks to cut the state’s deficit from six to five per

cent in 2025 and involves a series of tax hikes and spending cuts, which are opposed by the left. While RN has de facto supported Barnier's precarious minority government (which was formed after the latest, inconclusive National Assembly elections this summer) by refusing to support a motion of no confidence in October, its leaders have repeatedly indicated that they are displeased with the proposed budget.

**Assessment:** Currently, the next "steps" in an increasingly likely French political crisis have a somewhat clear timeline. After being debated by the Senate, which will introduce further changes to the bill, the budget will then be subject to a vote by lawmakers from both houses on 12 December. If it fails to pass this vote, then Barnier is highly likely to use Article 49.3 to bypass the legislative branch and force the bill through. If this takes place, a no-confidence motion will almost certainly follow. Here, the centre would highly likely support Barnier whereas the left-wing coalition, the New Popular Front (NFP), will almost certainly back the motion as it did in October, leaving the RN to again play a kingmaking role. If, however, RN votes against Barnier, and the government collapses, this will not constitutionally be followed by new National Assembly elections, due to constitutional constraints that elections must be separated by at least 12 months.

After Barnier, therefore, President Macron would almost certainly have to opt to nominate a caretaker government. Moreover, following the failure of the 2025 budget to pass, the 2024 one would be reinstated as per the constitution. However, the 2024 budget is already far outside of EU regulations. The resulting situation is one in which the ruling centre and Macron would have little political power and the parliament would be "stuck" with a budget that both the left and the right (and Brussels) strongly oppose. In such a scenario, Macron could either openly oppose his allies in Brussels, thus likely destroying the centrist bloc as a Europhile force in French politics and caving in to either the left or right, likely dooming his coalition to a complete rout at the next presidential elections; resign and cause snap presidential elections; or, more likely that the previous option, attempt to rule by decree until 2027. This last scenario, however, would almost certainly result in extremely severe civil unrest spearheaded by RN and NFP. Possibly, a worsening position for Macron will give some momentum to LFI's "nuclear option": trying to impeach Macron. This, however, would again require an agreement with RN, an unlikely scenario due to the political relevance of the move.

While not directly connected, the Le Pen trial and the ongoing budget debate will likely increase the risk of France collapsing into a more severe political, and possibly fiscal, crisis. RN's current president (and Le Pen's de facto deputy and representative at the EU Parliament) Jordan Bardella, has repeatedly hinted at the possibility of collapsing the government if the final budget does not reflect RN's concerns over areas such as the cost-of-living crisis. The introduction of a judicial threat to RN likely increases the party's incentives to end its truce with Barnier. However, Le Pen and Bardella could also assess that collapsing the Barnier government could go to the party's detriment, and shift RN's moderate supporters towards the politically weaker, but more established Republicans (LR).

## Georgia:

### Protests against contested election results intensify in Tbilisi.

Following the 26 October parliamentary elections, which the ruling Georgian Dream party claimed to have won, protests amid allegations of electoral fraud have intensified in Tbilisi. On 16 November, pro-Europe opposition protesters turned out in the tens of thousands to demonstrate, block major roads in central Tbilisi and clashing with local security forces. The protests continued over the following days, with opposition protesters establishing sit-ins and protest camps around Tbilisi State University. On 19 November, Georgian police engaged in clearing operations, detaining at least 16 demonstrators and dismantling protest camps. Furthermore, on 19 November, the pro-opposition Georgian President, Salome Zurbishvili, requested that the constitutional court annul the results of the October elections over claims of vote rigging, according to her lawyer.

**Assessment:** In comparison to the unrest which gripped Georgia during the anti-‘foreign agents’ bill protests in March 2023 and April-June 2024, the protests have so far been less attended and less intense. However, the trajectory of the levels of unrest has been accelerating since the 26 October elections. In the immediate aftermath of the elections, protests were relatively restrained and peaceful. This past week’s protests mark an escalation in their intensity, with protesters increasingly deploying methods of direct action such as sit-ins and protest camps. It is likely that hypothetical events such as the arrest of the pro-opposition President Zurabishvili, with former Russian president Dmitry Medvedev having called for her arrest in late October, would lead to further escalation in the levels of unrest. Moreover, it is generally likely that protests will continue into at least the next few weeks.

In terms of the probability that the protest movement will succeed in overturning the election result and/or overthrowing the Georgian Dream government, which they criticise as being pro-Russia, there are key factors which diminish the capability of the opposition movement to challenge the government both politically and in the streets through direct action. Firstly, the movement is politically highly fragmented, with numerous opposition parties such as United National Movement (UNM), Lelo, For Georgia, Droa and European Georgia each contesting political leadership of the opposition. Secondly, the opposition protesters have struggled to contest with the Georgian riot police in street battles, evidenced by the relative success of clearing operations on 19 November. In contrast, the November 2013-February 2014 ‘Euromaidan’ protests in Ukraine, which ultimately overthrew the pro-Russian government, were supported by militant far-right groups such as Right Sector which contributed to a paramilitarisation of the protest movement and increased the capability of the anti-government protesters to challenge the Berkut riot police. In Georgia, while not entirely homogenous, the militant far-right are typically anti-opposition, more sceptical of Western influence and more sympathetic to Russia. The liberal left and centrist base for the opposition movement, meanwhile, is not generally characterised by violent militancy.

## Nigeria:

### **Boko Haram conduct two major attacks in two days across Nigeria.**

On 18 November, a convoy belonging to the Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC) was ambushed when patrolling around a National Grid installation in Kaduna State. The ambush was reportedly conducted by the Islamist group Boko Haram and involved 200 insurgents armed with sophisticated weapons from advantageous high ground. The ambush allegedly resulted in the deaths of over 50 Boko Haram militants but seven NSCDC troops were captured by the militants. The following day, Boko Haram launched another major attack on a Nigerian army camp in Borno State in northeast Nigeria, near their main stronghold in the Lake Chad region. The attack killed several soldiers and four soldiers remain missing.

**Assessment:** Two major Boko Haram attacks in two days in different parts of Nigeria is likely indicative of how the Islamist group has strengthened as a result of the wider destabilisation of the Sahel region. The rise of extremism in Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger has almost certainly resulted in a proliferation of arms in Nigeria and likely accounts for the group’s use of “sophisticated weaponry”. Moreover, the Sahel’s destabilisation has likely contributed to the overstretching of Nigerian government forces which have deployed more resources to the border regions, a move that has almost certainly provided domestic militants with more freedom of movement. The scale of the Boko Haram assaults may also indicate that the group has managed to boost its recruitment, improve the coordination of operations and has been emboldened by Nigeria’s decreased internal security. There is a realistic possibility that these attacks were purposefully timed and coordinated by senior leadership in a move to further overstretch government resources. Such a strategy would complicate commanders’ allocation of resources and limit the government’s ability to conduct major offensives

on Boko Haram in its main area of operations. Government efforts will almost certainly be further undermined by the capture of personnel. The abductions were likely intended objectives of the attacks, designed to degrade troop morale, disrupt cohesion and to provide the group with leverage for ransom demands or political concessions. The targeting of energy infrastructure will likely become a more integral element of the group's strategy, with power outages serving to undermine the government and deter foreign presence or investment, one of Boko Haram's primary objectives.

## EMEA Summary and Forecast:

### Politics, Economics and Civil Unrest:

#### Protests in separatist Abkhazia in Georgia lead to resignation of Abkhazia's President.

The so-called Republic of Abkhazia, a separatist region of Georgia which is de facto independent, had intense protests against the ratification of a Russian investment deal. The breakaway region is highly influenced by Russia and is described by most UN member states as being a Russian-occupied territory. Protesters argue that the proposed investment grants Russian oligarchs unfettered access to Abkhazia. On 15 November, protesters stormed the Abkhazian parliament building in Sukhumi and clashed with security forces. Following negotiations between opposition leaders and the Abkhazian government, on 19 November a deal was made for protesters to leave government buildings in return for the resignation of President Aslan Bzhania and new elections, which soon followed. A member of the so-called Central Election Commission of occupied Abkhazia later stated that elections will be held within three months. It is likely that this development will reduce levels of unrest in Abkhazia.

#### Iran vows "proportionate" response if Western-backed resolution passes at the IAEA.

Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi was warned that Iran will be forced to enact a "proportionate" response if a Western-backed resolution is passed at the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), the United Nations nuclear agency. The resolution criticises Iran for its lack of cooperation with the agency and advocates for increased scrutiny and diplomatic consequences. The move follows the recent sanctioning of Iranian state airliner Iran Air and shipping company Islamic Republic of Iran Shipping Lines (IRISL) for their involvement in the delivery of arms to Russia for use in Ukraine. Hardliners in Iran have called for the closure of the Strait of Hormuz; however, such an action would likely harm Iran's own interests and almost certainly alienate Tehran from the Gulf nations with which it has recently improved relations.

#### Senegal's new government secures parliamentary victory.

Legislative elections in Senegal, held on 17 November, have resulted in a significant victory for the ruling Pastef party with a reported 79 per cent of the vote. The opposition has acknowledged the results and conceded defeat, a move which will likely help curb the potential for major unrest, with many of Senegal's previous elections marred by disruptive protests and political violence.

#### Australian mining company strikes expensive deal to secure release of CEO and employees in Mali.

The employees had been detained over unclear charges of "false evidence" and "misappropriation of public goods". The "memorandum of understanding" agreed by Resolute Mining and the Mali junta entails an "initial settlement payment" of USD 80 million and an extra USD 80 million in future payments. The case is likely to be influential for Western private actors operating in the Sahel, who face a greatly deteriorated legal environment as part of the Sahel juntas' increasing transition towards international isolation.

### **Gabon referendum on new constitution passes in landslide.**

The “yes” vote, which introduces a new constitution with term limits for the president, won with the support of around 91.8 per cent of the participating electorate. The Gabonese junta, which took power in an August 2023 coup which removed the long-term President Ali Bongo, hailed the result as a positive step towards re-establishing democracy. The success of this process is, however, likely to be a reflection of the junta’s willingness to allow for a retrenchment of the military’s political position.

### **SADC extends mandate to keep troops in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo.**

At a summit on 20 November, the Southern African Development Community (SADC) extended its mandate to keep troops in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). The mandate, initially implemented on 15 December 2023, consists of roughly 3,000 troops primarily from Tanzania and Malawi and aims to “support the Congolese army in fighting and eradicating the M23 and other armed groups that continue to disrupt peace and security.” The decision comes as the Kigali-backed M23 rebel movement, the primary rebel group in the region, has made significant territorial gains in North Kivu, which has seen over 7 million people displaced. Despite the Luanda Process aimed at restoring peace between the DRC and Rwanda, violence in North Kivu will almost certainly continue despite the presence of SADC and United Nations peacekeeping forces.

### **Opposition party wins presidential election in Somaliland.**

On 19 November, results for Somaliland’s presidential election were published, revealing that opposition leader Abdirahman Mohamed Abdullahi of the Waddani party won 63.9 per cent of the vote. Abdullahi has voiced opposition over the previous government’s deal to lease Ethiopia a section of Somaliland’s coastline to setup a naval base due to its perceived lack of economic benefit. The deal has caused significant complications with Mogadishu, who do not recognise Somaliland as an independent territory. The election comes amidst Somaliland’s push for global recognition, with many expecting President-elect Donald Trump to recognise Somaliland after assuming office. Given the election’s success in demonstrating Somaliland’s commitment to democracy, the election will likely contribute positively towards its international recognition.

## **Security, Armed Conflict and Terror:**

### **16-year-old Chechen arrested for planning attack on synagogue in France.**

The target was a place of worship located on the outskirts of Le Mans. It is highly likely that the attack plan was partially influenced by previous attacks on synagogues in France, including an arson attack in August in La Grande-Motte. Moreover, the suspect’s youth further corroborates the trend of increasingly younger “lone wolves” becoming self-radicalised in Europe and North America.

### **Tunisian coast guard vessel reportedly intentionally rammed and sank migrant boat.**

According to Italian media, a Tunisian coast guard vessel deliberately rammed into a small vessel on 7 November. The small vessel was carrying approximately 80 people, of which 52 died and the rest were rescued by local fishermen. A similar case, which occurred in 2022, sparked significant condemnation in Tunisia and Italy. Tunisian President Saied has increasingly sought to establish his administration as a key partner for south European governments, especially Italy, seeking to decrease migrant arrivals to the continent. Saied has managed to ensure an in-flow of approximately EUR 150 million from the EU to fund Tunisian anti-migrant efforts, but NGOs have noted how much of the funding has effectively been redirected towards bolstering Saied’s efforts to suppress dissent at home.

### **Wagner troops targeted by JNIM in southern Mali.**

On 21 November, a convoy of Wagner mercenaries and government forces was attacked with firearms and improvised explosive devices (IEDs) in the vicinity of Bankass, near the Mali-Burkina Faso border. According to both Malian and JNIM sources, the ambush resulted in the deaths of at least six Wagner members. The ambush is the latest in a series of setbacks and defeats, as well as episodes of brutal conduct towards civilians, which have increased scrutiny of Wagner's performance both in the Sahel and Moscow. Since Prigozhin's death, Wagner in Africa has been increasingly moved towards a greater government control under the Africa Corps umbrella, a change that Prigozhin's successors decry. Moscow has leveraged the latest failures by the group to accelerate this process, as a more controllable Wagner likely allows the Russian regime a greater leverage over the juntas.

### **Burkinabe junta freezes assets of suspected terrorists and imposes six-month travel ban.**

The 100 people that were targeted include former president Paul-Henri Sandaogo Damiba, as well as former politicians, journalists, military officers and other civilians. The junta justified the move as directly targeting the Islamic State and JNIM. It is, however, more likely that the freezes, which targeted the country's intelligentsia, are meant to quash possible sources of internal dissent, and may be a reflection of growing instability within the junta. There is a realistic possibility that further measures will be taken against the targets, including imprisonment.

### **Foreign terrorist fighters flocking to Somalia to join the Islamic State (IS).**

A UN report has identified that foreign terrorist fighters are transiting to Somalia's Puntland region via both land and maritime routes to join the Islamic State's Somalia Province (ISSP). The report indicates that ISSP has doubled in size to around 600-700 fighters, with foreign militants principally arriving from Syria, Yemen, Ethiopia, Sudan, Morocco, and Tanzania. The influx of fighters have bolstered ISSP's operational capabilities and has likely put it in a better place to challenge government forces and regional rival, the al-Qaeda-affiliated al-Shabaab. The affiliate's strength has also grown as a result of al-Karrar, an IS regional office established in Somalia in 2022, which supports global IS operations. In addition, former leader, Abdul Qadir Mumin, has been elevated to oversee IS affiliates in Africa, indicating that IS senior leadership in the Middle East is likely attempting to expand its influence in Africa and deflect international resources from the Middle East.

## **Environment, Health and Miscellaneous:**

### **Evacuations ordered after seventh eruption of Icelandic volcano.**

On 20 November, evacuation orders were issued after a volcano on the Reykjanes Peninsula erupted for the seventh time since December. Several homes near the volcano as well as guests at the popular Blue Lagoon spa resort were told to leave the area after lava spurted from a two-mile fissure. However, the eruption was considerably smaller than the most recent one in August and is unlikely to disrupt air travel.

### **Cholera outbreak suspected of causing mass deaths in al-Hilaliya, Sudan.**

At least 150 people have died of illness in a few days in the city in eastern al-Jazira state, which has been besieged by the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) for weeks. In early November, the RSF massacred more than 120 people in the town, and, according to the authorities, RSF troops have systematically destroyed civilian infrastructures, further depriving civilians of clean water and medical care. Sudanese activists assessed approximately ten days ago that the siege has already resulted in 450 deaths.

## Asia Pacific (APAC)

### Pakistan:

#### Imran Khan's PTI organises nationwide protest for 24 November.

The Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party is set to hold a major nationwide demonstration on 24 November after calls to protest from imprisoned PTI founder, Imran Khan. The party has refused to enter negotiations with the government and has stressed that PTI's entire leadership will be part of the march which will demand a revocation of the 26th Constitutional Amendment, the restoration of democracy and the constitution, and the release of all political prisoners.

**Assessment:** Khan has called on workers to join the protest and has warned party members to disassociate themselves from the party if they fail to attend. PTI's leadership is urging supporters to join large convoys that will travel along major roads, including a primary convoy that will head to the capital Islamabad from Peshawar. PTI has called on its supporters to video record the convoys as they head to Islamabad and other major cities. Pakistan's government has prohibited all public gatherings of five or more people, processions, rallies and demonstrations for two months in the federal capital by imposing a Section 144 order for Islamabad, with further Section 144s likely to be issued for other cities. The Minister of the Interior has approved the deployment of the Pakistan Rangers and Frontier Constabulary (FC) to counter potential unrest and violence in the capital. On 20 November, the Islamabad High Court (IHC) granted bail to Khan for a recent Toshakhana case in what was likely a last-ditch effort to sap the energy from the protests. However, Khan was arrested hours later under anti-terrorism charges, a development that has almost certainly galvanised his base.

Calls from Khan and other party members combined with threats to remove members for not joining will likely guarantee that the protests will attract tens of thousands of participants. The protests are likely to result in significant disruptions throughout Pakistan, and despite warnings not to, protestors will likely attempt to enter Islamabad's Red Zone. Increased security checks, roadblocks and internet shutdowns are likely to occur. There is a high likelihood of violent interactions between protestors and the security services including the use of tear gas and other forms of crowd dispersal. 2023 protests erupted after Khan's arrest on corruption charges, which led to incidents of rioting, vandalism and clashes, with at least eight protestors killed, hundreds injured and over 5,000 arrests. There is a realistic possibility that the 24 November protests will eclipse those of 2023 given the government's sustained crackdown on PTI leaders and supporters and its overseeing of democratic backsliding. There is a realistic possibility that extremist groups may seek to attack large convoys monitored by the security services, with the filming of the convoys potentially amplifying the visibility and propaganda value of such an attack.

### China:

#### Continuation in "random" mass-casualty attacks.

On 16 November, eight people were killed and 17 injured in a knife attack at a vocational school in Yixing in China's Jiangsu province. The suspect allegedly was a student, and the triggering motive for the attack was his failure at recent examinations. On 18 November, a 39-year-old man reportedly deliberately drove an SUV into students and bystanders outside a primary school in Changde, Hunan province. The attack resulted in at least "a dozen" injuries, although officials have not stated whether the incident resulted in any deaths.

The two incidents occurred only days after a vehicle attack in Zhuhai, Guangdong, which reportedly killed 35 and injured 45. Moreover, other attacks have occurred in the past months. For example, on

the eve of National Day in October, a man carried out a stabbing attack in Shanghai. In May, a knife attack at a hospital in Yunnan province resulted in two deaths and at least 21 injuries. Notably, in June 2024, four US college instructors were stabbed in a public park in the northern province of Jilin.

**Assessment:** The attacks have some notable commonalities that set them apart from the relatively narrow lens of lone actor terrorism that characterises previous incidents in Europe and North America. In general, Chinese attackers target areas that are high traffic, but not necessarily high visibility. Apart from the national day stabbing, which coincided with a politically relevant date (although it is not clear if this had any relevance for the attacker), all the other attacks were seemingly only carried out by targeting spaces with a high-density of victims, like hospitals or schools. In all cases, no clear ideology could be identified. While some speculation exists regarding whether the attack on US college instructors had to do with their identity, no decisive information regarding this has been released by media or government channels. None of the attackers, according to available data, made overly political or religious statements, or adopted behaviours similar to those of “Western” lone wolves, such as writing an ideological manifesto, pledging allegiance to a cause or organisation, or carrying symbols associated with a particular ideology. The only notable commonality is the use of non-sophisticated methods, such as vehicles or bladed weapons, but this almost certainly reflects constraints that are intrinsic to the dynamic of lone-perpetrator attacks.

The paucity of available information is almost certainly a reflection of Chinese media and authorities’ self-censorship concerning similar episodes. However, the lack of a clear ideological motive or affiliation between the various attackers appears likely by factual elements such as the choice of target and lack of overt promotion of symbols. Still, the similarities between the attacks makes a “copycat” element likely, especially due to the high engagement and coverage rates following the attacks in Chinese social and legacy media, which make it likely that attackers had access to previous cases. The closest parallel to the attacks in China are likely the so-called “mudjima” (“don’t-ask-why”) stabbings recorded in South Korea, which share the same lack of an ideological component, as well as characteristics such as target type and method.

## APAC Summary and Forecast:

### Politics, Economics and Civil Unrest:

#### **Bangladesh interim government seeks Hasina’s extradition.**

Interim government leader Muhammad Yunus has called for Hasina to be tried for crimes against humanity. Hasina is currently in India, where she sought refuge after her government was toppled. It is unlikely that the request will be met with a positive response in the short term. While the Indian government may have an interest in surrendering Hasina if Bangladesh’s position stabilises in a way that makes it unavoidable for Delhi to have to coexist with a post-Awami League political system, this scenario currently appears remote. If Delhi ignores the request or responds negatively, however, there is a likelihood of this resulting in episodes of “bulldozer justice” and mob violence against the Hindu minority in Bangladesh.

#### **Vanuatu changes law to ban same-sex marriages.**

The Vanuatu parliament has explicitly prohibited same-sex marriage, amending its Marriage Act to prevent the registration of such unions and will revoke the licence of any official performing a same-sex marriage. This decision follows the formation of a committee to draft a national policy banning LGBTQ advocacy, which has reportedly been prompted by concerns from the Council of Traditional Chiefs about the impact of LGBTQ activities on traditional values and Christian beliefs.

### **Mass protests spearheaded by New Zealand Māori community.**

On 19 November, more than 40,000 protesters peacefully assembled near the country's parliament in Wellington to oppose the Treaty Principles Bill, which was introduced to parliament for a preliminary vote on 14 November. The bill was introduced by the libertarian ACT Party and seeks to narrow the interpretation and principles of the Treaty of Waitangi (1840), which is a key founding document for New Zealand that established parameters for the relations between the Māori community and the British crown. Opponents of the bill argue that it is in violation of the original treaty and would infringe upon Māori indigenous rights. Considering the unpopularity of the bill for both the right and the left, and ACT's relatively small presence in parliament, the bill is unlikely to pass.

### **Security, Armed Conflict and Terror:**

#### **Shia convoy attacked in Pakistan's restless northwest.**

On 21 November, an estimated 40-50 Shia Muslims were killed after militants opened fire on vehicles travelling through Pakistan's northwest Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, marking one of the deadliest sectarian attacks in years. No group has claimed responsibility for the attack; however, given the location of the attack near the Afghan border, it was likely either Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) or the Islamic State Khorasan Province (ISKP). Large crowds have amassed in the city of Parachinar to protest the incident and the government's inability to guarantee the Shia community's security.

#### **India develops first hypersonic missile capability.**

India has successfully tested its first domestically produced long-range hypersonic missile, putting it within a small group of nations that have already acquired this capability. The range of the missile is assessed at 1500 kilometres, enabling the Indian military to strike all of Pakistan and much of China and to better evade enemy air defence by manoeuvring mid-flight. The missile has reportedly been designed to carry a multitude of payloads, but India has not declared whether it is nuclear capable- a development that will almost certainly be a major concern to Beijing and Islamabad.

#### **Six tourists die from suspected methanol poisoning in Laos.**

As of 22 November, six tourists (two Australian, one American, and two Danish nationals) have died after consuming alcohol suspected to have been contaminated with methanol. The poisoning reportedly occurred in the Nana Backpacker Hostel in the backpacker town of Vang Vieng. Methanol, a colorless and odorless alcohol used in cleaning and industrial products, is sometimes illegally substituted for ethanol due to its lower cost. Even 30 millilitres can be lethal, causing symptoms like nausea, vomiting, and heart and respiratory failure. Multiple governments have issued warnings to tourists in the wake of this incident to be cautious of contaminated alcohol. Laos is currently affected by inflation and low levels of economic growth. Furthermore, because of Laos's poor infrastructure, safety regulations are often not strictly reinforced. These factors have likely influenced the use of methanol as an alcohol substitute in Vang Vieng, which will likely see reduced tourism levels in the wake of this highly publicised event.

#### **Insurgents launch attacks in southern Thai provinces.**

On 20 November, insurgents in the restive Thai provinces of Yala and Songkhla launched arson and grenade attacks on construction sites. Suspected Muslim separatists attacked a construction site of a Chinese goddess statue in Thepa district in Songkhla, which is set to be the tallest statue of its type in the world. In Yala province, insurgents conducted at least seven arson attacks on surveillance cameras and utility poles in three distinct districts. These attacks have been conducted in the context of increased militant attacks in southern Thailand and follow a recent warning that extremists would target Israeli tourists at Thailand's famous full moon parties.

### US signs intelligence-sharing deal with the Philippines.

In response to increased hostile action by China in the South China Sea, Washington and Manila have signed an intelligence-sharing deal that will permit the exchange of classified information. The move is a further indication of US support for the Philippines and the defence of maritime law in the South Chia Sea as specified by the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS). The deal will provide the US with more oversight of Chinese naval and coastguard activity in the region and will almost certainly improve the Philippines' situational awareness if provided access to data captured by US strategic intelligence assets, such as satellites. Moreover, the deal could be expanded to incorporate other South China Sea claimants like Malaysia, a move that could provide the US with an intelligence advantage without having to allocate its own resources to the area.

### Environment, Health and Miscellaneous:

#### Air pollution in New Delhi reaches "hazardous" levels.

On 18 November, air pollution levels in New Delhi reached 493 in the air quality index (AQI), placing it in the "severe plus" category. This level is more than 30 times higher than the recommended limit set by the World Health Organization (WHO), with some areas of the city reaching pollution levels of over 50 times the recommended limit. In response, India's government has enforced stage 4 of a graded response action plan (GRAP 4) to combat air pollution in New Delhi, closing schools, staggering office timings, banning non-essential construction, banning non-essential trucks from entering, and deploying water tankers and mechanised sweeping to settle the dust. India's heavy dependence on coal for electricity production, along with vehicle emissions and construction fumes, significantly contribute to the pollution problem. Over the weekend, farmers in Uttar Pradesh set fire to their fields, leading to smoke drifting into New Delhi and exacerbating the already high pollution levels. It is estimated that more than 1.6 million deaths in India each year are attributed to diseases caused by pollution. While pollution levels may reduce in the short term as government measures take effect, pollution levels will almost certainly remain high despite government initiatives to clean up pollution.



## ABOUT SOLACE GLOBAL

Solace Global Risk is a leading provider of comprehensive risk management solutions, serving clients globally with a commitment to excellence. With a worldwide presence and a team of seasoned experts, Solace Global Risk empowers organisations to navigate complex risk landscapes with confidence and resilience.

