

ZeroFox Intelligence Geopolitical Brief for January 2024



TLP: CLEAR

B-2023-12-29a

Executive Summary

Israeli forces have yet to attain their stated objectives of capturing Hamas' senior leadership and dismantling the militant group. With Hamas likely still having thousands of fighters in Gaza, the war is likely to continue for several more weeks to months. The military campaign in Gaza, which has increased in intensity since the end of a week-long ceasefire on December 1, has other international implications. International support for Israel in the Israel-Hamas War is eroding—primarily due to high civilian casualties but also partly due to the Israeli leadership's intransigence towards a future Palestinian state.

An increase in hostilities between Israel and Hezbollah, operating in southern Lebanon, looks more likely than at any other point in the conflict. The Houthis in Yemen, another Israeli enemy, have also become more brazen as support for Israel has diminished. A military escort mission in the Red Sea will likely be targeted in the near future, calculating that any Western response will be muted because the Biden administration is not eager for another war in the Middle East. Similar calculations may result in an increase in attacks against U.S. or Israeli interests by Iranian proxy groups in Iraq or Syria.

Israeli domestic politics are also an important consideration. Public approval of the Netanyahu administration is low due to the war and because of its previous judicial reform efforts. There is a strong chance that public protests against the government will increase in January 2024; the ongoing war is likely the only issue keeping Netanyahu in power. The longer the dichotomy between the international community and the interests of the Israeli government continues, the higher the probability that the war will expand into other arenas.

The Israel-Hamas has heightened concern among European security services that lone actors will attack soft targets like protests or other large gatherings. This threat is exacerbated by the ongoing European migrant crisis. Attacks or supposed attacks by Hamas supporters have prompted violent riots across European cities by those opposed to immigration. European authorities are attempting to pass immigration reform to weaken the appeal of anti-immigrant political parties ahead of European Union-wide elections in mid-2024.

Regardless of who wins the Taiwan elections in January 2024, political leaders will likely remain vehemently anti-China, and Taiwan will remain a close U.S. ally. For China, however, the distinctions between the incumbent party, known to be anti-China, and the opposition, calling for closer relations with China, are stark. So much so that if the incumbent party wins, China is likely to ratchet up military maneuvers immediately. China will also seek to help the opposition party by utilizing trade restrictions and other forms of economic coercion to worsen Taiwan's high cost of living and overall sluggish economy.

Key Findings

- The Israel-Hamas War in Gaza will likely continue for months.
- A key Israeli judicial decision could also lead to political protests increasing across Israel.
- Houthi attacks in the Red Sea are likely to continue, despite a U.S. naval mission escorting container ships.
- Violence by attackers inspired by the Israel-Hamas War and immigration opponents is likely in Europe.
- Protests in Argentina over austerity measures are certain.
- China will increase military incursions near Taiwan and ramp up economic coercion in the event of a presidential victory for the incumbent Democratic Progressive Party.
- Taiwan's opposition is likely to gain ground in parliament, which means the political status quo is likely to remain the same.
- A security crackdown against protesters in Argentina is likely to inspire activists to target the government.
- Jihadist groups like al-Qaeda and the Islamic State have identified the politically weak Sahel area of Africa as their new operating base, allowing them to regroup after wars in the Middle East decimated their capabilities.
- The risk of a Venezuelan invasion of Guyana is low for now, but the prospect will increase the closer Venezuela gets to a general election.
- Guatemala's transfer of power in mid-January will likely be smooth, but efforts by the outgoing administration to limit the effectiveness of the new government will continue.
- Social unrest is likely in Senegal ahead of general elections as the outgoing administration attempts to limit the opposition.
- With Western aid to Ukraine stalled, Russia will seek to gain ground and debilitate Ukrainian infrastructure, while Ukraine will likely shift to defensive measures.

Key Threats and Developments



Argentina's opposition in Congress will attempt to limit the scope of austerity measures.



Protests before and after Bangladesh's general election are likely.



Attacks by Iranian proxy groups could increase across the Middle East.



Russia will look to gain ground in Ukraine as Western aid languishes.



Immigration limiting reforms has become the biggest political issue in Europe.



European security services are concerned with lone-wolf terror attacks targeting large gatherings.



Chinese economic coercion against Taiwan will increase if the incumbent party wins re-election.



Judicial reform protests could escalate in Israel in January 2024.

SCOPE NOTE ZeroFox Intelligence is derived from a variety of sources, including—but not limited to—curated open-source accesses, vetted social media, proprietary data sources, and direct access to threat actors and groups through covert communication channels. Information relied upon to complete any report cannot always be independently verified. As such, ZeroFox applies rigorous analytic standards and tradecraft in accordance with best practices and includes caveat language and source citations to clearly identify the veracity of our Intelligence reporting and substantiate our assessments and recommendations. All sources used in this particular Intelligence product were identified prior to 3:00 PM (EST) on December 29, 2023; per cyber hygiene best practices, caution is advised when clicking on any third-party links.



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Russia-Ukraine War Update Conflict

The Russia-Ukraine war faces a transitional year in 2024 as both sides adjust to a protracted, attritional fight. Weapons supplies and manpower will likely play a large role over the next phase of the conflict. Russia appears to be gaining a numerical advantage in both categories though the quality of its weapons does not match the NATO supplies Ukraine receives from the West. Russia relies heavily on poorly produced domestic weapons, Iranian drones, and North Korean ammunition.[1] Russia's numeric munitions advantage may prove effective in mass wave style attacks but the poor quality would not lend itself to advanced military maneuvers.

Meanwhile, Ukraine began curtailing offensive operations in December, in part due to ammunition shortages.[2] The United States and European Union (EU) failed to pass comprehensive aid for Ukraine in December, leaving it with fewer than expected supplies heading into 2024.[3] If the West cannot pass aid in January 2024, it increases the likelihood that Ukraine could face some temporary territorial losses. However, Russia is highly unlikely to achieve any major strategic breakthrough in the short term.

Forward Look:

- Russian President Vladimir Putin will likely seek a high-profile victory to tout before presidential elections in March 2024, which may prompt a winter offensive. Weather conditions would influence any such fighting between January and February 2024. Russia began an air campaign against Ukrainian infrastructure in November 2023. While the intensity of these strikes has not yet matched that of last year's campaign, a harsh winter could strain resources and infrastructure to support the civilian population; however, mild winter conditions would soften the impact of Russian airstrikes. Additionally, cold temperatures may freeze the ground within the next several weeks, which would allow Russia to more effectively deploy armored vehicles.

European Immigration Reform

- EU member states need to agree to immigration reform by February 2024 in order for it to be in place for the June 2024 EU-wide elections.[4]
- The reform requires all EU states to take a set number of migrants or pay for each they do not accept.

Forward Look:

- The EU immigration reform bill requires all states to accept at least 30,000 migrants per year or pay EUR 20,000 per migrant to countries willing to accept more. The bill will likely limit overall immigration to the EU while better-dispersing the costs and impacts across the 27 members.[5] The new system, which still needs numerous layers of approval, has broad acceptance from frontier states like Greece, Italy, and Spain, which usually see the most migrants because they are geographically closest to the migrant hotspots of North Africa and the Middle East. Eastern EU states are the most likely to oppose it, as it will increase the number of migrants they accept. Migration into the EU has been a growing political problem for EU states, with anti-immigration politicians gaining political power in countless EU states while simultaneously pushing other policies that run counter to EU principles. For example, Hungarian leader Viktor Orban has been accused of using his hostility toward immigration to gain power, which he ultimately used to carry out undemocratic reforms. EU leaders are likely aiming to reduce immigration to lessen other political pressures as well. However, even if the bill is in place in time for the EU-wide June elections, victories for more far-right anti-immigrant politicians are still likely.

Holiday Season Terror Threat Raises Global Alarm

Multiple Western security authorities have warned that the likelihood of a terrorist attack is high.[6] Attackers will likely aim for soft targets, especially given the increased sensitivities surrounding the Israel-Hamas War. An uptick in extremist propaganda online could further inspire would-be attackers, who (in the recent past) have viewed large public gatherings as ideal targets. Additionally, European authorities are concerned that broader, longer-term societal fissures will drive an increased threat over the holiday period. Protests over immigration and the cost of living have already turned violent multiple times this year and could resurface.

Forward Look:

- Terror groups probably calculate that events in Israel and Gaza, coupled with propaganda, will inspire lone-wolf actors to carry out terror attacks in Western nations.
- In addition to the Israel-Hamas War, European authorities, in particular, are also concerned that broader, longer-term societal fissures will drive an increased threat over the holiday period. The EU is likely referring to concerns around the cost of living and immigration that have worsened in recent years and have resulted in acts of violence across the continent.
- In recent weeks, there have been several large-scale riots by far-right groups in response to supposed acts of violence committed by immigrants. Predating the war period, these groups also clashed with the police over lockdowns, housing affordability, energy costs, public spending, and environmental reforms.[7]
- The Israel-Hamas War is likely to continue into 2024, and the polarization that existed before the war will most likely be amplified during large gatherings and demonstrations, increasing the risk of violence.

Venezuela-Guyana Territorial Dispute

- Venezuela is threatening an invasion of the western Guyana region of Essequibo that Venezuela claims as its own.
- In mid-December, both sides agreed to solve the dispute via non-military means. However, Venezuela will likely ramp up anti-Guyana rhetoric ahead of an election in 2024.

Forward Look:

- On December 14, 2024, the Presidents of Guyana and Venezuela, Irfaan Ali and Nicolas Maduro, respectively, agreed not to settle their territorial dispute over the Essequibo region of Guyana with violence.[8] The meeting comes after Venezuela held a referendum that included support for a Venezuelan invasion of Essequibo, which borders eastern Venezuela and has large-scale oil deposits off its waters. Most Venezuelans dispute Guyana's sovereignty over the region, including the political opposition. However, most of the opposition believe the referendum is a political stunt by Maduro to fracture the opposition ahead of an election sometime in 2024. Opposition polling says Maria Machado would easily beat Maduro in a fair election. Despite the agreement, there is a high probability that Venezuela will resume threatening a military invasion of Guyana in the near future, and Venezuela may even launch some small-scale military activity. However, Venezuela is unlikely to launch a full-scale invasion in the short term.
- The security threat could intimidate Western oil producers seeking to further explore Guyana's potential oil reserves. Venezuela could seek a recurring payout from Guyana or energy firms to keep the peace.

FOOTNOTES

[1] [hXXps://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/ukraine-conflict-updates](https://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/ukraine-conflict-updates)

[2] [hXXps://www.kyivpost.com/post/25669](https://www.kyivpost.com/post/25669)

[3] [hXXps://www.politico.com/news/2023/12/18/u-s-funds-ukraine-00132304](https://www.politico.com/news/2023/12/18/u-s-funds-ukraine-00132304)

[4] [hXXps://www.euronews.com/my-europe/2023/12/20/eu-strikes-major-deal-to-reform-migration-policy-after-three-years-of-bitter-debates](https://www.euronews.com/my-europe/2023/12/20/eu-strikes-major-deal-to-reform-migration-policy-after-three-years-of-bitter-debates)

[5] [hXXps://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/policies/eu-migration-policy/](https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/policies/eu-migration-policy/)

[6]

[hXXps://www.cbsnews.com/philadelphia/video/fbi-director-warns-us-facing-unprecedented-number-of-terror-attacks-this-holiday-season](https://www.cbsnews.com/philadelphia/video/fbi-director-warns-us-facing-unprecedented-number-of-terror-attacks-this-holiday-season)

[7] [hXXps://www.rfi.fr/en/france/20231207-ultra-right-group-disbanded-after-violent-clashes-in-south-of-france](https://www.rfi.fr/en/france/20231207-ultra-right-group-disbanded-after-violent-clashes-in-south-of-france)

[8]

[hXXps://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2023/12/20/statement-from-president-joe-biden-on-securing-the-release-of-americans-detained-in-venezuela/](https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2023/12/20/statement-from-president-joe-biden-on-securing-the-release-of-americans-detained-in-venezuela/)



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Red Sea Shipping

- Houthi attacks in the Red Sea could lead to a supply chain disruption that is more enduring and costly than the six-day blockade of the Suez Canal in 2021.
- Houthis will likely continue targeting ships during the duration of the Israel-Hamas War, believing any U.S.-led retaliation will be limited.

Forward Look:

- Major shipping companies are rerouting vessels to avoid the Red Sea as Yemen's Houthi rebels step up missile and drone attacks against cargo ships. The Red Sea handles about 10–15 percent of all trade, but, more consequently, about 30 percent of all shipping passes through the sea.[9] Vessels will likely re-route around South Africa's Cape of Good Hope rather than use the nearby Suez Canal. Given the longer distance, shipping costs will likely rise by about USD 1 million per ship due to the greater travel time needed to route shipments and added fuel.
- A 2021 six-day blockade of the Suez Canal led to billions in additional costs, and the backlogs took months to clear. At the time, shipping was at an all-time high, which exacerbated the crisis. However, the current threat posed by the Houthis has the potential to cause a more enduring blockade, which could eclipse the costs of the 2021 blockade in a matter of weeks—despite the fact that the global economic slowdown has reduced the demand for shipping and is currently limiting the inflationary impacts of the Houthi strikes.
- On December 19, the United States announced the formation of a 10-nation task force to protect Red Sea shipping lanes.[10] While the United States has not ruled out direct strikes on the Houthis, the task force will likely focus on defending freighters rather than retaliating. Escalation by the Houthis, either in the form of direct attacks on task force ships or drastically stepped-up attacks on cargo ships, could prompt U.S.-led retaliation. The Houthis are likely prepared to accept small-scale strikes inside Yemen and will therefore continue targeting ships, even with the task force present. On the other hand, the United States does not want the crisis (which is linked to the Israel-Hamas War) to escalate into an additional war in the region, which likely factors into the Houthis' decision to continue targeting all ships in the region.

Argentine Protests and Economic Measures

- New President Javier Milei is pushing austerity measures that slash public spending and devalue the currency.
- Ahead of anticipated social unrest, the security forces have announced plans to limit protests.

Forward Look:

- On December 20, 2023, President Javier Milei eliminated or changed 300 laws by presidential decree. Among the new rules are the elimination of a law regulating rent, as well as rules preventing the privatization of state enterprises. There were also deregulatory measures affecting tourism, satellite internet services, pharmaceuticals, mining, and foreign trade.[11] The laws will be assessed for legality by an independent commission within 10 days; however, the prospect of them being overturned is low. While Milei's far-right political party, Libertad Avanza, has little representation in Congress, center-right parties will likely protect the measures from being overturned by left-leaning parties in Congress.
- Before the latest measures, Milei had already sharply devalued the Argentina peso, drastically reduced subsidies for fuel and transportation, announced suspensions in construction projects, and made cuts to public sector ministries—all part of his economic "shock therapy" policies. Taken together, these measures will drastically increase inflation, unemployment, and poverty in the short term. Milei argues that the short-term pain of higher inflation and unemployment will return Argentina to a more stable economic footing. International economists largely agree—if the measures are allowed to run their course.
- Opponents argue the increase in poverty and inequality will be permanent. Therefore, months of protests are likely in Argentina.[12] However, to reduce the threat that protests stifle his economic measures, Milei has also announced sweeping restrictions on protest activity that give police broad authority to crackdown on disruptive protests while also reducing the ability of protesters to earn a living or receive state subsidies. These measures could backfire if they prompt more protests or if the short-term anger of the local population threatens Milei's political survival. Efforts to prevent protests could worsen them, especially if there are credible reports of police brutality. There could be indefinite worker strikes, as well as night-time acts of violence. Similar events happened across Latin America in 2019–2020, notably in Chile, when conservative leaders attempted to impose austerity measures prompting months of violent protests.

Germany: Budget-related Protests

Protests against tax increases and budget cuts are likely into 2024. Rail workers are also planning work stoppages in early 2024.[13]

- Protests against the new terms of the 2024 budget are expected into early in the coming year. Germany recently agreed to a new budget after a court said the old one included too much debt. To make the new budget amenable to the courts, Germany announced increases in taxes for some sectors and subsidy cuts for others. The most controversial measure is increasing the levy on carbon dioxide emissions from fuel, which will increase the price of diesel used by truckers and farmers. Thousands of truckers and farmers have blocked roads to protest the measures. Other measures to plug the budget gap include reducing subsidies for high-emitting industries, slightly reducing the spending of some ministries, and using privatization revenue to finance the modernization of railways. The budget has still not been formally approved, so expect more protests by groups hoping to reverse the government's decision into 2024.
- Separately, rail workers (who have held numerous strikes over pay) are highly likely to renew strike action after January 8, potentially leading to months of major supply chain and transportation disruptions.

FOOTNOTES

[9] <https://www.cnn.com/news/spiral-ing-cost-in-ocean-freight-ship-ping-rates-is-becoming-a-reality-as-suez-canal-remains-out-of-bounds>

[10] <https://www.reuters.com/world/us-allies-reluctant-red-sea-task-force-2023-12-28/>

[11] <https://www.infobae.com/politica/2023/12/21/el-dnu-completo-de-javier-milei-las-366-articulos-para-realizar-una-profunda-desregulacion-de-la-economia-argentina/>

[12] <https://www.pagina12.com.ar/597467-la-huelga-nacional-esta-en-el-menu-de-opciones-de-las-centra>

[13] <https://www.reuters.com/business/economy/german-government-strikes-against-budget-will-be-part-2024-budget-2023-12-20/>



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Senegal Elections

- Opposition leader Ousmane Sonko has been declared eligible to run for president in the February 2024 general elections, despite government objections.[14]
- A total of 79 candidates have registered for elections to take over for outgoing President Macky Sall. Sall's choice of successor is Amadou Ba, currently serving as Prime Minister.
- Sonko is the main opposition leader, but his candidacy was in doubt after he was convicted at a trial his supporters called politically motivated. His arrest in 2021 and conviction in 2023 both spurred violent riots, each time leaving more than 10 dead.
- Sall only ruled out an unconstitutional third term for himself because of political pressure and social unrest. Protests against other efforts to influence the elections are likely.

Forward Look:

- Senegal's presidential election has been contentious due to uncertainty around the candidacy of opposition leader Ousmane Sonko, who was barred from running and whose party (PASTEF) was dissolved earlier this year.
- A recent court decision found that Sonko was eligible to run, despite being found guilty of a crime, and allowed him to formally submit his candidacy.
- While government figures continue to insist Sonko cannot present himself as a candidate, actually enforcing a ban would be both dangerous and legally dubious.

Al Qaeda Identifies West Africa Operating Base

- Jihadist groups have found success rebuilding in Africa, particularly the Sahel region, after losing the traditional bases in the Middle East.

Forward Look:

- On December 13, 2023, Iyad ag Ghali—the leader of al-Qaeda's (AQ) most effective branch, Jama'a Nusrat ul-Islam wa al-Muslimin (JNIM)—announced JNIM's key operations would be targeting the military coup leaders in Mali, Burkina Faso, and Niger.[15] If JNIM is able to control a greater share of government-held land in southern Mali, Burkina Faso, and Niger, they will likely expand into the more economically-important West African states of Ghana and Ivory Coast, as well as Benin and Togo, which are already seeing an increase in attacks in the north. While JNIM and, to a lesser extent, the Islamic State (IS) have steadily been gaining territory in the region for years, the statement is significant because it highlights a shift in focus from the entirety of AQ and presents a wider risk to West Africa. It is also a continuation of a trend since a U.S.-backed coalition helped route IS and AQ from their traditional seats of power in Iraq and Syria, as well as in Afghanistan and Pakistan, where the Taliban maintains a greater presence. AQ and IS have found room for growth in parts of Africa that is currently unavailable to them in the Middle East. Their expansion has led to political instability; coup leaders in Mali, Burkina, and Niger have cited the incumbent governments' inability to halt jihadist attacks as their primary reason for taking power. The security vacuums have only worsened since the coups, and there is a high likelihood that attacks will spread further across the region.

Taiwan Elections

- Polling in the general election has narrowed.
- In the lead-up to elections, China has been utilizing economic, military, and cyber coercion to increase support for opposition parties.[16]
- In the event the incumbent party wins, expect a short-term increase in Chinese military maneuvers near Taiwan.

Forward Look:

- Current Taiwanese Vice President Lai Ching-te of the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) holds a narrow lead in the polls for the January 13, 2024, general elections. In the last month, the opposition Kuomintang (KMT) party has closed the gap to a few percentage points after failing to agree to a coalition with the Taiwan People's Party (TPP).[17] If the two united behind one candidate, they would likely easily win the election. Of the three, the DPP is the most anti-China and openly advocates for a more independent Taiwan, although does not outright call for independence. Neither the KMT nor the TPP call for reunification with China, but they do advocate for closer relations—especially on economic grounds. Overwhelming support for the opposition parties shows the primary electoral issue is the economy as opposed to concerns over China. This could be reflected in a more divided parliament, where the opposition is likely to gain a majority.
- If the failure of the opposition to unite means that the DPP wins a second term, it will coincide with marginally-worsening relations with mainland China and marginally-improving relations with the United States. In the event of a DPP victory, expect China to respond with naval maneuvers and airspace intrusions. However, an invasion of Taiwan by China remains extremely unlikely in the short term. Expect an increase in U.S. military aid, particularly for Taiwan's aging air force.
- An opposition victory would likely see a reduction in tensions between mainland China and Taiwan and potentially reduce Taiwan-U.S. ties. Less tension between mainland China and Taiwan would improve revenues for Taiwanese semiconductor companies that rely on China for the bulk of their revenues. Expect China to celebrate a KMT victory, but KMT leadership will likely disappoint China. Improved relations with China will likely be minimal in the short term.
- A DPP victory likely means that Taiwan will continue to abide by U.S. technology restrictions on what can be sold to China, which will impact the revenues of some of the world's largest tech companies that rely on Taiwanese semiconductors to power their products.
- China will likely continue its efforts to influence the election by highlighting that tensions with Taiwan will worsen with a DPP victory. This will likely take the form of disinformation campaigns, military drills that encroach on Taiwanese territory, potential cyberattacks, and economic coercion.
- China is increasingly concerned with the deteriorating relations it has with its neighbors, who have grown closer to the United States in the last year. This applies to China's neighbors, South Korea and Japan, which have resumed diplomatic ties after decades in 2023, as well as the Philippines, which has also established closer U.S. military ties since 2022. China is eager to reverse this trend but—given the geopolitical victories the United States has secured across the region at China's expense, alongside China's own economic crisis—is likely to utilize cyberattacks to influence the region rather than economic or military retaliation.

FOOTNOTES

[14] <https://www.africanews.com/2023/12/13/dakar-court-to-rule-on-ousmane-sonko-eligibility-on-december-14/>

[15] <https://www.lopinion.fr/international/dans-la-tete-de-iyad-ag-ghali-le-ben-laden-du-sahel>

[16] <https://www.msn.com/en-gb/news/world/china-threatens-more-trade-sanctions-on-taiwan-as-election-nears/ar-AAIm6bfi>

[17] <https://www.taiwannews.com.tw/en/news/5065802>



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Bangladesh Elections

- Bangladesh will hold national elections to select a new parliament on January 7, 2024. The ruling Awami League party (AL), led by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, is heavily favored to triumph amid an election boycott by the political opposition led by the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP).
- The BNP and its allies accuse Prime Minister Hasina of using imprisonment and censorship to oppress critics of the government. The BNP claims police have arrested over 21,000 of its members, including its entire leadership, since a political rally turned violent on October 28, 2023.[18]
- The BNP has led a months-long series of protests calling on the AL to step down so that a neutral caretaker government can oversee the elections. These protests have caused significant disruptions including clashes with police, traffic blockades, and nearly 300 arson attacks on vehicles.
- The United States and other Western countries have urged Bangladesh to conduct a free and fair election and have threatened diplomatic repercussions for any officials found to be influencing the election toward any particular candidates.

Forward Look:

- The BNP will continue holding disruptive protests up until the election and potentially afterward. These may include large rallies and road, rail, and waterway blockades. Scattered arson attacks during these actions are likely.
- A victory for the AL would herald Prime Minister Hasina's fifth term as premier. Opponents accuse her and her government of democratic backsliding.

Guatemala Transfer of Power

- President-elect Bernardo Arevalo is due to assume power on January 14, 2023.[19]
- Since Arevalo's surprise win in the June first round election, incumbent prosecutors and politicians have attempted overturn the results

Forward Look:

- In December 2023, Guatemala's electoral commission rejected the latest attempt by the Attorney General's office to nullify the results of the first round of the general elections. Prosecutors argue that President-elect Bernardo Arevalo's Semilla Movement political party was improperly registered, and therefore the first-round electoral win in June 2023 should be nullified. Arevalo then went on to easily win the second-round vote in August 2023.
- Ahead of the vote, numerous anti-corruption candidates, like Arevalo, were disqualified from participating in the election. Critics argue Arevalo was only allowed to participate because the ruling government of President Alejandro Giammattei did not view him as a threat. Prosecutors attempted to deny Arevalo a victory after the surprise win in June and continue to do so. International election observers have called the actions an attempted coup.
- There have been widespread protests across the country against the actions of prosecutors, which are likely to resurface ahead of the inauguration. Further efforts by the political status quo in places like Congress and the Attorney General's office to disrupt the anti-corruption reforms proposed by Arevalo are likely. These could also prompt social unrest.

Israel-Hamas War Update

- Since the collapse of a week-long ceasefire on December 1, 2023, Israel has increased the intensity of its offensive operations in the Gaza Strip.[20][21] According to Israeli Defense Force (IDF) officials, Israeli troops control most of the northern portion of the enclave, including central Gaza City.[22] Meanwhile, combat has picked up in the south, including in and around Khan Yunis, Gaza's second-largest city. Amid the fighting, the Palestinian deaths reportedly surpassed 21,000, while Israeli troop casualties reached 164 on December 27, 2023.[23][24]
- As the Israeli offensive extends into its second month, senior officials such as Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Defense Minister Yoav Gallant stressed that the war is likely to continue for several more weeks or months, and anyone who believes differently is "unmoored from reality." [25] In this context, Israeli forces have yet to attain their stated objectives of capturing Hamas' senior leadership and dismantling the militant group, which many analysts believe is still able to field "thousands of fighters." [26]
- Deadly tit-for-tat clashes also resumed between Israeli forces and Hezbollah, with Israeli officials warning that if the group's forces are not pushed several miles from the border, the conflict there could expand into all-out war.[27]

Forward Look:

- Taking into account the recent statements made by senior Israeli officials and the IDF's failure thus far to destroy Hamas, the war should be expected to continue in the near- to medium-term. However, given the increasingly-high casualties suffered by Palestinian civilians, international support (crucially, that from the United States) may begin to waver, forcing an easing of hostilities.
- Prime Minister Netanyahu may also be motivated to extend the conflict as long as possible by recent surveys showing that approximately 70 percent of the country is in favor of fresh elections immediately following the war.[28] Polling suggests that in any such vote, Netanyahu and his coalition would be easily defeated by the opposition, leaving him to face an ongoing criminal trial while out of power.[29]
- Ongoing hostage talks could lead to a ceasefire in the coming weeks, in large part due to concerted domestic pressure on the Israeli government to secure the release of the approximately 130 hostages that remain in the Gaza Strip.[30] However, any truce will almost certainly only be a temporary respite from the fighting, similar to the last agreement.
- A leaked draft decision indicated that the Supreme Court of Israel is set to overturn the "Reasonableness Law," the most significant and controversial portion of the government's attempt to reform the country's judicial system. Any such decision may trigger unrest among right-wing activists, who have demonstrated in defense of the bill in the past.[31]

FOOTNOTES

- [18] <https://www.voanews.com/a/six-bangladesh-opposition-activists-die-in-custody/7404479.html>
- [19] <https://elpais.com/americas/2023-12-08/un-fiscal-sugiere-anular-las-elecciones-en-guatemala>
- [20] <https://www.axios.com/2023/12/01/gaza-ceasefire-collapse-israel-hostages>
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ZeroFox Intelligence

Geopolitical Brief for January 2024



TLP: CLEAR B-2023-12-29a

APPENDIX A:

ZeroFox Intelligence Probability Scale

All ZeroFox Intelligence products leverage probabilistic assessment language in analytic judgments. Qualitative statements used in these judgments refer to associated probability ranges, which state the likelihood of the occurrence of an event or development. Ranges are used to avoid a false impression of accuracy. This scale is a standard that aligns how readers should interpret such terms.

Almost No Chance	Very Unlikely	Unlikely	Roughly Even Chance	Likely	Very Likely	Almost Certain
1-5%	5-20%	20-45%	45-55%	55-80%	80-95%	95-99%

APPENDIX B:

Traffic Light Protocol for Information Dissemination

TLP: RED

HOW IT IS USED

Sources may use **TLP: RED** when information cannot be effectively acted upon by additional parties and could lead to impacts on a party's privacy, reputation, or operations if misused.

HOW IT IS SHARED

Recipients may NOT share **TLP: RED** with any parties outside of the specific exchange, meeting, or conversation in which it is originally disclosed.

TLP: GREEN

HOW IT IS USED

Sources may use **TLP: GREEN** when information is useful for the awareness of all participating organizations, as well as with peers within the broader community or sector.

HOW IT IS SHARED

Recipients may share **TLP: GREEN** information with peers and partner organizations within their sector or community but not via publicly accessible channels.

TLP: AMBER

HOW IT IS USED

Sources may use **TLP: AMBER** when information requires support to be effectively acted upon but carries risks to privacy, reputation, or operations if shared outside of the organizations involved.

HOW IT IS SHARED

Recipients may ONLY share **TLP: AMBER** information with members of their own organization and its clients, but only on a need-to-know basis to protect their organization and its clients and prevent further harm.

Note that
TLP: AMBER + STRICT restricts sharing to the organization only.

TLP: CLEAR

HOW IT IS USED

Sources may use **TLP: CLEAR** when information carries minimal or no risk of misuse in accordance with applicable rules and procedures for public release.

HOW IT IS SHARED

Recipients may share **TLP: CLEAR** information without restriction, subject to copyright controls.

About ZeroFox

ZeroFox (Nasdaq: ZFOX), an enterprise software-as-a-service leader in external cybersecurity, has redefined security outside the corporate perimeter on the internet, where businesses operate and threat actors thrive. The ZeroFox platform combines advanced AI analytics, digital risk and privacy protection, full-spectrum threat intelligence, and a robust portfolio of breach, incident, and takedown response capabilities to expose and disrupt phishing and fraud campaigns, botnet exposures, credential theft, impersonations, data breaches, and physical threats that target your brands, domains, people, and assets. Join thousands of customers—including some of the largest public-sector organizations, as well as finance, media, technology, and retail companies—to stay ahead of adversaries and address the entire lifecycle of external cyber risks.

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