



| Assessment |

Monthly Geopolitical Report: October 2026

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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 1:50 PM (EDT) on October 1, 2026; per cyber hygiene best practices, caution is advised when clicking on any third-party links.¹

Assessment | Monthly Geopolitical Report: October 2026

Key Findings

- The United States will likely maintain its focus on economic tactics to secure Iranian concessions. Iran will likely respond to U.S. economic pressure with military escalation. Therefore, a prolonged period of occasional escalation by both sides, marked by economic pressure to induce concessions, is likely.
- Middle Eastern oil shipments have increased to 80 percent of their pre-war levels, despite continued threats to shipping in both the Red Sea and the Strait of Hormuz (SoH). Moreover, Iranian oil shipments through the SoH have completely ceased. This combination very likely signals that the United States is weakening Iran's ability to control the SoH and is therefore unlikely to accept Iranian demands over SoH control. Oil prices have nevertheless remained high, likely driven by an expectation that Iran will further escalate its attacks on the energy sector in response to U.S. success in moving oil through the strait.
- The past two months have marked an escalation in Russian hybrid activity, particularly against defense and dual civilian-military logistics infrastructure in Eastern Europe. If Ukraine's tactics continue to succeed, Russia will likely escalate its hybrid attacks throughout Europe to asymmetrically pressure Ukraine's partners.
- In Brazil's elections, a victory for opposition candidate Bolsonaro will likely bring the country closer to U.S. policy when it comes to security, trade, and relations with China. A victory for

¹ Report Purpose: The purpose of this report is to provide monthly updates on significant geopolitical occurrences and logistics developments, as well as potential impacts to the global supply chain.



incumbent Lula da Silva will likely reignite the tensions with the United States over those issues

- The United States and China agreed to extend their existing trade truce by two months. The extension very likely reduces the immediate risk of renewed tariff escalation. However, the timing of the announcement and its shorter-than-anticipated duration very likely signal that little progress was made on key issues.

Middle East

Stasis in Middle East Fighting Likely Until U.S. Midterms

The conflicts in Yemen and Iran are unlikely to be resolved before the U.S. midterm elections. The United States will all but certainly maintain its focus on economic tactics to secure Iranian concessions and weaken support for the ruling government. Iranian leaders are reportedly planning to carry out widespread attacks in the event that the United States strikes Iranian targets.² Therefore, a prolonged period of occasional escalation by both sides, marked by economic pressure to induce concessions, is likely.

With the conflict largely frozen, Gulf states have resumed using the SoH to export oil. Around 13–14 million barrels of oil per day (bpd) are now transiting the strait, roughly 80 percent of the pre-war level.³ The increase is made possible by U.S. Navy escorts and more reliance on ship-to-ship transfers, which allow major shipping companies to pick up oil shipments without entering the SoH. While Gulf countries have boosted their exports, Iran remains unable to export any of its own oil due to the ongoing U.S. Navy blockade.⁴

- **SoH Control:** With the SoH approaching normal operations, the United States is unlikely to concede Iran's demand for recognition of its control over the waterway. Because SoH volumes continue to rise despite Iranian attacks, this leaves Iran with two options: de-escalation is the less likely one. The more likely path is escalation through other avenues to achieve the same aims—such as striking stationary targets like ports, pipelines, and oil fields in Gulf countries, which have largely been spared so far. For example, Houthis in Yemen have attacked Saudi vessels in the Red Sea, and Iraqi militias have targeted Saudi Arabia's East-West Pipeline, which serves as a SoH bypass.⁵ Oil prices will very likely remain high, likely driven by an expectation that Iran will further escalate its attacks on the energy sector in response to U.S. success in moving oil through the SoH.

² [hXXps://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/iran-readies-harder-retaliation-if-attacked-diplomacy-faces-long-odds-2026-10-01/](https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/iran-readies-harder-retaliation-if-attacked-diplomacy-faces-long-odds-2026-10-01/)

³ [hXXps://x.com/JavierBlas/status/2104554616008401344?s=46](https://x.com/JavierBlas/status/2104554616008401344?s=46)

⁴ [hXXps://x.com/JavierBlas/status/2103840379741032757](https://x.com/JavierBlas/status/2103840379741032757)

⁵ ZeroFox Weekly Global Supply Chain Risk Report, September 24, 2026



- **Looking Forward:** Both Iran and the United States likely view occasional escalation as part of the negotiation process and will likely continue to struggle to overcome key differences. This signals a prolonged period of partial confrontation during talks, with military pressure remaining a source of leverage that likely produces periods of military confrontation, economic coercion, and on-and-off negotiations. Even a new ceasefire would likely leave core issues unresolved, allowing for recurring conflict.
- **In Yemen:** Iran-aligned Houthis seized nearly all of Yemen's remaining Red Sea coastline from Saudi-backed government forces in September, almost certainly giving the Houthis the ability to challenge freedom of navigation in the Red Sea similar to Iran's tactics in the SoH. Iran will likely pressure the Houthis to utilize this leverage in the Red Sea to keep oil prices high, though the Houthis are unlikely to carry out this order unless they personally benefit.
 - Houthi actions are not directly coordinated by Iran but almost certainly benefit Iran by increasing energy prices and stretching military resources. Houthi advances will likely persist unless Saudi Arabia offers concessions or increases military support to retake Houthi-controlled parts of Yemen. This likely demonstrates the Houthis are not a dedicated Iranian proxy but, rather, an independent group pursuing its core interest of gaining recognition as the government of Yemen.

Opposition Favored in Israel's Upcoming General Election

On October 27, 2026, Israel will hold its first general election in almost four years. In the months leading up to the vote, polls have consistently shown Prime Minister (PM) Benjamin Netanyahu's coalition garnering less than the 61 seats needed to comprise a majority in the 120-seat Knesset and no clear path to forming a government. However, the opposition bloc, led by former Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) general Gadi Eisenkot, is also only projected to win between 50 and 55 seats. This would leave both blocs short of an absolute majority.⁶⁷

Nonetheless, Eisenkot's party, Yashar, is currently projected to edge out Likud as the Knesset's largest vote-getter. By tradition, the President of Israel (currently Isaac Herzog) nominates the leader of the largest faction to form a government—meaning it is likely that Eisenkot will have an opportunity to form and lead a coalition.⁸

- **Government Formation:** Given his likely lack of a majority, this leaves Eisenkot with two main options.

⁶ [hXXps://www.economist\[.\]com/interactive/2026-israel-election-tracker](https://www.economist.com/interactive/2026-israel-election-tracker)

⁷ [hXXps://www.haaretz\[.\]com/israel-news/elections/2026-06-29/ty-article-static/israel-2026-election-poll-tracker-the-latest-projections/0000019e-35f6-d813-adde-77fe823d0000](https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/elections/2026-06-29/ty-article-static/israel-2026-election-poll-tracker-the-latest-projections/0000019e-35f6-d813-adde-77fe823d0000)

⁸ [hXXps://en.idi\[.\]org\[.\]il/articles/63976](https://en.idi[.]org[.]il/articles/63976)



- The first is a minority government, which Israeli law allows.⁹ In this case, an Eisenkot government would likely depend on the “external support” of the so-called “Arab parties” (Hadash, Balad and Ta’al, and Ra’am), whereby these groups largely vote with the proposed government but do not formally join or occupy ministerial offices.¹⁰
- The second option involves a coalition with only the Ra’am party. Hadash and Balad and Ta’al will form an electoral faction called the Joint List, and Ra’am would remain outside it, a move almost certainly designed to make the party more palatable for a governing coalition.¹¹ Therefore, if a combination of votes for Ra’am and the other main opposition parties reaches 61 or more seats, there is a roughly even chance that Ra’am would be brought into a majority government.
- **Looking Forward:** If Eisenkot is able to form a government—minority or majority—he has stressed the need to rebuild Israel’s relationship with the United States, indicating that an Israeli military under his command is unlikely to undertake unilateral actions that would expand the conflict in the Middle East, including against Iran.¹² However, this does not mean that Israel will immediately proceed with agreements to end the war in Gaza, as well as withdraw from parts of Lebanon and Syria. The ongoing military operations in these areas remain broadly popular with the Israeli public—in particular, the continuation of “buffer zones” adjacent to Hamas and Hezbollah-controlled territories.¹³¹⁴¹⁵ Still, Eisenkot has spoken out against Netanyahu’s “forever wars”¹⁶ and is likely to attempt to slowly bring a more permanent end to Israel’s ongoing conflicts.

| Europe

Russian Hybrid Warfare Against Europe Likely to Escalate Through 2027

The past two months have marked an escalation in Russian hybrid activity, particularly against defense and dual civilian-military logistics infrastructure. The Baltic states and Poland have historically faced the brunt of Russian hybrid attacks and have experienced a sharp increase in their pace and directness since August.

⁹ [hXXps://en.idi.org.il/articles/34264](https://en.idi.org.il/articles/34264)

¹⁰ [hXXps://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/2019-10-31/ty-article/.premium/lieberman-goes-after-arab-joint-list-the-y-are-a-fifth-column/0000017f-f8b3-d887-a7ff-f8f7fb40000](https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/2019-10-31/ty-article/.premium/lieberman-goes-after-arab-joint-list-the-y-are-a-fifth-column/0000017f-f8b3-d887-a7ff-f8f7fb40000)

¹¹ [hXXps://www.nytimes.com/2026/08/31/world/middleeast/israel-raam-recruits-zionist.html](https://www.nytimes.com/2026/08/31/world/middleeast/israel-raam-recruits-zionist.html)

¹² [hXXps://www.jpost.com/israel-election-2026/article-909543](https://www.jpost.com/israel-election-2026/article-909543)

¹³ [hXXps://en.idi.org.il/articles/64918](https://en.idi.org.il/articles/64918)

¹⁴ [hXXps://www.inss.org.il/publication/inss-survey-may-2026/](https://www.inss.org.il/publication/inss-survey-may-2026/)

¹⁵ [hXXps://jcf.org/most-israelis-say-security-must-precede-territorial-withdrawal-and-that-buffer-zones-are-vital-for-defense/](https://jcf.org/most-israelis-say-security-must-precede-territorial-withdrawal-and-that-buffer-zones-are-vital-for-defense/)

¹⁶ [hXXps://www.timesofisrael.com/liveblog_entry/eisenkot-calls-netanyahu-a-pathological-liar-engaged-in-a-forever-war-as-a-tool-for-political-survival/](https://www.timesofisrael.com/liveblog_entry/eisenkot-calls-netanyahu-a-pathological-liar-engaged-in-a-forever-war-as-a-tool-for-political-survival/)



- On September 15, North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) forces shot down a suspected Russian drone carrying explosives after it entered Lithuanian airspace.¹⁷ This followed an August 14 incident in which NATO forces downed a likely Russian drone over Latvian airspace.¹⁸
- On August 15, a fire broke out at Estonian defense contractor Milrem Robotics. Estonian officials arrested three Latvian nationals suspected of setting the blaze.¹⁹
- Beginning in August 2026, Poland has faced sustained hybrid warfare across multiple fronts. Polish forces have intercepted Russian military aircraft near Poland's Baltic coast on a near-weekly basis, and a fire destroyed a facility at Polish drone manufacturer WB Electronics on August 31.²⁰

Other incidents include a September 13 drone strike on a passenger train in Ukraine near the Polish border carrying high-profile dignitaries, including former UK PM Boris Johnson, former Swedish PM Carl Bildt, and former CIA Director David Petraeus.²¹ Most significantly, German authorities discovered an explosives-laden drone near a Ukrainian cargo aircraft at Leipzig/Halle Airport,²² leading Germany to publicly attribute the incident to Russia, while the other incidents go unattributed.²³

- **Inspiration:** Ukrainian military successes against Russia are likely triggering further Russian attempts to undermine European support for Ukraine. Ukraine has increasingly targeted key Russian economic sectors, which has almost certainly successfully curtailed Russia's oil refining capacity and ability to export grain. Ukraine will likely need to continue making progress in its long-strike campaign. Russia will likely try to reverse Ukrainian gains by taking advantage of Ukraine's lack of missile defenses and escalating its hybrid warfare campaign to weaken European support for Ukraine.
- **Hybrid Warfare:** As Ukraine's recent tactics continue to succeed and dictate the pace of the conflict, Russia will likely escalate its hybrid attacks throughout Europe to asymmetrically pressure Ukraine's partners. These attacks are also likely to become more brazen as Russia seeks to better-probe NATO defenses and test the alliance's threshold to respond. In recent years, many incidents considered "likely" hybrid attacks have lacked indicators authoritatively suggesting Russian involvement, providing Russia some level of

¹⁷ [hXXps://www.npr\[.\]org/2026/09/15/g-s1-143284/nato-jets-down-drone-in-lithuanian-airspace](https://www.npr.org/2026/09/15/g-s1-143284/nato-jets-down-drone-in-lithuanian-airspace)

¹⁸ [hXXps://www.cnbc\[.\]com/2026/08/14/nato-drone-latvia.html](https://www.cnbc.com/2026/08/14/nato-drone-latvia.html)

¹⁹ [hXXps://news.err\[.\]ee/1610114578/3-suspects-detained-over-suspected-arson-at-milrem-robotics-factory-in-estonia](https://news.err.ee/1610114578/3-suspects-detained-over-suspected-arson-at-milrem-robotics-factory-in-estonia)

²⁰ [hXXps://x\[.\]com/DowOpersSZ/status/2102723364439679215](https://x.com/DowOpersSZ/status/2102723364439679215)

²¹ [hXXps://thehill\[.\]com/policy/international/6088221-petraeus-johnson-evacuate-ukraine/](https://thehill.com/policy/international/6088221-petraeus-johnson-evacuate-ukraine/)

²² ZeroFox Intelligence Flash Report: European Intelligence Seeks Broader Authority to Defend Against Russian Hybrid Warfare, August 14, 2026

²³ [hXXps://www.bbc\[.\]com/news/articles/c5ylm3m67n2o](https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/c5ylm3m67n2o)



plausible deniability. However, over the past year, increasingly dangerous examples of Russian hybrid warfare have more often occurred in plain sight.

- **Looking Forward:** Having failed to take more than 20 percent of Ukrainian territory after almost five years of fighting,²⁴ Russia likely views curtailing European aid to Ukraine as critical to reversing the war's trajectory—particularly as U.S. aid has already declined. Expect a continued stream of drones entering European airspace near transportation or critical infrastructure, along with strategic sabotage and cyberattacks carried out by Russian-aligned groups. Countries physically bordering Russia and those that have staunchly supported Ukraine likely face the highest risk of Russian hybrid warfare, including Poland, the Baltics, Romania, Germany, France, and the United Kingdom.
 - Russia is likely using acts of sabotage in strategic areas because it does not have the resources to challenge NATO militarily. The sabotage of critical infrastructure and repeated drone incursions likely serve to weaken European resolve to back Ukraine, with states suffering attacks likely reconsidering their support for Ukraine after facing domestic unrest from citizens concerned about the impacts. Further, it is a near certainty the attacks are harming Europe economically. Critics of Western support for Ukraine have frequently cited rising energy costs and an overall elevated cost of living attributed to the war, and repeated attacks by Russian-backed groups are likely to worsen these issues.

Serbia Elections and Likely Romanian Ones in October 2027

On September 27, 2026, Serbian President Aleksandar Vučić announced his resignation, ending his second and final five-year presidential term seven months early and paving the way for early presidential elections. The move comes ahead of Serbia's October 25 snap parliamentary elections; the timing allows Vučić to seek the PM post and shift from the presidency back into direct government leadership if his Serbian Progressive Party secures control of the next parliament. It also keeps the October election centered on his political authority.²⁵

On September 30, 2026, Romanian PM-designate Siegfried Mureșan failed to secure a parliamentary confidence vote, almost certainly prolonging Romania's political crisis. The vote followed President Nicușor Dan's September 17 nomination of Mureșan, a Liberal European Parliament member, after previous attempts to form a government also failed.²⁶ The outcome leaves Romania under continued caretaker governance and almost certainly adds further pressure to the country's fiscal reform agenda, access to European Union (EU) funding, and investor confidence.

²⁴ ZeroFox Geopolitical Forecast 2026 Assessment, December 18, 2025

²⁵ [hXXps://www.reuters.com/world/europe/serbias-president-vucic-resigns-paving-way-early-elections-2026-09-27/](https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/serbias-president-vucic-resigns-paving-way-early-elections-2026-09-27/)

²⁶ [hXXps://www.reuters.com/world/romanian-pm-designate-muresan-loses-confidence-vote-2026-09-30/](https://www.reuters.com/world/romanian-pm-designate-muresan-loses-confidence-vote-2026-09-30/)



- **Serbia:** Vučić's resignation follows months of political pressure tied to student-led anti-government and anti-corruption protests, which began after the November 2024 Novi Sad railway station canopy collapse that killed 16 people.²⁷ Under Serbia's succession process, outgoing Parliament Speaker Ana Brnabić is expected to serve as interim president until a new president is elected. Vučić said the first round of the presidential election would be held by the end of December.²⁸ The election is very likely a risk for Vučić, as the new Student List opposition party has gained ground despite having no obvious political leader.
- **Romania:** The failed confidence vote leaves Dan with narrowing options: broker a broader parliamentary compromise or move towards the constitutional path for early elections, with polling suggesting an opposition victory. In the near term, the deadlock is likely to delay fiscal and reform decisions while delaying EU funding access and broader economic stability.

Americas

Brazil 2026 Presidential Election on October 4 and 25

Brazil's presidential election is set for a first round on October 4, with a runoff on October 25 if no candidate obtains more than 50 percent of the vote. A second-round vote is expected and will almost certainly be a rematch-style contest between incumbent President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, seeking an unprecedented fourth term, and Senator Flávio Bolsonaro (PL), son of imprisoned former President Jair Bolsonaro (who lost to Lula in the last election). The former president is ineligible to run after being imprisoned for allegedly plotting a coup during Lula's most recent inauguration.²⁹

Lula has consistently led polls against Bolsonaro, but recent polling has put his lead within the margin of error.³⁰ Lula's polling lead is likely explained by Bolsonaro's close ties to President Trump. In 2025, the U.S. Commerce Department initially imposed 50 percent tariffs on Brazilian exports, despite the United States having a trade surplus with Brazil, because of legal proceedings against Jair Bolsonaro. Subsequent tariffs have similarly been attributed to Bolsonaro's close ties with the Trump administration. Expect further polling shifts after the first round, when voters will have only the two candidates to choose between.

²⁷ [hXXps://www.bbc\[.\]com/news/articles/ckgk841r4eo](https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/ckgk841r4eo)

²⁸ [hXXps://www.thetimes\[.\]com/world/europe/article/serbian-leader-aleksandar-vucic-election-gamble-6wmpsp3fl](https://www.thetimes[.]com/world/europe/article/serbian-leader-aleksandar-vucic-election-gamble-6wmpsp3fl)

²⁹ [hXXps://www.as-coa\[.\]org/articles/poll-tracker-brazils-2026-presidential-election](https://www.as-coa[.]org/articles/poll-tracker-brazils-2026-presidential-election)

³⁰ [hXXps://www.aljazeera\[.\]com/news/2026/8/15/lula-holds-slim-lead-over-flavio-bolsonaro-ahead-of-brazil-election](https://www.aljazeera[.]com/news/2026/8/15/lula-holds-slim-lead-over-flavio-bolsonaro-ahead-of-brazil-election)



- **Economy:** Brazil's economy has almost certainly slowed since the tariffs were imposed, and international investors very likely prefer a Bolsonaro administration, which has campaigned on reducing taxes, lowering government spending, and improving ties with the United States. Brazil's stock market has largely declined as polls anticipate a Lula victory, and economic conditions are likely the leading reason Bolsonaro remains in contention.
- **U.S. Ties:** Since Trump's re-election, the United States has redirected military and economic resources towards establishing a secure foothold in Latin America, countering Chinese influence in the region, and tackling narco trafficking and immigration priorities. The shifting U.S. focus towards Latin America has also coincided with U.S. support for politicians that value these initiatives, particularly those political leaders focused on addressing crime and security concerns.³¹ Since Trump took office for the second time, the region has seen the election of U.S.-friendly leadership in Chile, Peru, and Colombia, while Argentina has become a key strategic ally to the United States. Within this context, a Bolsonaro victory would almost certainly validate the Trump administration's current policy approach, whereas a Lula victory would likely create significant friction in U.S.-Brazil relations.
- **Protests and Social Unrest:** The current Brazilian election cycle has avoided the street protests and violence that characterized the previous election. Before the last vote, Jair Bolsonaro organized protests challenging election integrity, which culminated in the January 1, 2023, attempt to overturn Lula's victory.³² Jair's imprisonment and the Brazilian public's largely negative reaction likely explain the absence of protests led by Bolsonaro this cycle. However, Lula is known for his ability to mobilize widespread street protests. Such demonstrations are likely to emerge as the election approaches, particularly if poll margins remain narrow.

| Asia

U.S.-China Trade Truce Expires in January 2027

On September 23, 2026, U.S. Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent announced that the United States and China agreed to extend their existing trade truce by two months, moving its expiration from November 10 to January 10. The announcement preceded a planned summit between Chinese President Xi Jinping and U.S. President Donald Trump by one day.³³

³¹ ZeroFox Geopolitical Forecast Assessment 2026, December 18, 2025

³² [hXXps://acleddata.com/report/political-violence-during-brazils-2022-general-elections](https://acleddata.com/report/political-violence-during-brazils-2022-general-elections)

³³ [hXXps://www.cnn.com/2026/09/24/us-china-trade-truce-bessent-trump-xi.html](https://www.cnn.com/2026/09/24/us-china-trade-truce-bessent-trump-xi.html)



The extension very likely reduces the immediate risk of renewed tariff escalation. However, the timing of the announcement, coming before the summit and covering a shorter period than even pessimistic estimates suggested (three to six months), very likely signals how little progress was made on key issues involving critical minerals export controls, advanced technology, Taiwan, and tariffs. The United States was likely looking for Chinese concessions on the first two items, while China was likely looking for concessions on the latter two items—none of which occurred. Yet the extension itself very likely reflects a mutual desire to avoid a repeat of 2025, when U.S. tariffs on Chinese goods exceeded 100 percent and China imposed strict export controls on critical minerals. In essence, the two sides agreed to extend talks, despite agreeing on very little.

- **Inter-Dependencies:** This is likely a reflection of the economic dependencies each country has on the other. With the exception of its export data, most other Chinese economic indicators are in contraction. In other words, were it not for record-breaking international sales, China's economy would be in a far worse place. Therefore, China is unlikely to threaten its export-dependent economy by encouraging higher U.S. tariffs, and the United States is unlikely to raise tariffs to a level that would see China retaliate by curtailing the critical minerals exports on which U.S. industries rely.
- **Forward Look:** Additional opportunities to negotiate before the January 2027 expiration likely exist. The United States will host the Group of 20 summit in Miami in December, with both Xi and Trump expected to attend, providing the most likely venue for further engagement. Before that, China will host the Asian-Pacific Economic Cooperation conference in November, which President Trump reportedly plans to attend.³⁴ The fact that the trade truce was extended beyond those two summits makes it less likely a deal will be announced at them; it is more likely the leaders will attend those summits for further discussion opportunities.
 - During these periods, China will likely push for further concessions on U.S. support for Taiwan and on reducing tariffs, while the United States will likely want firmer commitments from China on reducing export controls for critical minerals and more evidence of U.S. agricultural purchases from China. An agreement on advanced technology, such as artificial intelligence (AI) development and Chinese overmanufacturing of technology products, is very unlikely; those topics likely remain the primary risk to the trade deal collapsing over the long term.
- **EU-China Trade Summit in Mid-October:** The EU and China very likely have similar trade concerns as the United States and China do. The EU is almost certainly apprehensive about the impact of cheaper Chinese imports, while China is very likely focused on potential trade restrictions that harm its ability to export. The two sides have set a deadline of October 15 to resolve their ongoing trade disputes.³⁵

³⁴ [hXXps://www.cnn\[.\]com/2026/09/24/politics/live-news/trump-meeting-china-xi-us-visit](https://www.cnn.com/2026/09/24/politics/live-news/trump-meeting-china-xi-us-visit)

³⁵ [hXXps://www.politico\[.\]eu/article/eu-china-dialogue-trade-war/](https://www.politico.eu/article/eu-china-dialogue-trade-war/)



- In recent years, the EU has struggled to maintain a unified response. China has effectively countered potential tariff measures by selectively targeting individual EU member-states that maintain trading relationships with China, thereby preventing the unanimity required for stronger action.
- China is likely to resist limitations on its exports and respond with retaliatory measures against key European industries, such as pork, wine, and luxury goods. Furthermore, China will likely impose selective export curbs on critical minerals essential for European manufacturing. EU leaders have proposed legislation requiring companies to diversify their sources of rare-earth elements and other strategic raw materials, but that will likely take years; China's leverage on the issue will almost certainly remain.³⁶
- Because Chinese export restrictions have almost certainly been used to compel the United States to escalate its trade war with China, the EU is unlikely to undertake the measures that would reverse its trade deficit with China. Smaller concessions done sectorally are more likely in the short term.

Africa

Ethiopia: Civil War Will Likely Restart in October 2026

On September 24, 2026, violence erupted between the newly formed Alliance for Survival (AFS) rebel group and the Ethiopian government across at least three northern regions. AFS claimed it responded to incursions by Ethiopian troops in Tigray, Afar, and Amhara and reportedly seized at least three airports. Since then, rebels have claimed to have captured cities and towns across northeastern Ethiopia, while attacks have been reported in the capital of Addis Ababa.³⁷

AFS is a seven-member rebel alliance and reportedly comprises the Tigray Liberation Front (TPLF), Fano militia from Amhara, the Oromo Liberation Army (OLA), and four smaller armed groups.³⁸ Before the official formation of the alliance in late September, sporadic fighting in the Tigray, Oromo, and Amhara regions was reported in August.³⁹ However, the latest escalation in fighting almost certainly means that Ethiopia will return to civil war, after relative peace since 2022.

- **Wider War:** Ethiopia only recently ended a civil war between the central government and the TPLF in 2022. The most recent fighting is very likely linked to grievances from that

³⁶ [hXXps://www.reuters.com/world/china/eu-propose-diversification-law-drive-de-risking-china-2026-06-19/](https://www.reuters.com/world/china/eu-propose-diversification-law-drive-de-risking-china-2026-06-19/)

³⁷ [hXXps://www.bbc.com/news/articles/c3vgygpqky9zo](https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/c3vgygpqky9zo)

³⁸ [hXXps://www.cnbc.com/2026/seven-ethiopian-armed-groups-announce-anti-government-alliance](https://www.cnbc.com/2026/seven-ethiopian-armed-groups-announce-anti-government-alliance)

³⁹ [hXXps://acleddata.com/expert-comment/has-conflict-resumed-between-ethiopian-federal-government-and-tplf](https://acleddata.com/expert-comment/has-conflict-resumed-between-ethiopian-federal-government-and-tplf)



2020–2022 civil war, which cost Ethiopia an estimated USD 28 billion.⁴⁰ This time, the consequences will likely be more dire, and there are risks of a regional spread in violence. Ethiopia's western neighbor, Sudan, is also involved in a violent civil war, with reports of both Ethiopian and Tigrayan forces fighting on opposite sides. If uncontrollable violence erupts in Ethiopia, it would likely have serious economic impacts across the region bringing in foreign powers such as the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Turkey, Saudi Arabia, and Egypt, which have been battling for influence in the vital Red Sea and Horn of Africa area.⁴¹

- **Regionalization:** Ethiopia has several large regions, and the Tigray region is known for its battle-hardened local militias that dominated Ethiopian politics for decades until the election of PM Abiy Ahmed in 2018. Several PMs have sought to gain more authority for the central government over the extent of state rights, an issue that likely provoked the initial war. The central government managed to win the war only after foreign intervention helped reverse gains made by the TPLF, who nearly took the capital, Addis Ababa.⁴² The confluence of regions fighting alongside each other against the government likely signals dissatisfaction with the central government's efforts to consolidate power. TPLF likely seeks to regain lost territory and power from the civil war, while the other rebel groups similarly resist the central government's efforts to assert control over Ethiopia's powerful regional governments.

⁴⁰ [hXXps://www.ft\[.\]com/content/cdd73748-58f3-41d4-add1-cd563372c6de](https://www.ft.com/content/cdd73748-58f3-41d4-add1-cd563372c6de)

⁴¹ [hXXps://www.bbc\[.\]com/news/articles/cwygrnjz9wro](https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/cwygrnjz9wro)

⁴² [hXXps://www.cfr\[.\]org/global-conflict-tracker/conflict/conflict-ethiopia](https://www.cfr.org/global-conflict-tracker/conflict/conflict-ethiopia)



Appendix A: Traffic Light Protocol for Information Dissemination

	Red	Amber
WHEN SHOULD IT BE 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.	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 MAY IT BE SHARED?	Recipients may NOT share TLP:RED with any parties outside of the specific exchange, meeting, or conversation in which it is originally disclosed.	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.
	Green	Clear
WHEN SHOULD IT BE 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.	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 MAY IT BE SHARED?	Recipients may share TLP:GREEN information with peers and partner organizations within their sector or community but not via publicly accessible channels.	Recipients may share TLP:CLEAR information without restriction, subject to copyright controls.



Appendix B: 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 occurrence of an event or development. Ranges are used to avoid a false impression of accuracy. This scale is a standard that aligns with 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%

