



Global Intelligence Summary

REPORTING PERIOD: 16 OCTOBER – 23 OCTOBER



Global Intelligence Summary

IN THIS REPORT

Americas (AMER)

US drone strikes on **Colombian**-origin vessels are **almost certain** to result in a deterioration of bilateral relations and could undermine regional cooperation on counter-narcotics operations in the long term.

There is a **realistic possibility** that **US** threats to expand counter-narcotics strikes to **Venezuelan** soil may be expanded to include other nations harbouring US-designated Foreign Terrorist Organisations (FTOs).

Further large-scale protests in **Peru** are **likely** if security forces are perceived as using excessive force against protesters following the government's announcement of a state of emergency in **Lima** and **Callao**.

Europe, Middle East & Africa (EMEA)

The collapse of the **US-Russia** Budapest summit **almost certainly** reflects an impasse between the Kremlin's desire for the entire Donbas and **Ukraine's** unwillingness to concede the 'fortress belt' due to the threat of reinvasion.

Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) carried out its largest attack in years in southern **Yemen**. This is **likely** reflective of AQAP's leadership efforts to increase its operational tempo after years of decline.

Widespread protests are **unlikely** in **Zimbabwe** following a two-year extension to President Mnangagwe's term, despite the faltering economy and perceptions of corruption.

Asia-Pacific (APAC)

A Qatari-brokered ceasefire between **Afghanistan** and **Pakistan** is **almost certainly** vulnerable to cross-border militant activity, with militant attacks in Pakistan **likely** to result in retaliatory airstrikes in Afghanistan.



Americas (AMER)

Colombia: Bogotá claims strike on suspected narcotics smuggling vessel was in Colombian waters.

On 17 October, the US military conducted its sixth drone strike on a suspected drug smuggling vessel in the Caribbean Sea, killing three people on board. The targeted vessel was reportedly in international waters and in an area under the purview of the US Southern Command (SOUTHCOM), according to US sources. US sources have indicated that the vessel was linked to the National Liberation Army/Ejército de Liberación Nacional (ELN), a far-left guerrilla group based in Colombia that is widely suspected of being involved in the cultivation and trafficking of narcotics.

Following the strike, US Secretary of War Pete Hegseth stated that US strikes on drug trafficking vessels in the region will continue. Hegseth asserted that these groups are the al-Qaeda of the Western Hemisphere, which use violence, murder and terrorism to impose their will and threaten national security, and like al-Qaeda, these organisations will be hunted and killed. However, Bogotá has denied claims that the vessel was linked to the ELN and has stated that the strike violated Colombian sovereignty, claiming that the strike was conducted within Colombia's territorial waters, or within 12 nautical miles of the shoreline.

Solace Global Assessment: A video released by the US military indicates that the vessel was a low-profile speedboat, consistent with the profile of vessels used by drug traffickers. The release of these videos is likely being done by SOUTHCOM to control the narrative and deny allegations that US forces may have targeted civilian or non-combatant vessels, such as fishing boats, narratives that have been advanced by both Venezuela and Colombia. However, the potential targeting of a suspected narcotics smuggling vessel within a nation's sovereign waters would almost certainly represent a major escalation and has already resulted in a rapid deterioration in bilateral relations.

President Trump has also suspended aid to Colombia and has accused Colombian President Gustavo Petro, a former guerrilla leader, of being an "illegal drug dealer", citing official estimates that indicate that cocaine production in Colombia has increased by around 70 per cent under his administration. Bogotá has responded by recalling its US ambassador, deploying troops to the Venezuelan border and halting arms purchases from the US, its largest military supplier. While the Trump administration's strategy of targeting vessels linked to Venezuela may help to isolate Caracas and starve it of revenue, the expansion of this strategy in other parts of the region could backfire.

Washington is likely risking the alienation of cooperative governments, and US military actions will likely strengthen the anti-US narratives advanced by Venezuela and other regional actors or world powers. This approach may also undermine regional intelligence sharing, law enforcement partnerships and broader joint counter-narcotics efforts. Long term, it



may even weaken US influence in the Western Hemisphere and provide opportunities for adversarial powers like Russia and China to exploit in Latin America.

Venezuela: Trump considers expanding counter-narcotics strikes to Venezuelan territory.

On 22 October, US President Trump stated that his administration has the legal authority to conduct strikes on Venezuelan-linked vessels suspected of narcotics smuggling and signalled that he may seek congressional approval before authorising strikes on land. President Trump asserted that the US is “totally prepared” to hit traffickers onshore and said, “We’ll probably go back to Congress and explain exactly what we’re doing when [they] come to the land.” President Trump’s comments follow two US strikes on suspected narcotics smuggling vessels in the Eastern Pacific off the Colombian Coast, marking the first US strikes targeting narco-traffickers outside of the Caribbean region. US Secretary of War Pete Hegseth stated that the vessels were transiting on a “known narco-trafficking route”, again referring to the alleged traffickers as “narco-terrorists” and comparing them to al-Qaeda.

Solace Global Assessment: The Trump administration is currently invoking the framework of a Non-International Armed Conflict (NIAC) to justify strikes against alleged narco-trafficking vessels in international waters. This approach effectively frames the US as being in a continuing armed conflict with transnational criminal and terrorist actors. This framework has previously been used to target Foreign Terrorist Organisations (FTOs) abroad without prior congressional approval or host nation consent. President Trump’s stated intent to involve Congress is likely aimed at reinforcing the legality and legitimacy of potential land strikes while also helping them to achieve bipartisan support, as land-based strikes on a sovereign nation would almost certainly mark a major escalation with far higher political, legal and diplomatic risks. Congressional deliberations would also provide it with greater publicity and send a strategic message to any state or non-state actor engaged in narco-trafficking.

The US strikes in the Eastern Pacific off the Colombian coast represent a significant expansion of the Trump administration’s counter-narcotics strategy, and follow recent diplomatic spats with Colombian President Gustavo Petro. These expanded strikes likely fall within existing frameworks and are likely to increase. The Colombia-based National Liberation Army (ELN) was implicated in one of the Pacific strikes. The ELN is a leftist guerrilla group suspected of being heavily involved in narcotics trafficking, is an FTO and has alleged links to the Maduro regime. However, this geographical and target expansion could be an early indication that the US is willing to broaden its campaign to include non-Venezuelan actors.

While this comes with major diplomatic risks, this broadening is likely to send a strong message to regional governments like Mexico and Colombia that Washington is prepared to unilaterally escalate counter-narcotics operations if it perceives governments have taken insufficient action against trafficking networks. Moreover, although Trump’s remarks on potential land strikes were made in the context of Venezuela, he did not explicitly reference Venezuela by name. There



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KY1-1001, Cayman Islands



is a realistic possibility that this omission was intentional and has achieved strategic ambiguity. In theory, the expansion to land strikes could involve any nation where there is a US-designated FTO engaged in narcotics smuggling. This would not just cover Venezuela, but also Colombia, Ecuador and most importantly, Mexico, the primary hub for narcotics entering the US and a country that Trump has repeatedly threatened to target with unilateral strikes against drug cartels.

Peru: Government imposes a state of emergency in Lima following unrest and clashes.

Anti-government protests in Peru, which have been ongoing since 20 September, escalated on 15 October. Thousands gathered in Lima, with hundreds clashing outside the Congress building. Security forces cracked down on demonstrations with tear gas, and numerous protesters and police officers were injured. Figures released by The Ombudsman's Office reveal that at least 102 people were hospitalised due to injuries sustained during the clashes, with 78 of them being police officers. One protester, identified as popular rapper Eduardo Ruiz, was killed in the clashes after being shot by security forces. The police have since identified the officer involved in the shooting and have detained and dismissed him from his position.

The protests have targeted the government of President José Jerí, who assumed office following the impeachment of former President Dina Boluarte on 10 October. The demonstrations have been fuelled by widespread discontent over corruption, political instability, and high crime rates. The trigger was a law passed on 5 September requiring all Peruvians above the age of 18 to join a pension provider, despite widespread job insecurity. While primarily centred in Lima, protests have also occurred in Arequipa, Callao, Cusco, and Puno. Fishermen's strikes and demonstrations have also occurred in Lambayeque and Piura.

In response to the unrest, Prime Minister Ernesto Alvarez announced on 16 October that the government would declare a state of emergency, with a curfew under consideration. President Jerí has faced mounting pressure, with at least 19 members of parliament signing a petition to initiate impeachment proceedings against him over the handling of the protests and the resulting violence. However, the motion requires at least 33 signatures to proceed. Despite the unrest, President Jerí has stated he will not resign, even as lawmakers rejected a censure of the board of directors he chairs. On 22 October, Alvarez announced the imposition of a state of emergency in metropolitan Lima and Callao.

Solace Global Assessment: Despite President Jerí announcing that the death of the protester would be “objectively investigated” and that they would face the “full force of the law”, the killing of Ruiz has almost certainly deepened anti-government sentiment and inflamed protests. This has been further exacerbated by President Jerí's refusal to step down amid escalating pressure from Peru's parliament.

States of emergency in Peru typically enable authorities to deploy Peru's Armed Forces to support the National Police and give them the power to detain people with few limitations, search homes without warrants, and deny the freedom



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of assembly. While the current 30-day measure has been declared to combat the crime wave, it highly likely aims to both placate protesters' criticisms over the high crime rates and prevent large demonstrations by cracking down on the freedom of assembly.

The rise in crime has been attributed to multiple factors, many of which are unlikely to improve in the near future. Economic issues, political instability, corruption, and weak law enforcement have all been significant contributors to the deteriorating security situation. However, the primary driver has likely been the growing influence of transnational organised crime groups, which view Peru as a crucial hub for their operations. If crime rates continue rising at a similar rate, there is a realistic possibility that the Peruvian government will be forced to implement more severe security measures, similar to those seen in El Salvador and Ecuador. This could involve mass arrests, prolonged military deployments, and the suspension of civil liberties in an attempt to quash the influence of organised crime groups.

The state of emergency imposed in 2022 failed to deal with the civil unrest, instead resulting in alleged human rights abuses, such as the use of live ammunition against protesters and forced disappearances; protests continued for months, inflamed by the perceived excessive force used by security forces. It is likely that a state of emergency resulting in harsher measures by security forces will exacerbate protests.

AMER Summary and Forecast

Politics, Economics and Civil Unrest:

"No Kings" protests in US break attendance records.

On 18 October, the second instalment of the "No Kings" protests took place across the US, with some "solidarity" protests also recorded in other countries. According to some estimates, more than 2,600 events were attended by up to seven million people. If confirmed, this would make them the most attended single one-day protest event in US history. The protests, whose first "round" took place in June 2025, oppose what organisers perceive as an abuse of executive power by the administration of President Donald Trump. The protests remained generally peaceful, with no notable reports of violence or vandalism.

Rodrigo Paz, of the Christian Democratic Party (PDC), wins Bolivian presidential vote.

On 19 October, Paz defeated his conservative rival Jorge Quiroga in the presidential election runoff, winning around 54.5 per cent of the vote. Paz's PDC also received the most votes at the August parliamentary elections, although its lack of a majority in parliament will force it to strike a coalition deal. Paz's victory ends two decades of left-wing governments in Bolivia, due to the collapse of former president Evo Morales' Movement to Socialism (MAS) amid severe internal rifts.



While PDC and Paz have a clear mandate to govern from their electoral results, Bolivia's political environment likely remains unstable due to the MAS-Morales crisis. Following the vote, Morales, who was not allowed to run, stated that "deep Bolivia" was excluded from the electoral process. This tension could, if the next government fails to address socioeconomic and corruption-related grievances early in its tenure, drive significant civil unrest.

Argentina to hold parliamentary elections on 26 October.

Argentina's parliamentary elections are highly likely to be a crucial moment for the future of the presidency of Javier Milei. His party, La Libertad Avanza (LLA), maintains a relatively small presence in parliament. This has forced Milei to advance his libertarian reforms by decree or via ad hoc political agreements. A positive result at the ballot box would thus grant Milei more power to implement his policy proposals. Having suffered recent setbacks due to scandals and a poor performance at the Buenos Aires provincial elections, Milei's electoral bid was likely boosted by the recent USD 20 billion currency-swap deal that was formalised with the US in October, although the agreement's possible results are unlikely to become clear ahead of the vote. Due to the growing polarisation of Argentina's politics and the vote's extremely high profile, the elections have the potential to trigger civil unrest in major population centres.

Security, Armed Conflict and Terror:

Jalisco New Generation Cartel (CJNG) carries out drone attacks on prosecutors in Baja California, Mexico.

On 15 October, the office of the state attorney general in Tijuana, Mexico, was "bombed" with three improvised explosive devices (IEDs) dropped by drones. This represents the first time that drones have been used to attack officials in Baja California. On 18 October, the CJNG claimed responsibility for the attack with a "narcomanta", a banner left in a public space to warn the civilian population, which also warned the prosecutor against "making a deal" with the rival cartel Los Mayitos (a splinter group of the Sinaloa Cartel). Local observers have stated that it is likely that the attack represents an escalation of CJNG's hostilities towards the local government, which have been ongoing since mid-2023. The use of drones in Baja California may indicate the CJNG's intent to expand these tactics beyond more violent states like Jalisco and Michoacán, and core areas of the cartel's influence and activity.

US issues alert for Trinidad and Tobago following vessel strike.

On 18 October, the US Embassy in Port of Spain issued an advisory calling on citizens to "refrain from visiting all US Government facilities" in the country over the "holiday weekend" (the weekend of Diwali, 18-20 October). The advisory followed reporting that two men from Trinidad and Tobago were among the six killed in a US strike on a vessel allegedly transporting narcotics from Venezuela the previous week. The alert is reportedly based on threats directed at American citizens in the Caribbean nation, and Trinidad and Tobago's minister of homeland security has stated that it could be linked to ongoing tensions in the region. It is unclear how credible the threat is or whether the alert relates to protests being staged outside US government buildings or to intelligence suggesting a potential attack targeting US diplomatic or





commercial interests in the country. The security alert follows the recent alleged discovery of a “narcomanta”, a banner commonly used by cartels to communicate with local populations, in the tourist hub of Los Cabos, Mexico, which warned of attacks targeting key US figures and US citizens for Washington’s increased aggression towards cartels. Collectively, these developments suggest that there is a realistic possibility that transnational criminal networks may seek to retaliate against US interests in the region should the Trump administration continue to intensify its counter-narcotics operations.

Several police officers wounded by arrows during demonstration in Bogotá, Colombia.

On 17 October, violent protests occurred in the centre of Colombia’s capital. The protests were organised by indigenous activist groups (under the People’s Congress network) “in solidarity with Palestine, Venezuela, and Ecuador,” according to local media. Protesters clashed with police as they tried to reach the US Embassy and blockaded some key roadways like El Dorado Avenue. During the clashes, they reportedly threw Molotov cocktails, and at least four officers were struck with arrows. Protesters also vandalised several assets and offices owned by local public transport operator TransMilenio and briefly occupied the local university. There is a realistic possibility that further protests targeting the US Embassy and interests in Colombia will occur in line with increased military operations in South America and the developing diplomatic spat between Washington and Bogotá.

Environment, Health and Miscellaneous:

Major cloud infrastructure outage affecting US-based provider has worldwide impact.

On 20 October, Amazon Web Services (AWS) recorded a major outage, which caused several websites to go offline. These included both large private companies as well as foreign government services, such as the UK’s Gov.uk portal. The outage was first reported in the US-East-1 region of AWS, which is hosted in the state of Virginia. While the exact cause of the outage has not been disclosed as of 23 October, early reports have suggested that a cyberattack is improbable, and that the likely cause is a fault at one of Amazon’s data centres.

Tropical Storm Melissa to threaten Jamaica, the Dominican Republic and Haiti with flooding.

As of 23 October, Tropical Storm Melissa is advancing across the central Caribbean Sea and is expected to bring life-threatening flooding to parts of Jamaica over the coming days. The storm is less than 325 miles from Jamaica and Haiti, with forecasts indicating heavy rainfall and flash flooding through the weekend. As a precaution, the US Embassy in Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic, will be closed, while Cuba’s civil defence agency has issued an early warning, and El Salvador’s civil protection authorities have declared a nationwide green alert for rain associated with the storm. Although no additional tropical storm watches or warnings are currently in effect, the risk of severe flooding and mudslides remains high across Haiti, Jamaica, and the Dominican Republic through the weekend.



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Europe, Middle East & Africa (EMEA)

Ukraine: US-Russia Budapest talks cancelled and Ukraine strikes Russia with Storm Shadow.

On 16 October, US President Donald Trump and Russian President Vladimir Putin spoke by telephone, agreeing to a meeting in Budapest, Hungary, in the coming weeks to discuss an end to the war in Ukraine. The following day on 17 October, Trump met with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky at the White House. In a reportedly tense meeting, Trump told Zelensky that he does not intend to sell Tomahawk missiles to Ukraine for now, stating subsequently in press interviews that the US needs Tomahawk missiles “for ourselves too.” During the White House talks, the US special envoy Steve Witkoff is claimed to have essentially tested the waters on whether the Ukrainians would be willing to accept ceding the entire Donbas to Russia, which was flatly rejected, according to a source who briefed the press. Trump followed the meeting with a call to freeze the conflict at the current frontlines.

A subsequent call between US Secretary of State Marco Rubio and Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov on 20 October resulted in the proposed Budapest talks being halted. Trump later stated that he did not want to have a “wasted meeting”, and subsequently confirmed that the meeting was cancelled. On 21 October, Ukrainian forces conducted an attack against a Russian chemical plant in the Bryansk region using British-provided Storm Shadow cruise missiles. Following the attack, the *Wall Street Journal* published an exclusive which claimed that the Trump administration has lifted key restrictions on Ukraine’s use of missiles provided by Western allies against targets inside internationally recognised Russian territory, approval which is necessary due to the need for American targeting data. Trump responded that the story is “FAKE NEWS!” and that the US “has nothing to do with those missiles, where they may come from, or what Ukraine does with them!” Moreover, on 22 October, Trump announced new sanctions on two of Russia’s largest oil exporters, Rosneft and Lukoil.

Solace Global Assessment: The proposed Budapest summit would have been complicated to hold, firstly due to practical considerations of how Putin would actually get there and security vulnerabilities for the Russian president. To avoid the airspace of EU countries that would be potentially willing to arrest the Russian president, Putin’s plane would most likely need to fly via the Adriatic and then into Bosnia and Herzegovina, Albania, or Montenegro, before entering Hungary through Serbia. However, the primary cause for the collapse of the planned meeting is almost certainly the fundamental impasse between the US proposal to freeze the conflict at the current frontlines, in contrast to Moscow’s desire for the entire Donbas as a precondition for meaningful peace talks.

Moscow’s demand for a full Ukrainian withdrawal from Donetsk Oblast likely poses an existential threat to Ukraine’s sovereignty if realised. Donetsk Oblast has seen the most intense fighting and largest battles of the war, with Ukrainian forces inflicting enormous casualties on Russian forces. The eight fortified cities which remain untaken in Donetsk

(although Russian forces have penetrated deep into Pokrovsk with heavy fighting ongoing), which include the extensive Sloviansk-Kramatorsk agglomeration, have been termed the ‘fortress belt’. If Ukraine cedes the fortress belt to Russia, Ukraine would essentially be forfeiting its most defensible line, exposing less fortified areas to any potential future Russian advances. It is highly likely that the only measures which could enable Kyiv to agree to such a withdrawal would be credible security guarantees against future Russian reinvasion and attacks against withdrawing forces, guarantees that the Kremlin has so far firmly rejected.

Trump’s comments regarding the US need for Tomahawks are likely reflective of concerns within the Pentagon that the US is using Tomahawks at a higher rate than they are being produced, with only 202 Tomahawks purchased since 2022, but at least 124 used against the Yemen-based Houthis and Iran since 2024. The Trump administration has almost certainly leveraged the threat of Tomahawks being sold to Ukraine as a means to coerce the Kremlin to come to the negotiating table, with the 16 October agreement to meet in Budapest likely conditioned by this. However, the summit’s subsequent cancellation is likely reflective of lessons learnt by the Trump administration earlier in the year with their dealings with Putin. The Kremlin has highly likely consistently used previous prospects of talks and limited gestures such as moratoriums on attacks against energy infrastructure as a means to ward off US pressure, while continuing to push for maximalist concessions on the battlefield, a strategy which is likely to continue.

The Ukrainian attack against the Bryansk Chemical Plant was swiftly followed by mass combined drone and missile strikes from Russian forces against Ukrainian cities. Layered mass aerial strikes against Ukrainian cities are conducted regularly, and are likely to further increase in frequency as Russian military planners seek to deprive Ukraine of energy during the winter months and conditions on the front lines are less conducive for advances, as demonstrated in previous winters. However, such attacks are likely to be increasingly conducted in retaliation to Ukrainian attacks, such as the Storm Shadow strike, and in reaction to diplomatic developments considered favourable to Ukraine. There is a realistic possibility that the use of a British-provided system will increase the risk of Russian strikes targeting assets associated with the UK in Ukraine, increasing the threat profile of UK nationals and businesses operating in Ukraine.

Yemen: Al-Qaeda in the Arab Peninsula (AQAP) carries out large-scale attack on Yemeni forces.

On 21 October, al-Qaeda in the Arab Peninsula AQAP fighters staged a large-scale attack in the al-Mahfad district of Abyan Governorate, in southern Yemen. The attack targeted the local headquarters of a Southern Transitional Council (STC) unit, the 1st Support and Logistics Brigade. According to local media, AQAP started the attack by detonating either one or two suicide vehicle-borne improvised explosive devices (SVBIEDs) to breach the perimeter. These were followed by several “Inghimasi” attackers, “shock troops” armed with light firearms and possibly suicide vests (sources indicate at least five suicide belts being detonated during the attack). Reports indicate that, while the attack was repelled, at least



nine STC troops were killed (other sources claim that the actual death toll was considerably higher) and an unspecified number were wounded, with seven AQAP fighters being killed.

Solace Global Assessment: The attack is the largest-scale and most sophisticated AQAP operation in years, both in terms of the assets deployed (notably, SVBIEDs), and in terms of casualties inflicted on STC forces. Some sources have speculated that the attack may have been a reaction to recent STC counterterrorism operations. However, regardless of its immediate trigger, the attack likely represents a notable shift in AQAP’s operational tempo. It may also reflect recent changes at the top of the group’s leadership. In 2024, AQAP leader Khalid al-Batarfi was reported to have died and was succeeded by a member of AQAP’s Shura Council, Saad Muhammed Atef al-Awlaki. Al-Awlaki is largely seen as considerably more aggressive than his predecessor, particularly in the area of foreign operations. In mid-2025, reports of a growing partnership between the Houthis and al-Shabaab being mediated by AQAP, despite their distinct ideological differences, likely confirmed this assessment. While the recent attack in al-Mahfad was unsuccessful, with AQAP forces being repelled despite inflicting notable casualties on STC units, further operations cannot be ruled out in the near term.

Zimbabwe: Ruling party rules to extend the president’s term after failed protests.

On 17 October, protesters gathered in Harare following a call from opposition figure Blessed Geza for a “Million Man March”. The demonstrations were called to express public anger over “state capture” and “grand corruption” by a cabal of powerful businessmen allegedly protected by President Emmerson Mnangagwa, as well as attempts by the ruling Zimbabwe African National Union – Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF) party to extend Mnangagwa’s rule. While turnout figures were unconfirmed, only 10 protesters were arrested, likely suggesting that the demonstration had a very low turnout. Investigators claimed that stones, boulders, and other missiles were found near the protest site, implicating the protesters in inciting violence.

The day preceding the protests, the Zimbabwe Republic Police (ZRP) warned that “Acts of violence, threats, vandalism, or incitement to commit crime will be severely dealt with in line with the country’s laws. Any attempts to engage in unlawful demonstrations, gatherings, or processions will be met with the full wrath of the law.” Ahead of the protests, there was a high security presence registered in Harare, with a Zimbabwe Republic Police (ZRP) anti-riot unit deployed to the Central Business District (CBD) and cordoning off the Africa Unity Square. ZRP officers were stationed at key intersections, including Cameroon, Jason Moyo, Rezende, and Robert Mugabe streets.

On 19 October, the ZANU-PF resolved to extend Mnangagwa’s term by two years, to 2030. His term is currently set to end in 2028, with the constitution requiring him to step down after serving two five-year terms. Opposition figures have condemned this as unlawful.



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Solace Global Assessment: The decision was adopted against the backdrop of an escalating internal power struggle and widespread perceptions of corruption. Vice President and former army general Constantino Chiwenga is widely regarded as Mnangagwa’s principal challenger, and was recently accused of treason after a confidential memo leaked on 7 October in which he warned the president against “repeating the sins of the past”, in reference to Robert Mugabe’s authoritarian grip on ZANU-PF. Chiwenga has consistently opposed prolonging Mnangagwa’s tenure and leads a broader anti-Mnangagwa faction within the ruling party. His ally, Geza, has openly called for Chiwenga to assume the presidency and take control of the party. Chiwenga has, so far, not issued any public response to the extension of Mnangagwa’s rule.

Mnangagwa has become increasingly unpopular and has presided over a stalling economy. Currency instability and policy reversals, land seizures, high political risk, and high corruption levels have meant that investor confidence is low. Hyperinflation has exacerbated this, reaching a peak of 676 per cent in March 2020, and then another peak of 191 per cent in June 2022. A new currency was announced in April 2024, but there remain wide disparities between official and parallel exchange rates, meaning that many people do not trust the currency enough to trade it at its official value. Environmental issues, including drought, have added further economic instability. While official unemployment statistics are around 15 per cent, many are employed in the informal economy.

Despite the widespread perceptions of corruption and economic instability, many Zimbabweans have been reluctant to protest. The government is quick to impose heavy security crackdowns in response to demonstrations, with security forces treating demonstrations as a threat to national security. Arbitrary detentions are common, and human rights organisations have reported detainees being held without trial. Geza has attempted to organise previous widespread protests in March 2025, which were similarly attended by very few protesters. Geza and Chiwenga will likely call for widespread protests following ZANU-PF’s extension of Mnangagwa’s term. However, the government will almost certainly respond with a heavy security presence, which will likely dissuade many from taking part in demonstrations.

EMEA Summary and Forecast

Politics, Economics and Civil Unrest:

Police and protesters clash during anti-migrant demonstration in Dublin, Ireland.

On 21 October, violent protests occurred near a building housing asylum seekers in the Irish capital. The protests broke out after the publication of reports that a ten-year-old had been sexually assaulted on the facility’s premises, allegedly by an asylum seeker. Local media reported that online channels and social media were used to rapidly organise the protests, which were attended by approximately 500 people. After protesters began throwing rocks and other projectiles, responding police deployed pepper spray and effectively managed to prevent the breaching of the facility’s perimeter.



Six people were arrested during the unrest and an unspecified number of protesters and police were injured. The protests were the most violent in Dublin since the 2023 anti-migrant riots. However, they had a considerably more limited impact, likely due to a combination of better police preparedness and due to the unrest's concentration in a relatively small area, making crowd-control easier. The protests follow other cases of violence near facilities hosting migrants recorded in the United Kingdom. In virtually all cases, social media has played a crucial role in driving the rapid organisation of large crowds.

Dutch general elections to be held on 29 October.

General elections will be held in the Netherlands on 29 October 2025. The early vote was triggered after the far-right Party for Freedom (PVV), which became the largest force in parliament after the 2023 vote, quit the coalition government due to disagreements over asylum policy reform. Current polls indicate that, while still the first party in terms of support, PVV has lost significant ground, likely haemorrhaging voters to other right-wing parties like JA21 and a resurgent Christian Democratic Appeal (CDA).

In the leadup to the elections, several large-scale protests have taken place in the Netherlands, mostly spearheaded by anti-migrant groups. On 12 October, around 30 people were arrested in Amsterdam after an anti-migrant demonstration turned violent, with attendees clashing with police. This followed a similar case the previous month, where protesters had also vandalised the headquarters of political party D66 in the Hague. Unrest, including violent protests, cannot be ruled out on election day, and also following the publication of the first results.

Moderate candidate wins Turkish Cypriot presidential elections.

At the 19 October vote, Tufan Erhurman, of the centre-left Republican Turkish Party (CTP), defeated incumbent President Ersin Tatar by more than 20 points. This likely represents an important political shift, as Erhurman campaigned on a policy of re-establishing ties with the Greek Cypriot community and supports the UN plan for the island's reunification. The Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus was established in 1974, following a Turkish invasion that bisected the island. Ankara is the only state to recognise it, and North Cyprus continues to be a major source of friction in Greek-Turkish relations.

In the past decade, the status of the island has become one of the most prominent geostrategic issues in the eastern Mediterranean, due to an increase in the discoveries of natural gas reserves in Cyprus' exclusive economic zone (EEZ), over which both Cyprus and Turkey (via North Cyprus) claim sovereignty. Interest in the area's large gas deposits has likely added a regional dimension to the island's divisions, with regional powers like France, Egypt, and Italy becoming increasingly involved.



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Armenian Apostolic Bishop arrested, deepening rift between Apostolic Church and the Armenian state.

On 16 October, Armenian police arrested Bishop Mkrtich Proshyan, under charges of coercing citizens to take part in anti-government protests, using his office to commit theft, and “obstructing electoral rights”. Proshyan is a prominent figure and is also the nephew of the Apostolic Church’s Catholicos Karekin II. The arrest is part of a growing conflict between the Armenian Apostolic Church and the Armenian government, which became prominent following the 2018 Velvet Revolution and accelerated following the Second Nagorno-Karabakh War, and particularly after the Tavush Province border demarcation agreement between Armenia and Azerbaijan in 2024.

In the Summer of 2025, Armenian security detained more than a dozen people accused of plotting to overthrow the government on behalf of a group called “Sacred Struggle”, allegedly led by Archbishop Bagrat Galstanyan. The latest arrest is likely to be seen as a direct attack on Karekin II and therefore has the realistic possibility of provoking protests.

Israeli Knesset gives preliminary approval to bill to apply Israeli law to West Bank.

On 22 October, the Israeli parliament passed the first of four votes for a bill that would apply Israeli law to parts of the West Bank, which would constitute a form of de facto annexation. The vote coincided with the visit of US Vice-President JD Vance to Israel. Notably, the bill was put forward by parties outside of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu’s coalition, and Netanyahu’s party Likud abstained from the vote. The bill, if it passes all the necessary votes, would almost certainly precipitate a major international crisis, as attempts to annex the West Bank have been identified as a clear “red line” by other regional powers. Moreover, the bill is highly likely to meet significant opposition from Washington, as the US administration likely sees it as destabilising its interests to build a stronger allied framework in the Middle East under the “Abraham Accords” system.

Further protests in Morocco after a brief pause.

On 18 October, protesters marched in Rabat after an eight-day pause in demonstrations, with dozens of young people organising a sit-in in front of the parliament building. Smaller protests also occurred across other major cities, including Casablanca, Tangier, and Fez. Gen Z 212, the protest organisers, reiterated calls for social and economic reforms, particularly in education and health, the resignation of Prime Minister Aziz Akhannouch, and demanded the release of protesters arrested during the earlier wave of protests, which began on 27 September.

While smaller than the previous wave, this marks a continuation of the demonstrations, which saw the youth protest across major cities in Morocco following the death of eight women in a public hospital in Agadir. The demonstrations have targeted government expenditure on the upcoming Africa Cup of Nations 2026 and World Cup 2026, which take up a high proportion of government spending, to the perceived detriment of public services. Further protests are highly likely, although they are unlikely to reach the scale of the previous wave due to King Mohammed VI’s call on the government to accelerate development in education and health.

Egyptian authorities raise fuel prices, seeking to ease budget deficit.

On 17 October, Egyptian authorities raised the prices of several fuel products by between 10.5 and 12.9 per cent. The increase followed a sharper 15 per cent hike in April 2025, and the government added that they plan to keep prices fuelled for at least a year. While the April increase in fuel prices did not result in notable cases of unrest, protests following this second increase cannot be ruled out. Egypt remains in a precarious economic situation. While the inflation rate has fallen from the recent high of 38 per cent in 2023, it remains in the double digits. The state's revenues have moreover been impacted by the decrease in Suez Canal transits caused by the Houthis' campaign of strikes on commercial vessels in the Red Sea, dwindling gas production, and continued dependence on imported foodstuffs and fuel.

Gendarme shot and killed in Ivory Coast ahead of presidential election.

On 21 October, a gendarme was shot dead during a security patrol near Grand-Yapo in the south of the country. According to the gendarmerie statement, "[as] he was advancing with the gendarmes under his command along the Agboville-Azaguie route, the patrol came under gunfire 500 metres from the town of Grand Yapo." The shooting has been linked to regional tensions ahead of the 25 October presidential election. Despite the government ban on protests, sporadic rallies have taken place in southern and western regions, where opposition support is strong. The unresolved tensions from the civil war, whereby former President Laurent Gbagbo's allies have been perceived as being disproportionately prosecuted, have meant that deep mistrust persists between northern pro-President Alassane Ouattara communities and southern pro-Gbagbo communities. The killing of the gendarme almost certainly heightens tensions and will likely be met with an increased security presence in the region in the coming week. If protests occur, this could lead to a heightened risk of clashes.

Protests staged in Nigerian capital demanding the release of separatist leader.

On 20 October, protests erupted in the Nigerian capital Abuja, demanding the release of Nnamdi Kanu, the detained leader of the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB), a separatist group advocating for the independence of southeastern Nigeria. The demonstrations led to significant disruptions, including the closure of the Unity Fountain area and halted traffic along the Abuja-Keffi expressway. Banks and markets in Abakaliki, Ebonyi state, also closed in solidarity with the protests. Police deployed tear gas to disperse the crowds. However, there are also allegations that the police fired live ammunition, although no confirmed deaths have been reported. Despite local media reports of live rounds being fired, Nigerian police have denied these claims, stating only tear gas was used. No major protests were observed on the following day, but Kanu's detention is likely to remain a flashpoint for unrest, particularly in the capital region and in southeast Nigeria, where support for the IPOB is greatest.

At least 20 protesters arrested in Cameroon ahead of presidential election results.

On 21 October, protests occurred in Garoua, in the country's north, in support of opposition figure Issa Tchiroma Bakary, demanding recognition of his victory. Authorities announced that they arrested at least 20 people during the demonstrations. One teacher was reportedly shot dead, and while the perpetrator hasn't been identified, the shooting was likely conducted by security forces. A video shared on social media shows one protester destroying a surveillance camera. On 23 October, the Constitutional Council announced that the results of the presidential election would be announced on 27 October, a day after the deadline. The Council dismissed calls for a partial or total cancellation of the vote, which is projected to give victory to the incumbent President Paul Biya, but is being disputed by opposition leader Tchiroma Bakary. Biya reportedly offered Bakary a role in his government, which he has rejected. It is highly likely that Biya will be declared the victor in the election and that Bakary will reject this, declare a stolen election, and attempt to mobilise the population in protest. Given the sporadic protests that have taken place in support of Bakary across numerous cities in Cameroon, civil unrest is highly likely.

Tanzania authorities detain deputy chair of opposition party ahead of general elections.

On 22 October, authorities arrested John Heche, the deputy chair of one of the main opposition parties, the Party for Democracy and Progress (CHADEMA), outside a court where the treason trial for the party's leader, Tundu Lissu, was underway. The arrest occurred as Heche attempted to enter the court to attend the trial; no reason had been given for his detention. The arrest was highly likely part of a broader crackdown on opposition figures by the ruling Chama Cha Mapinduzi (CCM) party.

Since the 2015 election, which resulted in CCM achieving its smallest vote share of 58 per cent, the government has become increasingly authoritarian. Under President Samia Suluhu Hassan, the government has cracked down on civil society and journalists, passing laws such as the Cybercrimes Act (2015) and Electronic and Postal Communications (Online Content) Regulations (2020), which regulate cybercrime and online content, respectively, but have been used to arrest journalists and opposition figures and stifle dissent. In response to the government's perceived growing authoritarianism, civil unrest is highly likely around the 28 October general election. Following the 2020 elections, protests against government corruption erupted in Zanzibar. Security forces responded forcefully, with reports of soldiers, police, and a militia linked to the CCM beating civilians and using live ammunition against demonstrators, killing nine. Thousands also demonstrated in January 2024 to demand constitutional changes to reform the electoral commission and reduce presidential powers.

Gen Z protest representatives condemn appointment of prime minister in Madagascar.

On 20 October, interim President Michael Randrianirina, who came to power in a military coup and was sworn in on 17 October, appointed businessman Herintsalama Rajaonarivelo as prime minister. Gen Z Madagascar representatives rejected the appointment, declaring that it was made in a "non-transparent" manner, without consultation". Despite



being broadly in favour of the Army Corps of Personnel and Administrative and Technical Services' (CAPSAT) seizure of power and deposition of the president and prime minister, the movement claimed that the decision "runs contrary to the desired structural change". While protests have currently subsided, there is a realistic possibility that a failure of the new military authorities to credibly and transparently transition toward democracy will lead to renewed large-scale unrest in the coming months. The initial trigger of the recent unrest, starting 25 September, was power cuts and water supply, and these remain key additional potential triggers for renewed protests.

In the aftermath of the military coup, there are likely early indications of limited but notable retaliation by the new authorities against figures associated with the ousted Rajoelina government. Madagascar's Anti-Corruption Unit (PAC) has issued an international arrest warrant for businessman and Rajoelina ally Mamy Ravatomanga, who reportedly fled Madagascar on 12 October. On 17 October, the Financial Crimes Commission (FCC) of Mauritius ordered the freezing of Ravatomanga's bank accounts. Furthermore, local media reports on 19 October indicate that citizens in some Fokontany (villages) are demanding the replacement of local officials deemed close to the "former regime", with a police prefect stating that he was not aware of the demands but that it could be possible. Over the weekend of 18-19 October, the national coordinator of the Tanora malaGasy Vonona (TGV) movement, Mirana Rajanoah, a figure regarded as close to Rajoelina, was reportedly arrested on suspicion of endangering state security. There is a realistic possibility that these actions could further escalate, increasing the risks of political violence and arbitrary detention.

Security, Armed Conflict and Terror:

Airport in Palma de Mallorca, Spain, halts flights following drone sightings.

Palma de Mallorca Airport authorities briefly suspended flights on 19 October, following reported drone sightings near the airport perimeter. The incident is the first time that such a disruption has occurred in Spain, but it follows several similar episodes that have been mostly concentrated in northern Europe. While European authorities have hypothesised that the drone sightings are part of Russia's hybrid warfare campaign targeting European states that support Ukraine, attribution remains difficult due to several factors. Quadcopter drones are cheap, difficult to trace, and can be deployed and retrieved quickly, increasing the operator's chances of escape. Their potential to cause significant transport disruptions at airports likely makes them useful tools in the arsenal of direct-action groups espousing a multitude of different ideologies.

Car bomb targets journalist in Pomezia, Italy.

On the night of 16-17 October, an improvised explosive device (IED) detonated outside the residence of a prominent Italian journalist in Pomezia, near Rome. The IED had reportedly been placed on a stolen vehicle and was detonated in the late evening, resulting in no injuries. The incident notably occurred on the eighth anniversary of the death, in Malta,



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of Daphne Caruana Galizia, an investigative journalist who was killed when an IED placed in her vehicle exploded. The profile of the target and the choice of date for the bombing highly likely underscore the perpetrators' intent to achieve maximum visibility. Local media have speculated that the incident was linked to multinational drug-trafficking networks, particularly those operating across Italy and the Balkans.

Syrian forces clash with French foreign fighters near Turkish border.

On 22 October, security forces of the Syrian interim government carried out an operation targeting a camp housing foreign fighters, mostly French nationals reinforced by a contingent of Uzbek citizens, in the town of Harem, in the Idlib province near the Turkish border. The operation was reportedly launched after the militants kidnapped a local girl, but French media instead reported that it had been prompted by French pressures on Damascus to crack down on French nationals who had travelled to Syria to fight in the civil war. The militants reportedly belong to "Firqat al-Ghuraba", a jihadist group that was established in 2013 and had links to the al-Nusra Front and al-Qaeda. Its leader, the French-Senegalese citizen Omar Omsen (real name Omar Diaby), gained prominence as a key jihadi "influencer", who efficiently leveraged social media in the early stages of the Syrian civil war to driven dozens of French and Belgian citizens to become foreign fighters.

The group has, since 2018, been at odds with Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham (HTS), with occasional crises, including a temporary detention of Omsen by HTS forces. These tensions have almost certainly intensified since the fall of Assad, as former HTS leader and now transitional President Ahmed al-Sharaa has sought to absorb rebel elements within the new Syrian Arab Republic, re-establish ties with Western countries (including France), and marginalise some extremist forces and figures in the anti-Assad camp. The operation against Firqat al-Ghuraba likely reflects Damascus' ongoing "credibility-building" efforts. However, high-visibility crackdowns targeting popular preachers and groups have the potential to be leveraged by extremist actors who seek to oppose the new Syrian transitional government.

The Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS), in particular, has intensified recruitment operations targeting foreign fighters in Syria, leveraging narratives claiming that their ideological motives to fight Assad have been "betrayed" by the al-Sharaa regime. Such an appeal is likelier to be successful among foreigners, as they could increasingly feel "stuck", being unable to return to their home countries due to the threat of imprisonment, and sidelined by Damascus. The raid on the French foreign fighters has a realistic possibility of becoming a watershed moment, encouraging other groups of foreign fighters who are not completely aligned with Damascus to break with the interim government.

Joint US-Syrian raid targeting Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS) leads to killing of intelligence asset.

On 17 October, US special forces carried out a raid alongside units of the Syrian interim government in al-Dumayr, a settlement located approximately 45 kilometres northwest of Damascus. Initial local media reporting indicated that the raid led to the killing of an ISIS operative; however, other sources later suggested that the individual had been working



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with Syrian intelligence and thus was mistakenly targeted. The raid was reportedly the fifth joint operation by US and Syrian forces since July 2025. Damascus' willingness to cooperate with Washington, despite the threat of alienating the "hardline" elements of the militias that support the government, is likely reflective of President Ahmed al-Sharaa's interest in prioritising sanctions relief and the return of Syria to important international forums as a precondition for post-Assad reconstruction. Syria's operations against ISIS could be "systematised" with Damascus' entry into the Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS, originally formed in 2014 at the height of ISIS' territorial expansion. Syria's partaking in a more "formal" anti-ISIS framework could also help to resolve other important terror-related issues affecting the country, particularly the future of large camps holding ISIS members and their families in Kurdish-controlled parts of Syria, such as the al-Hol camp.

Ceasefire in Gaza remains vulnerable, as violent clashes continue.

Despite the conclusion of the first planned stage of the Gaza ceasefire, with the Israeli hostages having been returned and Israel Defence Forces (IDF) units having abandoned much of the territory of the Gaza Strip they had occupied, the truce remains extremely fragile. Several violations of the truce have been reported. On 18 October, the US State Department reported that Hamas had been planning an attack on Palestinian civilians. On the following day, two IDF troops were killed in Rafah, allegedly by Hamas sniper fire. Palestinian media has also alleged dozens of Israeli violations of the ceasefire and estimate that around 100 Palestinians have been killed in the Gaza Strip since 10 October. Israel has also been accused of denying the entry of humanitarian aid into Gaza and has been ordered by the International Court of Justice (ICJ) to facilitate the delivery of essential supplies, including food, water, and medical assistance. These developments could undermine the ceasefire and lead to a return to hostilities in the near future.

Iranian dark fleet LNG tanker abandoned in Gulf of Aden following explosion and fire.

On 18 October, the Cameroon-flagged liquefied natural gas (LNG) tanker MV FALCON (IMO 9014432) issued a distress call around 60 nautical miles south of Ahwar, Yemen, in the Gulf of Aden, with the crew ultimately abandoning the vessel. The United Kingdom Maritime Trade Operations (UKMTO) initially reported that the vessel had been hit by an unknown projectile, resulting in a fire. This remains unconfirmed and is unlikely. The EU's naval mission to the area, Aspides, has said that the early indications suggest an accident related to the vessel's cargo, which resulted in an explosion and fire.

Considering the incident's location in the Gulf of Aden, questions were initially raised regarding whether the Yemen-based Houthis had launched an attack against a vessel despite a reported intent to cease attacks while the Gaza ceasefire stands. However, MV FALCON is listed on United Against Nuclear Iran's (UANI's) Ghost Armada list, which tracks Iran's vast shadow fleet with obscured ownership structures used to export oil despite international sanctions. The vessel may have even been bound for Ras Isa in Houthi-controlled Yemen, and a Houthi official denied any connection to the incident. Another possibility raised was an Israeli operation against the vessel, like the Israel Defence Force (IDF) attack against the Iranian MV SAVIZ (IMO: 9167253) using limpet mines in 2021, but this is not currently supported with evidence. While



highly unlikely to be a Houthi attack, although the Houthis have in the past accidentally targeted vessels linked to their patron Iran, the risk environment in the Gulf of Aden remains high given the precarious nature of the Gaza ceasefire and the realistic possibility that Houthi attacks against merchant vessels could imminently resume.

As Mali fuel blockade continues, JNIM strikes “deals” with local operators.

On 20 October, channels affiliated with the al-Qaeda affiliate Jama'at Nusrat ul-Islam wa al-Muslimin (JNIM) reported that the group had struck a “deal” with a local fuel transport company. JNIM is currently carrying out a fuel blockade throughout Mali’s territory, likely with the aim of further destabilising and undermining the central government. As part of it, JNIM fighters carry out regular ambushes on fuel convoys. The “deal” reportedly grants a local transport company safe passage to deliver fuel to the civilian population, in exchange for some unspecified concessions. This development is notable as it likely further showcases how JNIM is increasingly positioning itself as a force that can carry out administrative duties, a strategy that is likely helping it to achieve greater legitimacy among the civilian population.

Environment, Health and Miscellaneous:

Storm Benjamin leads to disruption in France and the UK.

Storm Benjamin has significantly impacted parts of France and the UK, causing widespread disruptions and power outages. In France, approximately 100,000 homes are currently without electricity, with the Nouvelle-Aquitaine region being the hardest hit, accounting for 45,000 of the outages. In the Charente-Maritime department alone, 12,000 homes are reported to be without power. Rail services along France's southwest coast have been cancelled, and the Normandy Bridge in Honfleur is closed until late afternoon due to the storm. Public gardens, squares, and parks in Cannes, Grasse, and Antibes-Juan-les-Pins have been closed in anticipation of strong winds. In the UK, yellow rain and wind warnings are in effect across southern and eastern England and Wales, with localised flooding and high winds expected in much of the affected region.

Namibia Health Ministry declares outbreak of Mpox.

On 19 October, health officials declared an ongoing outbreak of Mpox in the city of Swakopmund, located on the coast west of the capital, Windhoek. Authorities have stated that they assess that the case was linked to cross-border travel from a state within the Southern African Development Community (SADC). In SADC, states that have recorded mpox cases include the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Malawi, Zambia, and Tanzania. In total, 17 countries currently have active outbreaks. Mpox is an infectious zoonotic viral disease that can be transmitted from both infected animals and humans. While the outbreak in Namibia is currently limited to one known case, with the patient undergoing treatment in isolation as of the time of writing, further reported cases could lead to the imposition of transport restrictions by local authorities.



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Asia Pacific (APAC)

Afghanistan and Pakistan: Peace talks held in Qatar.

On 18 October, the first round of talks between senior Pakistani and Afghan officials began in Doha, Qatar, after several days of heightened tensions and cross-border clashes. The discussions were convened to address Pakistan's recent airstrikes on Afghan territory, including in Kabul, which Islamabad claims targeted Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) militants allegedly sheltering inside Afghanistan.

The Taliban has repeatedly condemned Pakistan's strikes as a violation of sovereignty, while Pakistan insists that continued militant attacks originating from Afghanistan are unacceptable. The talks in Doha mark the first high-level diplomatic engagement between the two sides in months and are aimed at de-escalating hostilities and establishing a bilateral security mechanism to prevent further border incidents.

Solace Global Assessment: While the Doha talks mark a significant step towards de-escalation, the current ceasefire almost certainly remains very fragile. Despite exploiting Afghanistan as a relative safe haven, the TTP remains a distinct movement from the Afghan Taliban, with a separate structure, leadership and network. The degree to which the Taliban can control the TTP is likely limited, and the Taliban is likely reluctant to risk any internal divisions by taking direct action against the TTP. With the TTP maintaining a high degree of operational autonomy and the Taliban reluctant to take major steps against the TTP, future TTP attacks in Pakistan that could undermine the current ceasefire are likely.

Pakistan has also become more assertive in its demands and will no longer trust assurances from the Taliban, now demanding "verifiable action" against the TTP and its sanctuaries in Afghanistan. Kabul has responded by requesting detailed intelligence from Pakistan of TTP operations and hideouts in Afghanistan before it acts, a move that is likely reflective of persistent mistrust, limited appetite for cooperation and an unwillingness to take responsibility for militant activity. Consequently, the underlying drivers of cross-border militantism are unlikely to be resolved, and the current ceasefire may only offer a brief reprieve.

Recent Pakistani airstrikes in Afghanistan have demonstrated Islamabad's increasing willingness to conduct unilateral cross-border operations when it perceives the Taliban as failing to curb militant attacks. These strikes have also increasingly targeted Kabul, urban areas and areas closer to Taliban-run facilities suspected of facilitating TTP operations, rather than being contained to the border regions. There is a realistic possibility that retaliatory airstrikes in Afghanistan will become a recurring feature of Pakistan's counter-militancy strategy, especially in response to high-profile TTP attacks.

Future airstrikes are likely to result in border closures and trade disruptions, adding pressure to Afghanistan's fragile economy and compounding its humanitarian situation. Strikes may also increase the Taliban's use of communications and internet shutdowns to deny the electronic surveillance of militants and Taliban figures, reducing situational awareness and increasing disruption in Afghanistan.

APAC Summary and Forecast

Politics, Economics and Civil Unrest:

Mongolia's Prime Minister Zandanshatar Gombojav's removal from office vetoed by president.

On 17 October, Mongolia's parliament voted to remove Zandanshatar following an internal conflict within the ruling Mongolian People's Party (MPP), which pitted the prime minister against parliamentary speaker Amarbayasgalan Dashzegve. On 20 October, President Khurelsukh Ukhnaa vetoed the parliamentary motion of no confidence, calling it "unconstitutional". The veto is likely to precipitate a political crisis at a time when the Mongolian government is already grappling with the unresolved issue of next year's budget law, which will likely have to take into consideration recent labour action by public sector employees who are demanding higher salaries. Moreover, a large part of Mongolia's public will likely perceive the crisis as reflective of broader structural issues in the political system, like corruption, which remain long-standing sources of grievances. Earlier in 2025, large-scale anti-corruption protests led to the ousting of Zandanshatar's predecessor, Luvsannamsrain Oyun-Erdene. The continuation of Mongolia's political instability has a realistic possibility of reigniting the protests.

Sanae Takaichi becomes Japan's first female prime minister with last-minute coalition deal.

On 21 October, Sanae Takaichi was elected prime minister by the Japanese parliament, continuing the Liberal Democratic Party's (LDP) control over the executive. Takaichi, who was voted party head in October, is part of the LDP's right wing and espouses many of the positions of Shinzo Abe, the former Japanese prime minister who was assassinated in 2022. Some of her positions, such as reforming Japan's pacifist constitution, had prompted the historic LDP ally Komeito to quit the coalition pre-emptively, threatening the parliamentary vote. However, on 20 October, LDP struck a last-minute deal with the Japan Innovation Party (JIP), a populist centre-right group that supports some of Takaichi's reformist positions. The LDP-JIP deal is likely to result in a rightward shift in Japan's executive, which could trigger protests.

Anti-immigration protests result in violence in Australia.

On 19 October, several large-scale anti-immigration protests were held in several Australian cities, including Canberra, Sydney, and Melbourne. The protests were the second "March for Australia" rallies, the first having occurred in August. Despite the lower estimated turnout, the protests still resulted in disruptions and some instances of violence.



In Melbourne, protesters clashed with responding police, as they reportedly tried to approach a group of counter-protesters. At least two police officers were injured in the clashes. In Canberra, a clash between protesters and counter-protesters on the Commonwealth Bridge was narrowly avoided by police intervention, leading to two arrests.

Security, Armed Conflict and Terror:

Afghanistan Freedom Front (AFF) claims attack in Kabul, killing three.

On 20 October, AFF operatives reportedly carried out a targeted attack in the Chaman-e-Hozori area of central Kabul. The attack consisted of an ambush on a Taliban vehicle and killed at least three. AFF is an anti-Taliban and anti-Islamic State (IS) militant group that cooperates with the National Resistance Front (NRF). The group has carried out occasional targeted attacks against Taliban forces since 2022. The latest attack is almost certainly meant to weaken public confidence in the Taliban, as it occurs while the government is intensifying domestic and international messaging efforts to portray itself as having managed to contain the threat from domestic armed groups.

Environment, Health and Miscellaneous:

Air quality in New Delhi, India at “hazardous” levels following Diwali.

On 21 October, New Delhi’s air quality reached 442 on the air quality index (AQI), which classifies anything over 301 as “Hazardous”. This score makes New Delhi the most polluted major city in the world, with its particulate matter (PM) concentration of 2.5 at least 59 times the World Health Organisation’s (WHO) guideline. The reading comes after Diwali celebrations, where firecrackers were widely used. While firecrackers are typically banned, the Supreme Court of India relaxed the ban ahead of the celebrations, allowing the use of “green crackers”, which have between 30 and 50 per cent less emissions than conventional firecrackers, for three hours on 19 and 20 October. The Ministry of Earth Sciences (MoES) has forecast that air quality in New Delhi will stay in the “Very Poor to Poor” category in the coming days. Previous incidents of high AQI scores have prompted authorities to close schools, stop construction work, and restrict the use of motorised vehicles. Similar measures will likely be announced in the coming days, which could trigger disruptions.

Large fire prompts temporary closure of Dhaka airport, Bangladesh.

On 18 October, a large fire erupted in the cargo section of the Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport (DAC / VGZR) in Dhaka. Responding firefighters managed to contain the fire after seven hours. The fire caused severe delays and several cancellations throughout the day, and some estimates predict that the overall damages from the incident will surpass one billion USD. No casualties were reported. Bangladeshi authorities have stated that they have opened an investigation, hinting that they suspect that the fire may have been a case of sabotage. Local media has furthermore linked it to two



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other fires, earlier in October, at garment industry facilities in Dhaka and Chittagong, the former of which caused 16 deaths. Possible developments in the investigation have the potential to drive unrest in Bangladesh.



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