

WORLDWIDE THREAT ASSESSMENT

APRIL 2019



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INTRODUCTION

Bi-Annual Worldwide Threat Assessment

APRIL 2019

The goal of this report is to provide an overview of global security developments over the last several months. It assesses their impacts, examines trends, and focuses on how these events will shape future safety and security concerns for global businesses and international travelers.

Global Guardian offers an integrated suite of best-in-class security services that help clients identify and mitigate the risks of traveling and doing business both overseas and domestically. These services include: personnel tracking, emergency response, security and transportation support, intelligence and due diligence, medical support and transportation, emergency and custom aviation, cyber security, and video surveillance monitoring.

Global Guardian seamlessly integrates and delivers these capabilities 24-hours-a-day under the close guidance of its Operations Center.



YELLOW VESTS AND POPULISM — BLIP OR SHIFT

Since the first countrywide demonstration on 17 November 2018, France has been embroiled in its most serious wave of civil unrest in decades — the Yellow Vest movement, known as the *Gilet Jaunes*. The Yellow Vests are a symptom of the same political, economic, and socio-cultural forces that are strengthening populist movements across the continent. The May 2019 European Parliamentary elections may yield a populist bloc with the ability to veto many large initiatives.

Spurred by President Macron's hydrocarbon tax increase — a measure to curb France's budget deficit — the *Gilet Jaunes* have transformed into a grassroots, anti-establishment movement with an expanding list of grievances that stem from the rising cost of living amidst a decline in public services. The Yellow Vests are comprised of a broad cast of actors both demographically and geographically. Protesters hail mostly from middle and working-class backgrounds, living in rural and suburban locales, ranging from students and farmers to anarchists and environmentalists. While support for the movement has decreased slightly since November, polls suggest that over half of the French population either supports or is sympathetic to the *Gilet Jaunes*, meaning that the protests will endure for the coming months.

The Yellow Vest Movement is an outgrowth of both economic and socio-cultural factors. Since the onset of the European Financial Crisis, French economic performance has been anemic. Stringent regulation, high corruption levels, and perennial budget deficits have been a drag on France's economy. France's economic growth has been stagnant for a decade, with current levels around 1.8 percent. French manufacturing is on the decline — now representing a mere 9.6 percent of total employment. Its agriculture sector is also failing: 30 percent of French farmers earn less than \$400 a month. In addition, unemployment in France has hovered around 10 percent since 2009, with current levels estimated at nine percent, despite President Macron's election promise of curbing unemployment to seven percent by 2022. To compound their economic woes, the French pay the highest income taxes in the developed world and the French also pay a value added tax of 20 percent on most goods and services.

In parallel, France has been absorbing roughly 200,000 immigrants annually from the Middle East and Africa, many of whom are unskilled, thereby contributing to the rapidly changing demographics. Considering the numerous recent terrorist attacks, many are weary of the “creeping Islamization” of France. With the squeezing of the middle and working-classes, it is no surprise that the fuel hikes acted as the match that set France alight. While the proximate impetus for the Yellow Vest Movement is unique to France, the necessary conditions for such discontent are ripe across the West.

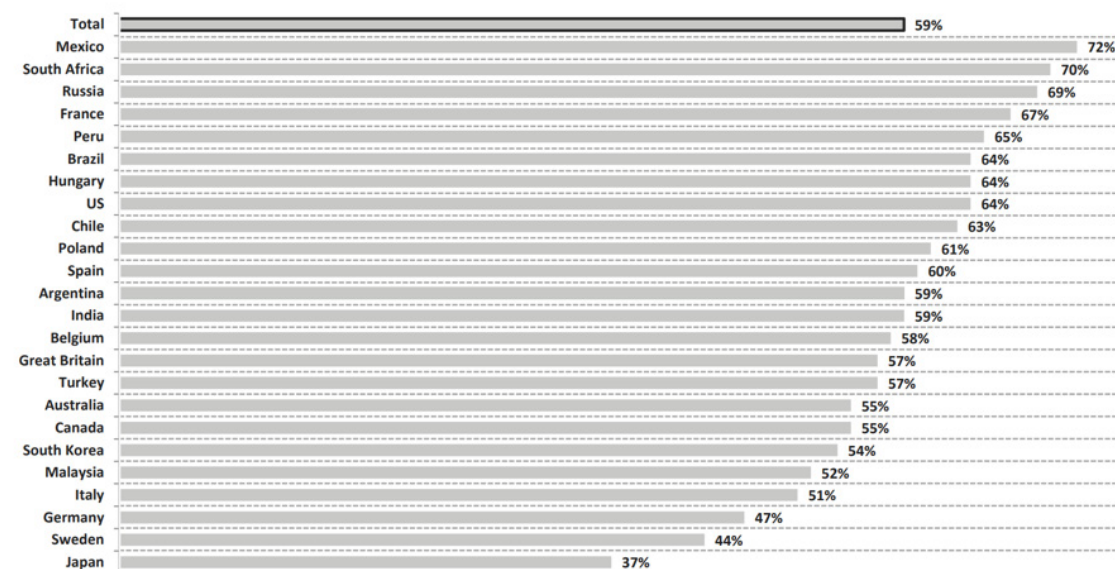


POPULISM IN EUROPE

The ire directed at the political establishment in the West is part of a larger phenomenon that helped drive President Trump into the White House, the British people to vote on leaving the European Union, the Italians into electing a populist coalition into office and the complete erosion of the German political center as demonstrated by German regional elections in 2018.

Q1d Traditional parties and politicians don't care about people like me

Strongly Agree/Tend to Agree



Base: 17,203 adults aged 16-64 across Argentina, Australia, Belgium, Brazil, Canada, Chile, France, Germany, Great Britain, Hungary, India, Italy, Japan, Malaysia, Mexico, Peru, Poland, Russia, South Africa, South Korea, Spain, Sweden, Turkey and the United States. June 26 - July 9 2018.

In July 2018, Ipsos MORI asked people whether they felt that "traditional parties and politicians" cared about people like them. The replies in Europe help explain the Yellow Vest Movement and other anti-establishment movements across the continent: 47 percent of people in Germany, 51 percent in Italy, 57 percent in Britain, and 67 percent in France feel that their leaders are not defending their interests.

Historically, populism has flourished in eras following economic decline and rapid social change stemming from a perceived lack of agency. On an individual level, this is derived from a relative loss of prestige, an erosion of a traditional or imagined former identity, manifesting itself as a backlash against political leadership, identity movements, special interests, minorities and foreigners. This political malaise has been exacerbated by an unequal distribution of economic gains and technological disruption.

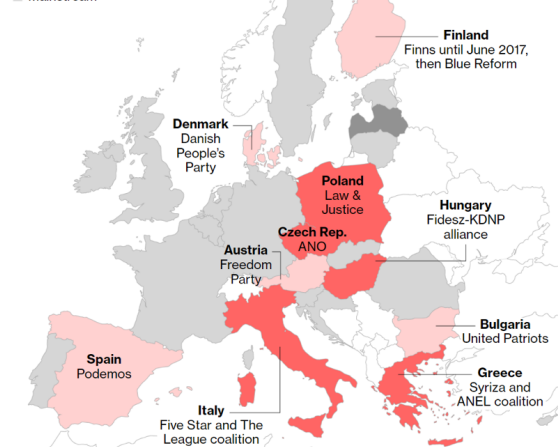
On a national level, populism in Europe is driving the ceding of sovereignty over national issues to the supranational authority in Brussels. This large disenchanted European constituency views the European Union (EU) as a foreign body that is unaccountable to the voters of its 28 constituent nations, and as a self-perpetuating

Europe's Populist Realignment

This year's European Parliament elections come as populists, many of them euroskeptics, control or prop up 10 of the EU's 28 member governments.

Parties in government

- Populist
- Populist partner or support
- Still to be formed
- Mainstream



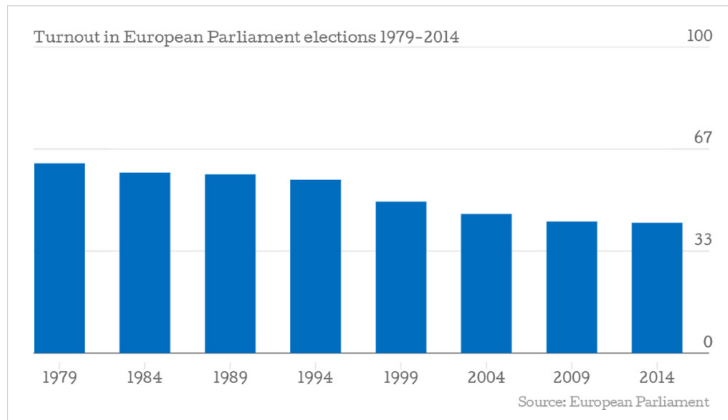
Source: Bloomberg reporting
Note: As of Jan. 18, 2019.

institution whose raison d'être is its own preservation and expansion. In the battle for the hearts and minds of Europe, the lines have been drawn between nationalists – populists – and cosmopolitans, the EU and the establishment centrist parties.



THE NEXT BATTLEGROUND

On 23 May 2019, Europeans will go to ballots to elect the new European Parliament, an election that will serve as a bellwether for the European project. Given the recent electoral successes of populist, Eurosceptic parties in conjunction with the Yellow Vest Movement, it is possible that these anti-EU parties could form a power bloc within the EU parliament, giving rise to many downside risks for businesses operating within the EU.



Unless the traditional European Center can galvanize its electorate in spite of the downward trend of European Parliamentary election voter turnout, it is becoming increasingly likely that Eurosceptic parties will garner close to one-third of EU Parliamentary seats. The likelihood of populist electoral success will be bolstered by Steve Bannon's "The Movement," a Eurosceptic network intended to support Europe's populist parties through polling operations, data analysis, and social media campaigns.

If successful, a populist bloc controlling one-

third of the EU Parliament would have the ability to stymie international trade deals, appointments to the European Commission, and block sanctions against Poland and Hungary who are actively undermining independence of judiciaries and the press. In other words, these potential developments can promote regulatory paralysis and uncertainty, corruption, and political instability, which in turn would increase operational risks. Further, a group of "spoilers" within the Parliament would hamper the EU's ability to respond to the continuing migrant crisis and to combat Russia's attempt to gain influence on the European flanks.

TOWARDS A NEW NORMAL?

There are growing signs that the current political volatility and polarization on both sides of the Atlantic may not be a deviation from the norm, but rather the beginnings of a new global political cycle. Even before the election of President Trump and Brexit, between 2004 and 2015, votes to mainstream parties in Europe declined by 14 points to 72 percent, while the share of populist votes – on the left or the right – more than doubled, reaching 23 percent.

The last 70 years has been marked by two distinct political eras delineated by major economic change. The post-war Keynesian welfare state project (1945-1975) which ended with stagflation was followed by the neoliberalism of Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan, which saw massive deregulation, the collapse of the Soviet Union, liberalization in China and the emergence of new, more powerful global multilateral institutions.

In this vein, it is possible that the 2008 Global Financial Crisis, China's rise, and the Global War on Terror have ushered in a new era of distrust in the current international system. If this new generation of nationalist world leadership can manage to bring prosperity to and increase living standards for those who feel betrayed by globalization, then Western politics could come to be dominated by political and economic nativism for the foreseeable future.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

Anti-establishment and anti-European Union parties are continuing to gain support across Europe. If Eurosceptic parties gain one-third of the seats in the upcoming European Parliamentary elections, they could be **of major source of disruption and uncertainty for the European Union** as a whole. Economic success by anti-establishment politicians could help cement an era hostile towards international institutions and multilateral cooperation



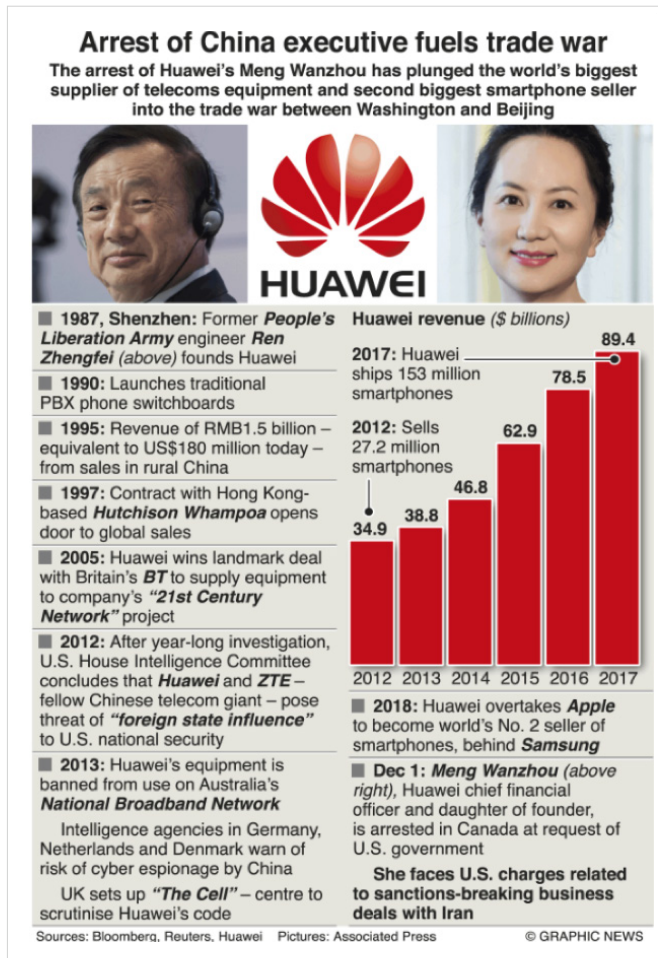
The recent arrest in Canada and planned extradition to the U.S. of Huawei CFO Meng Wanzhou has heightened tensions between the U.S. and China amid an ongoing trade war. The case highlights the close relationship Huawei and other “private” companies have with the Chinese government, and the risks posed to consumers of Huawei and others’ products.

Huawei is China’s largest private company. It’s CFO, the daughter of the founder, was arrested in Vancouver, Canada in December 2018 on U.S. charges that she and the company conspired to violate U.S. sanctions on Iran by doing business through a subsidiary it tried to hide. She faces extradition to the U.S. The arrest has raised already heightened tensions between the U.S. and China over tariffs.

Huawei is one of the world’s largest manufacturers of telecom equipment, including smartphones, and derives nearly half its revenue outside China. The U.S. government is trying to stop U.S. companies from buying Huawei equipment and is pressing allies to do the same. U.S. security experts are concerned the gear could be used by China’s government for espionage.

Chinese companies are known for being extensions of the Chinese government and are often forced to turn over data or spy on users at government request. Huawei’s founder spent 30 years in the Chinese army, and it is unlikely the company maintains independence from government oversight and influence.

Australia and New Zealand followed the U.S. lead in restricting market access over the past year. In January, TPG Telecom Ltd canceled the Huawei-based mobile phone network it was building, in the first commercial casualty of Australia’s move.



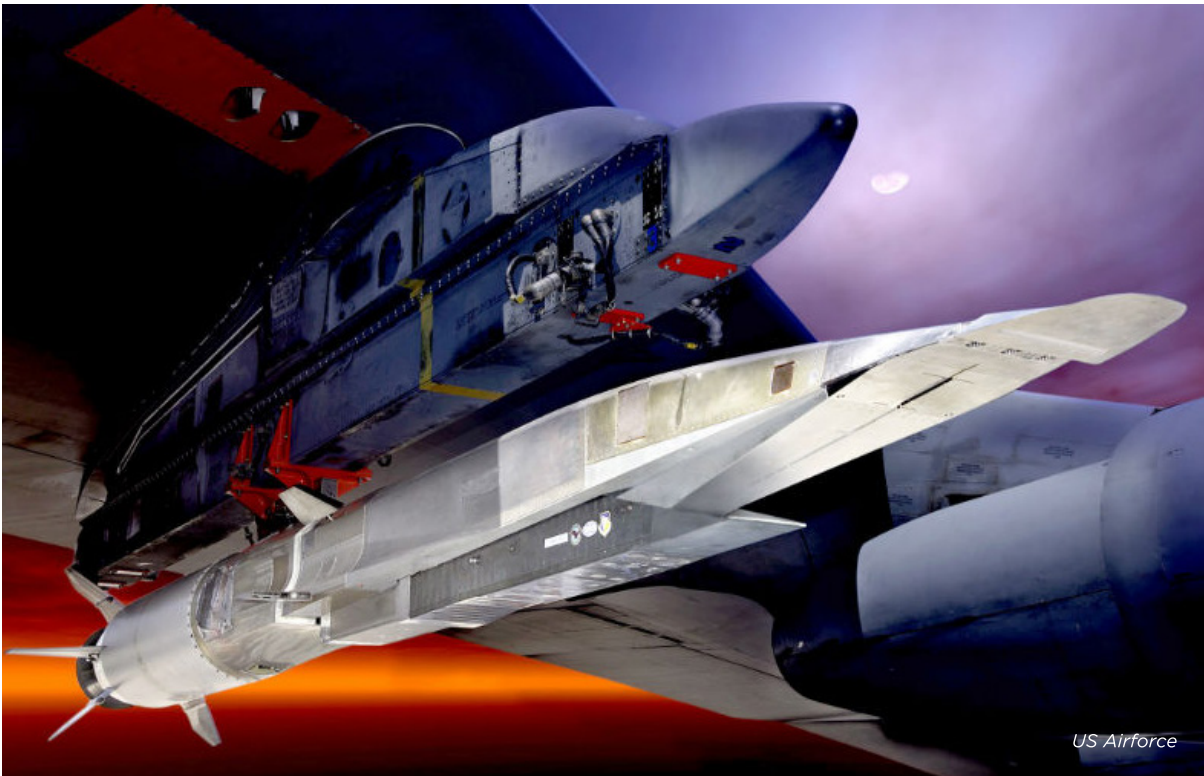
RETALIATION

Two weeks after the arrest of the Huawei CFO by Canadian authorities, the Chinese arrested former Canadian diplomat Michael Kovrig on charges of spying. Several months later, and just two days after Canada announced it would extradite Wanzhou to the U.S, the Chinese government stated that Kovrig and another detained Canadian national had stolen sensitive intelligence from China.

Kovrig’s fate is unknown, but this case highlights how deeply connected the massive Chinese companies are to the Chinese state. There are serious risks to doing business in China in this current atmosphere of geopolitics, including IP theft and arbitrary detainment of executives.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

A global trade war is the **largest tail risk** facing investors today. The Huawei case shows how geopolitics and economic policy are converging and impacting each other. As the US continues to levy tariffs on China and other nations, the world moves closer to a global trade war, especially with private Chinese businesses being so closely linked to Beijing and China’s goal of expanding international influence and reach.



HYPERSONIC TENSIONS - THE NEXT ARMS RACE

While hypersonic missile development is only in its nascent stages, in 2018 both the Chinese and Russians tested their first hypersonic glide vehicles (HGV), signaling the world's next arms race had already begun. Moreover, it appears America's geopolitical rivals have achieved a head start. Too quick and maneuverable to be intercepted, these hypersonic weapons will undermine traditional nuclear deterrence.

On 17 January 2019, the Department of Defense released its long-awaited Missile Defense Review ("MDR"), which outlines a roadmap for U.S. missile defense policy highlighting the growing need to address the near-term challenges associated with China and Russia's advances in hypersonic missile technology.

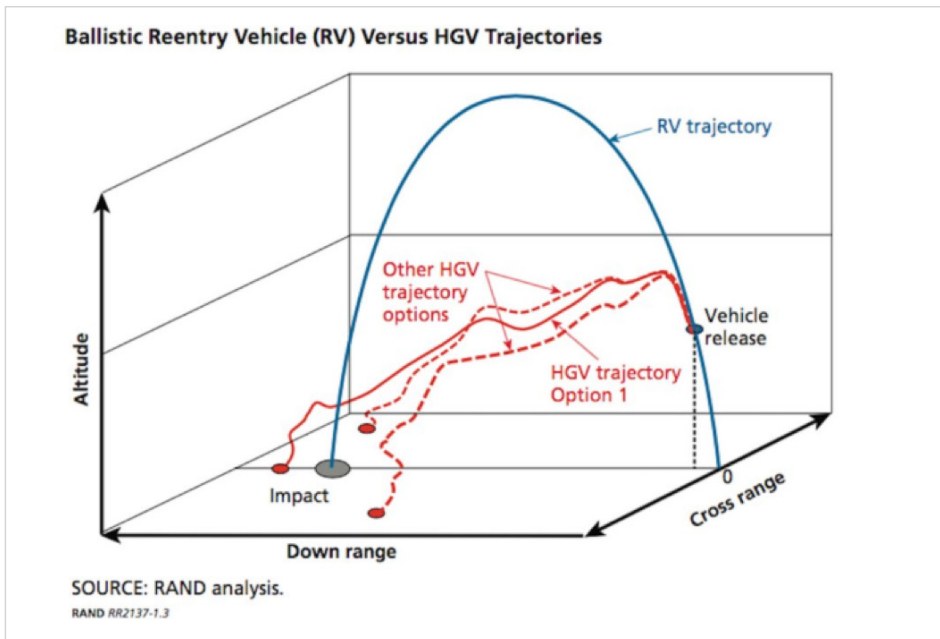


We don't have any defense that could deny the employment of such a weapon against us..."

US Air Force General John E. Hyten, the Commander of US Strategic Command

WHAT ARE HYPERSONIC MISSILES AND WHO POSSESSES THEM?

Hypersonic missiles are missiles that travel at speeds greater than or equal to Mach five. There are two categories of hypersonic missiles in development: Hypersonic Cruise Missiles (HCMs), similar to present (subsonic) cruise missiles; and Hypersonic Glide Vehicles (HCVs) which are launched into a high altitude via ballistic missile, but then released in order to "glide" towards their target. Whereas today's ballistic



trajectories are determined by momentum and gravity, both types of hypersonic vehicles can maneuver mid-flight and fly at low altitudes, thereby obfuscating their intended targets. Ultimately, the sheer velocity and variable trajectory of these missiles makes hypersonic weapons near-impossible to detect and intercept.

China has the only known operational HGV, known as the DF-ZF and reported by the Pentagon as the WU-14. At present it appears as though Russia and China are ahead of the United States in terms of nuclear-capable hypersonic weapons, but the US is leading the way in hypersonic weapons that carry conventional payloads.

THE INTERMEDIATE-RANGE NUCLEAR FORCES (INF) WITHDRAWAL

On 02 February 2019, the United States announced it would withdraw from the (INF) Treaty with Russia. In its own right, the announcement does not signify an escalation between Washington and Moscow, but rather a reflection of the outdated and defunct nature of the agreement. However, the abandonment of the INF will surely be used to justify the acceleration of the development of both American and Russian hypersonic arsenals.

DISMANTLING DETERRENCE

The introduction of hypersonic weapons will contribute to “crisis instability,” thereby threatening the balance of nuclear deterrence. Crisis instability occurs in conflicts where decision makers are pressured to strike first. By drastically reducing an actor’s time to detect intercept, and react, hypersonic systems increase the likelihood of preemptive nuclear strikes in the event of an escalatory conflict among hypersonic-armed rivals.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

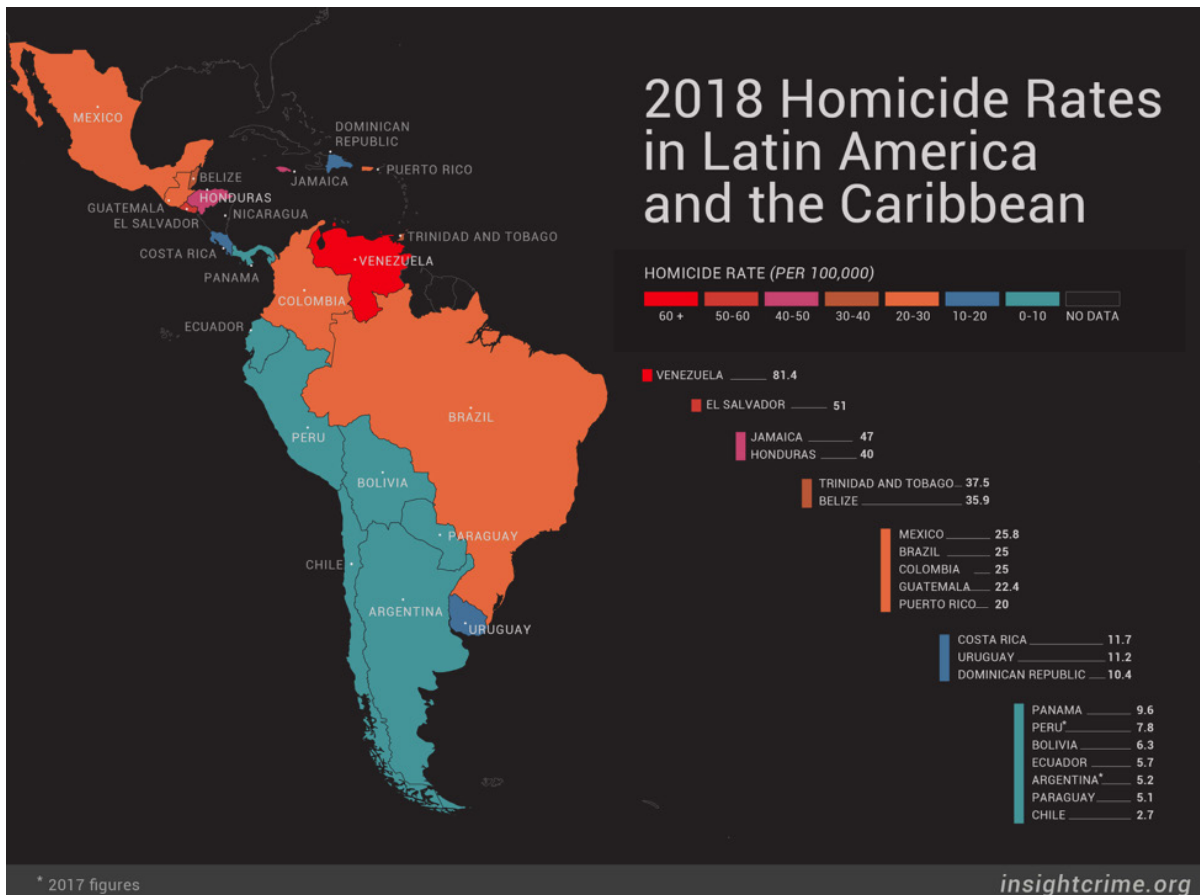
A new arms race between the US, Russia, and China is taking shape over hypersonic weapon systems — a competition in which **the US is lagging behind**. By the mid-2020s they will have introduced hypersonic weapons into their strategic arsenals. The introduction of hypersonic missiles holds the potential to **undermine traditional deterrence** strategy during conflict as these weapons will tilt the strategic balance in favor of preemptive strikes.

LATIN AMERICA - VIOLENCE & POLITICAL CHANGE



Mexico's homicide rate rose for the second straight year, making 2018 the deadliest ever with an average of 91 murders per day. According to the Mexican government, at least 33,341 citizens were murdered last year, a 15% increase over 2017. In Venezuela, an ongoing, dynamic political crisis over the presidency could lead to significant violence in a country which already has one of the highest murder rates in the world. And in Brazil, the new hardline Bolsonaro administration will crackdown on organized drug gangs, inevitably leading to increased violence across the country.

Homicide rates remain high across Latin America, with cities or states in Mexico, Venezuela, and Brazil having among the highest murder rates in the world. These include Los Cabos, Caracas, Acapulco, Guanajuato, Tijuana, Fortaleza, and Natal.



There are three main drivers of the violence in Latin America:

- Fracturing of drug trafficking organizations due to arrests or deaths of kingpins, leaving the groups fragmented and prone to infighting for control, especially of new areas as they seek to expand operations.
- Short supply of police officers; over 200,000 police positions remain unfilled across Mexico, Venezuela, and Brazil due to low pay and endemic corruption. There is a culture of impunity in these countries.
- Widespread corruption at the local, state, and federal level. In Mexico, dozens of mayors of small towns have either been arrested or killed due to their involvement in organized crime. Entire state and local police forces have been disbanded due to corruption. In Brazil, massive corruption scandals at the top levels of government and private corporations have eroded public trust.

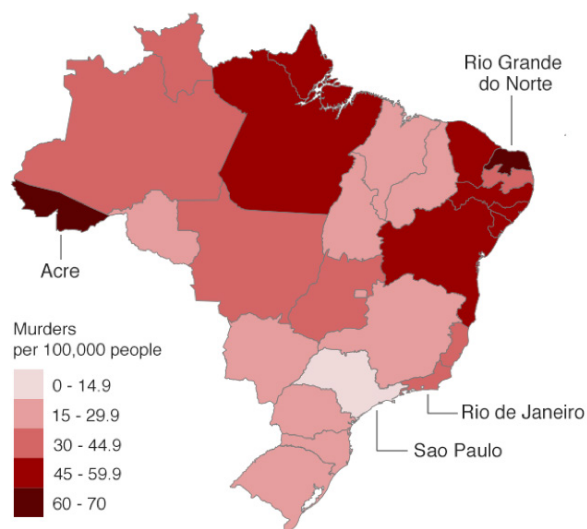


SPOTLIGHT: VENEZUELA

Venezuela has been in a downward spiral for many years, leading to hyperinflation (1,000,000% in 2019), food and medical shortages, power outages, and nearly 3,000,000 refugees fleeing to Colombia and Brazil. On 23 January 2019, amid nationwide protests, the leader of the National Assembly, Juan Guaidó, declared himself Interim President. He was recognized by the U.S., Germany, Brazil, and Colombia. Meanwhile, Mexico, Russia and Turkey rejected Guaidó and continue to support President Nicolás Maduro, who maintains the support and loyalty of the armed forces. There are several possible paths forward:

- Internal process of dialogue between Guaidó and Maduro in order to bring about free and fair elections and to bring a resolution to the duality of legislative powers. This is unlikely due to the resilience of Maduro and Chavismo, but possible as Guaidó has offered amnesty to Maduro, military leaders, and loyalist judges if they move in the right direction.
- Tensions build over the political stalemate as the economy worsens due to new sanctions on PDVSA (state oil company) and Maduro loyalists. Mass protests lead to violent clashes with security forces, resulting in hundreds or thousands of deaths, eventually turning the country and military against Maduro as better alternatives are offered to leaders of the armed forces. This is the most likely outcome, but things will get worse before they get better.
- Foreign intervention by the U.S., possibly with coalition of forces from Brazil and Colombia. This is the worst-case scenario and least likely to occur.

Where in Brazil has the highest murder rate



In Brazil, violence remains endemic across the country, and will likely get worse after the election of far-right president Jair Bolsonaro, a former army captain and self-styled strongman. Twenty of the top 50 most violent cities in the world are in Brazil, and Bolsonaro's militarization strategy will lead to an increase in violence. This occurred in Mexico when Vicente Fox and later Enrique Peña Nieto waged a war against drug trafficking organizations using the military.

So far in 2019, criminal groups have unleashed an assault on the state of Ceará, and the government has responded to the violence with federal troops, turning northeastern Brazil into a battle zone. Such outright conflict may add to the body count, meaning Brazil will be unable to address the root causes of its consistently high murder rate.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

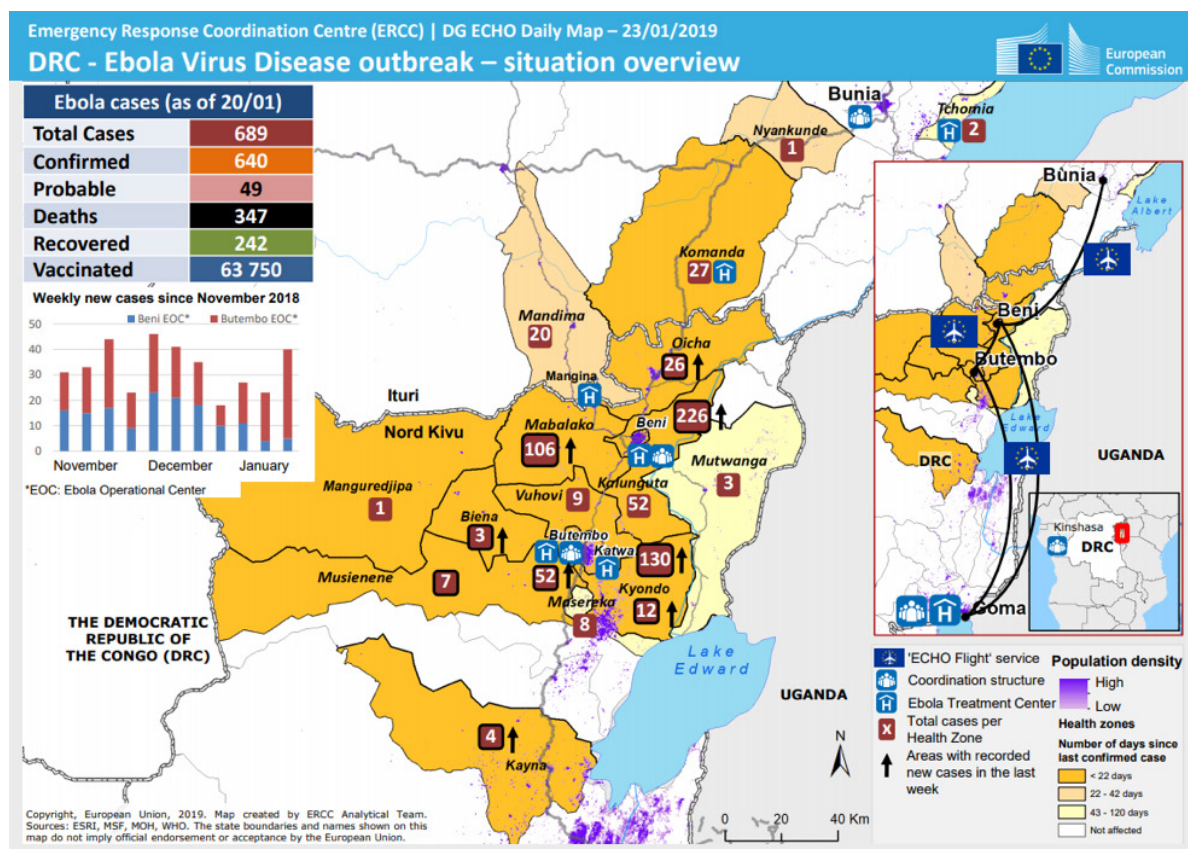
Homicide trends indicate 2019 is on course to become Latin America's deadliest year in the last decade, with significant increases in violence possible in Venezuela and Brazil due to political crisis and militarization strategies. While Mexico is under new leadership, 2019 is unlikely to see a real drop in homicides in the country as cartels continue to fracture and fight over new resources and territory such as oil pipelines and smuggling routes. Traditionally safe places like Los Cabos and Cancun are now high-risk destinations.



ELECTIONS & EBOLA IN THE DRC

Pre and post-election violence in the Democratic Republic of Congo has hindered efforts to stop the spread of Ebola virus in the country, which has killed over 400 people in recent months. Meanwhile, the contested presidential election saw accusations of voter fraud and illegitimate outcomes when opposition candidate Felix Tshisekedi was declared the winner. Further violence is likely.

The DRC has been marred by political violence as former president Joseph Kabila continued to delay elections until 30 December 2018, originally to be held in April 2018. An Ebola outbreak in the country made the situation worse, causing election officials to close polling stations in Ebola-affected regions, sparking demonstrations and further violence. More than 20 militant groups are active in North Kivu, where attacks on health workers slowed responses to the outbreak, increasing chances it could spread to major cities.



The DRC has a history of electoral violence. Protests over the last two years have led to dozens of deaths and sporadic clashes between opposition members and Kabila loyalists. The most recent election, held on 30 December 2018, had a troubling outcome that is likely to lead to more violence in the near future.



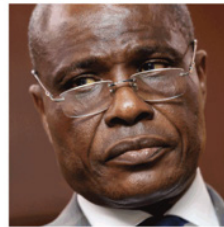
It is widely suspected that Tshisekedi cut a power-sharing deal with Kabila and his hand-picked successor, Emmanuel Shadary.”

Martin Fayulu, who held a healthy lead in pre-election polling, decried the results of the election, which saw another opposition leader, Felix Tshisekedi, declared the winner. Supporting his claim of fraud and an “electoral coup” is polling data collected by 40,000 observers deployed by the Catholic Church across the DRC. The church has not said publicly who won according to its findings, but pre-election polls had Fayulu leading by 20 points over Tshisekedi.

It is widely suspected that Tshisekedi cut a power-sharing deal with Kabila and his hand-picked successor, Emmanuel Shadary. It is believed they rigged the election results for Tshisekedi in order to avoid a Fayulu presidency, and to guarantee a power-sharing arrangement with Kabila’s successor. The election results announcement was delayed by one week, raising suspicions that the government wanted time to negotiate a backroom deal with Tshisekedi. In the eyes of the government, this outcome lends a semblance of legitimacy to the results, rather than an outright theft of the election in favor of Shadary.

Opposition leader wins Congo election

Opposition leader Felix Tshisekedi has been declared the surprise winner of the presidential vote in the Democratic Republic of Congo, with the vast country braced for possible protests over alleged rigging



38.5%

7 million votes

Felix Tshisekedi

Leader of main opposition party – *Union for Democracy and Social Progress (UDPS)*

34.8%

6.4 million votes

Martin Fayulu

Rival opposition candidate rejects results and claims Tshisekedi struck backroom deal with outgoing President *Joseph Kabila*

Results still to be confirmed by constitutional court.
Turnout: 48 per cent

23.8%

4.4 million votes

Emmanuel Shadary

Kabila’s chosen successor

Source: DR Congo’s National Electoral Commission (Ceni)

Pictures: Getty Images

© GRAPHIC NEWS

KEY TAKEAWAYS

Post-election **violence is likely as protests around vote rigging** and subversion of democracy take root. The violence will make containing Ebola more difficult, and could lead to explosive outbreaks in major cities in the DRC or across national border. Over 50,000 Congolese have been vaccinated against Ebola thus far in a country of 81 million people.



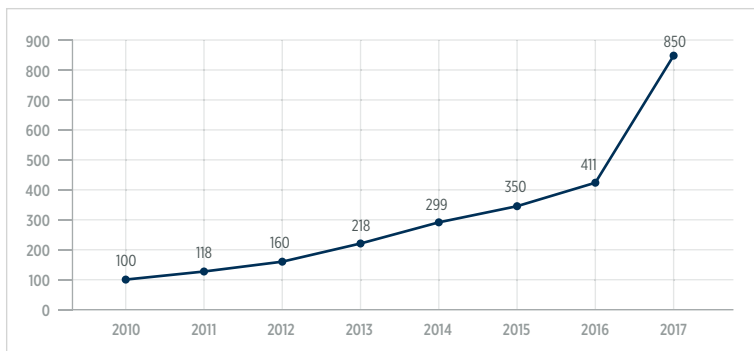
SUDAN - BELEAGUERED BASHIR TOPPLED

After ruling Sudan with an iron fist for 30 years, President Omar al-Bashir was sacked in a bloodless military coup d'état on 11 March 2019. The ouster comes amidst widescale protests that resulted in 80 deaths, including five soldiers who were killed defending the protesters from the regime's paramilitary forces on 09 March.

Sudan is in the midst of its most serious wave of instability since the nation's founding. The protests ignited on 19 December 2018 in the city of Atbara over austerity measures, specifically, a subsidy cut which tripled the cost of bread overnight. Spearheaded by Sudan's younger generation, and with help from civil society organizations, professional groups and professors, daily protests have spread across the nation calling for change. The protestors are demanding democratic and economic reforms, but more importantly, they are calling for Bashir's ouster – clamoring to the slogan: “Tasgut bas (just fall, that's all).”



With the secession of South Sudan in 2011, Khartoum lost approximately 75 percent of oil exports and 60 percent of its foreign reserves. The resultant diminishing state rents have exacerbated factional rivalries within the ruling class, which in turn, created a kleptocratic cycle. An increasing share of government revenue has been diverted to placate different political allies, namely the military elite. In a haphazard effort to secure international financial assistance, the government instituted austerity measures – including the subsidy cuts that precipitated the protests – amidst an increase in military expenditure.



Given Sudan's anemic economy, endemic corruption and weak civil protections, the youth as well as a growing number of Islamists have taken to the streets.

The chart to the left shows the increases in the Consumer Price Index (CPI) since 2010. As CPI rises, basic goods become more expensive. Rising CPI often portends social unrest and eventually violence.

RECENT EVENTS

- 22 February:** Facing mounting domestic pressure, President Bashir declared a state of emergency, dissolved the government, its constitution, appointed the military chief as Vice President; and replaced the state governors with members of the government's security apparatus. In doing so, he has distanced himself from his party – to shift the blame of the economic mismanagement – while giving more control to the military. Further, Bashir also signaled to the Islamists that he is no longer their ally, thereby distancing himself from Qatar and Turkey and the Muslim Brotherhood. By eliminating these potential partners and benefactors, Bashir tried to orient Sudan towards the deep pockets of Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates for political and economic protection.
- 06 April:** Several thousand protesters gathered in Khartoum for a sit-in outside the General Directorate of the Armed Forces. The protesters were dispersed by National Intelligence and Security Service (NISS) forces using tear gas, rubber bullets, and live ammunition prompting some members of the army to attempt to protect those demonstrating. Twenty-two were killed including five soldiers and over 150 were wounded.
- 09 April:** The United States and United Kingdom called for a plan towards political transition.
- 11 April:** After six successive days of anti-government protests outside Sudan's army headquarters, President al-Bashir was arrested; and Sudan's airspace, ports, and borders were closed in a military coup. Vice president and military chief, General Ibn Auf subsequently declared:
 - A three-month state of emergency
 - The suspension of the 2005 Constitution
 - Dissolution of all government institutions
 - The military council will govern Sudan until elections are held in 2021

Protests against the rule of Omar al-Bashir have centred on government buildings in Khartoum



KEY TAKEAWAYS

Despite the ouster of Bashir by the military, the **protests are set to continue** as the regime remains mostly intact. If the military moves to devolve power to technocratic transitional government, further unrest can be averted. However, if the military maintains full control of the government while violently suppressing protest, **the likelihood of armed insurrection will increase. Sudan will continue to teeter on the edge of chaos for the near future.**

CAMEROON — THE ANGLOPHONE QUESTION



The crisis between Cameroon's Anglophone population and the central government and its pro-government militias is on the edge of civil war. In the last year, the conflict has claimed the lives of over 200 government forces, 600 separatists, and 500 civilians, resulting in the displacement of just under 500,000 Anglophones. There are numerous reports of collective punishment, with government forces indiscriminately targeting civilians.

The Anglophone crisis is a vestige of the regions' colonial legacy. After Germany's defeat in World War I, Cameroon (Kamerun) was co-administered by France and the United Kingdom – who governed the English-speaking region as though it was Nigeria. French Cameroon declared independence in 1960, and the Northwest and Southwest Anglophone regions acceded to Cameroon in 1961. Despite comprising 20 percent of the population, Cameroon's Anglos have been politically, economically, and culturally marginalized by the French-speaking central government and the country's elites.

The seeds of the current violence were sown in late 2016, when English-speaking lawyers and teachers organized peaceful protests over the government's assignment of French-speaking judges and teachers to preside over English-speaking courts and schools. The harsh government crackdown bolstered support for English-speaking separatism, spurring a series of attacks on government forces and government reprisals.



2019 AND BEYOND

In December 2018, the central government attempted to de-escalate the situation by releasing 289 Anglophone detainees. However, many political prisoners remain, including the majority of the Anglophone leadership. With mounting casualties and an increasing death toll, unless the government can properly address the Anglophones' grievances by granting them partial autonomy or succession, a peaceful resolution remains out of sight. Further, as Nigeria, the region's power-broker, is roiled in electoral chaos, any outside mediation will be put on hold. If the fighting expands beyond the Anglophone regions, the conflict threatens to destabilize the entirety of Cameroon and southwestern Nigeria.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

The crisis between Cameroon's Anglophone population and the central government and pro-government militias is **sloping towards civil war**. This could further destabilize the region, leading to increased militant activity in West Africa.

INDO-PAK FLARE-UP FUELED BY DISINFORMATION



On 26 February 2019, the Indian Air Force launched its first attack on Pakistani territory since the two nations fought in 1971, skyrocketing tensions between the nuclear-armed rivals. The recent hostilities should be viewed as saber-rattling for domestic consumption rather than escalation towards a nuclear conflict in South Asia. However, the ubiquity of the misinformation surrounding this conflagration paired with high levels of military readiness, make escalation by accident possible.



TIMELINE OF EVENTS

14 February 2019: Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM) militants launched a suicide car bombing in Indian-administered Jammu and Kashmir's Pulwama district, killing over 40 Indian paramilitaries

26 February 2019: India jets strike a JeM training camp near Balakot, Pakistan; however multiple intelligence sources indicate that the missiles did not hit their target (either intentionally, so as not to escalate; or by targeting error)

27 February 2019: Pakistan shoots down two Indian military planes over the air space of Azad Jammu and Kashmir, capturing one Indian pilot, who was later returned to India on 01 March

WHY NOW?

Since the 2008 Mumbai terrorist attack conducted by Lashkar-e-Taiba, Indian decision makers have faced domestic political pressure to respond to Pakistani-linked terror with serious force. On the campaign trail, now Prime Minister, Narendra Modi championed a “muscular” approach against Pakistani Islamist militancy in Kashmir. The 14 February terrorist attack gave Modi an opportunity to showcase his nationalist bona fides months before India's upcoming elections, as his Hindu-nationalist party (BJP) had faced serious setbacks in state-level elections late last year.

In Pakistan, embarrassed by the display of India's ability to reach mainland Pakistan and return unscathed, the new and inexperienced Prime Minister, Imran Khan and his army chief, Qamar Bajwa, risked a backlash from their officer corps and the all-powerful Pakistani intelligence services, responding to India's aggression.

RISKS REMAIN

Since the original conflagration, the two sides have continued to exchange heavy artillery fire in the disputed region of Kashmir. Both militaries have also intensified aerial and naval patrolling along their territorial borders, which can lead to escalation by accident. Pakistan-based Islamist militant groups remain committed to attacks in India.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

Given the widespread weaponization of fact-checking and the promulgation of disinformation to a largely unsophisticated internet audience, **a terrorist attack in India**, or any military misstep **threatens to unleash** enough domestic pressure to prompt a rash **military escalation**. We advise all travellers to India's major urban centers **to stay at smaller hotels or to verify with Global Guardian beforehand if their proposed hotel meets our security standards**.



OUTLOOK AND TAKEAWAYS

POLITICAL RISK

Populist nationalism – with a penchant for “self-help” and disdain for large intergovernmental bodies – is continuing to make global gains. In Europe, the upcoming European Parliamentary Elections will serve as a litmus test for the long-term viability of this political trend. In the near-term, if the Eurosceptic parties manage to gain one-third of the parliamentary seats, they could increase uncertainty, and regulatory and operational risk. More broadly, the current political volatility and polarization on both sides of the Atlantic may mark the beginnings of a new global political cycle, an era with less cooperation and more competition.

GEOPOLITICAL RISK

The signs of geopolitical competition are crystallizing in 2019. In February, populist nationalist governments in India and Pakistan were pushed to the brink of war by their populations. Meanwhile, trade tensions and security concerns over the growing reach of Chinese telecommunications companies will continue to divide the world. Geopolitical competition has also entered into the military sphere as the advent of hypersonic weapons has thrust the world into a new arms race. Without any defenses against this new class of weapon, the nuclear deterrence that had prevented great power conflict will soon become antiquated.

VIOLENCE IN LATIN AMERICA

Mexico is on track for another record-breaking year of homicides as drug cartels continue to fragment and fight over territory and new targets such as oil pipelines and tanker trucks. New leadership in both Mexico and Brazil are likely to escalate violence. In Venezuela, more than 3,000,000 people have fled the country as a power struggle at the top continues. Those remaining are scraping by amid shortages of food and medicine, hyper-inflation, and frequent power blackouts.

INSTABILITY IN AFRICA

Two formerly stable nations, Cameroon and Sudan, have recently descended into chaos. With no viable political solution in sight and almost 500,000 displaced persons, unless the Cameroonian government changes course, the country will continue to on a path towards a civil war, threatening to destabilize the region. After declaring a state of emergency in February, Sudanese President Bashir was ousted in an April coup. The tipping point in Sudan will revolve around the government’s use of force: escalation will tip the country past the point of no return.

CONTACT US

Please contact the 24/7 Global Guardian Operations Center at any time with questions or comments on this special report, or for any travel security need.

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