

The title 'GRB' is displayed in large, bold, white, sans-serif capital letters on an orange background. The background of the entire page is a photograph of a sunset or sunrise over an industrial facility, with silhouettes of buildings and structures against a sky of orange, red, and blue.The subtitle 'GLOBAL RISK BULLETIN' is displayed in white, sans-serif capital letters on the orange background, stacked in three lines: 'GLOBAL', 'RISK', and 'BULLETIN'.The text 'VOLUME 8 | 2023' is located at the bottom of the orange section in a smaller, white, sans-serif font.

WORLD NEWS IN BRIEF

1 Mali War/terrorism

On 1 October, the Coordination of Azawad Movements (CMA), a coalition of Tuareg and Arab nationalist groups, took control of the Bamba military base in Northern Mali's Gao Region. Despite signing the 2015 peace agreement with the government and pro-government militias, the CMA has initiated several attacks on military assets in northern Mali since August 2023, moving to fill the power vacuum following the withdrawal of UN peacekeeping forces. These dynamics drive the potential for rekindled conflict in the region, particularly if Jama'at Nasr al-Islam wal Muslimin, an Al Qaeda-affiliated Islamist militant group, leverages its ties with CMA leaders to extend control in areas nominally held by rebels.

2 Uganda Terrorism

On October 17, suspected Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) militants ambushed a vehicle in Queen Elizabeth National Park, Kasese District, killing three people, including a British and a South African national. This follows a similar ADF attack in the area on October 13, which killed two people. While the ADF primarily operates in eastern Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), they sporadically launch cross-border attacks into Uganda, including a June 2023 attack on a school near the Congolese border where 41 people were killed. Limited law enforcement capabilities have left border communities vulnerable to heightened ADF activity.

3 Colombia Terrorism

On 16 October, the Colombian government signed a three-month ceasefire agreement with a dissident faction of the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia (FARC), signalling the start of peace talks. Despite President Gustavo Petro's progress in negotiating with various militant groups, relations between militant factions and the Colombian government remain fragile and subject to rapid deterioration. In September and October, FARC militants launched several separate attacks against police stations and security installations in Cauca and Valle del

Cauca departments, resulting in multiple civilian casualties. Ongoing incidents will sustain tensions and distrust, threatening to derail the peace process in the coming months.

4 Belgium Terrorism

On 16 October, an armed assailant allegedly of Tunisian descent killed two people after opening fire on Swedish football supporters in Brussels. The assailant claimed on social media that he was inspired to carry out the attack by the Islamic State (IS) militant group. Security forces killed the attacker in a shootout in Schaerbeek on 17 October. Authorities briefly raised Belgium's terror alert to the highest level.

5 Ukraine War

On 17 October, Ukraine targeted Russian-controlled airfields in Berdiansk and Luhansk with US-supplied army tactical missile systems (ATACMS). The strikes destroyed nine Russian helicopters and other military equipment, reportedly marking one of the most destructive attacks on Russian targets during the current war. The use of ATACMS threatens Russian logistics, ammunition depots, and airfields in the occupied territory, previously believed to be out of reach for Ukrainian missile systems. Ukraine will likely rely on the use of ATACMS to offset their struggling counter-offensive in southern Ukraine before winter weather complicates further offensive operations.

6 Nagorno-Karabakh War

On 19 September, Azerbaijan launched an offensive in Nagorno-Karabakh, quickly capturing the territory and forcing local security personnel to disarm. Local authorities also agreed to disband by the end of 2023. While Armenia has not taken military action in response to the Azerbaijani offensive, tensions between the two countries will likely persist, particularly concerning Azerbaijan's ambition to link its territory to its autonomous Nakhchivan exclave, situated between Armenia, Turkey, and Iran.

7 Turkey Terrorism

On 1 October, two Partiya Karkerên Kurdistanê (PKK) militants detonated a bomb outside the interior ministry in Ankara. One attacker was killed, and two officers were injured, while security forces killed the second assailant. This was the first attack in the capital since 2016, prompting the government to launch airstrikes against dozens of PKK targets in northern Iraq and northeastern Syria. A ceasefire between the PKK and Turkey – implemented after the earthquakes in February 2023 – ended in June, and Turkey has since increased its attacks against the PKK in Iraq and Syria, launching hundreds of missiles and drones into each territory.

8 Syria Terrorism

On 5 October, an armed drone attack killed 89 people and injured 277 others at a Military College in Homs, shortly after a military graduation ceremony. No group claimed responsibility for the attack, although Syrian authorities have accused Jihadist opposition factions that retain control in some parts of Syria. This incident was the deadliest attack within government-held territory in recent years, since the government asserted control over the majority of Syrian territory in 2020. Regime forces subsequently launched airstrike and artillery attacks against opposition strongholds in Aleppo and Idlib governorates, which killed at least 41 civilians.

9 Australia Civil unrest

On 8 September, unionised workers went on strike at two major liquified natural gas (LNG) facilities in Gorgon and Wheatstone in Western Australia, demanding increased wages and improved working conditions. These facilities account for more than five percent of global LNG supply, and the labour dispute has prompted volatility in the global market, with gas prices increasing by up to 35 percent in August. The LNG company and unions reached a deal on 22 September, bringing the work stoppage to an end. While

the deal collapsed in early October, reviving the threat of renewed strike action at the two plants, another agreement was reached on 18 October, with unions finally calling off a strike scheduled to begin on 19 October.

10 United States Civil unrest

On 15 September, the United Auto Workers (UAW) union, representing over 146,000 automotive workers countrywide, initiated strikes against three major US auto producers, calling for improved wages and benefits, and for workers at the firms' electric vehicle battery plants to be included into the union. The dispute continued in October, manifesting as walk-outs and protests countrywide, causing ongoing commercial disruptions and an estimated USD 4.2 billion in losses for the affected automakers. The UAW and the car manufacturers reached a tentative deal on 30 October, signalling an end to the strike.

11 Global Unrest

Since Hamas's invasion into southern Israel on 7 October, protests have taken place globally in support of Israel and Palestine. Some pro-Palestine demonstrations have targeted US and other Western embassies and consulates, including in Lebanon, Malaysia, Indonesia, South Korea and South Africa. Thousands of pro-Palestine activists have also protested throughout the Middle East and elsewhere to denounce a rocket strike on a hospital in Gaza on 17 October, which killed hundreds of people. Meanwhile, protests in support of Israel have occurred in New York, London and Berlin, denouncing antisemitism and calling for the release of several hostages held by Hamas in Gaza. On 9 October, rival protesters scuffled near the United Nations compound in New York City following a pro-Palestinian rally in Times Square. Unrest will continue as the conflict and associated humanitarian consequences persist or intensify. GRB

FRIEND OR FOE

THE (OTHER) STAKEHOLDERS IN THE
ISRAEL-HAMAS CONFLICT

Hamas's attack on Israel on 7 October has deepened divisions throughout the Middle East, and raised concerns of a wider, regional conflict. **Tamsin Hunt investigates** how the main regional stakeholders in this conflict are likely to navigate this conflict in the coming months.

On 7 October, the Gaza-based militant group Hamas launched an unprecedented, coordinated attack on Israel. At least 1,400 people were killed in the country, triggering an Israeli retaliation on Gaza in which thousands more have died. Despite the ongoing and concentrated aerial bombardment of Gaza, this conflict is not limited to just Israel and Hamas. Many neighbouring countries have a stake in its outcome, from those that have long stood against Israel – like Iran – to those that have sought beneficial economic ties with Tel Aviv.

Steps towards rapprochement?

In the years leading up to the October attack, we saw Israel improving bilateral relations with several of its Arab neighbours. In September 2020, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Bahrain and Israel signed the ground-breaking Abraham Accords, the first deal signed between Israel and any Arab state in 26 years. The accords facilitated security cooperation between the signatories, boosted trade, and were later expanded to include Morocco and Sudan, raising hopes that the trend of rapprochement would spread through the region.

And just weeks before Hamas's incursion, a deal between Saudi Arabia and Israel seemed within reach for the first time. Mediated through Washington D.C., Saudi Arabia would see formalised ties with Israel pave the way for a critical defence pact with the US.

Yet the Abraham Accords, and recent Saudi-Israeli talks, had secured little in the way of addressing the Palestinian issue. For the UAE in particular, the formation of Israel's far-right-leaning coalition government in December 2022, and Israeli settler expansion in the West Bank, disrupted bilateral relations. Now, Hamas's attack has stopped the trend of improving relations in its tracks and the conflict in Gaza has thrown the Palestinian cause back into the international spotlight.

While the Accords are unlikely to break in the immediate term, a major escalation in violence will disrupt ties between Israel and its Arab neighbours, impeding any prospect of expanding the Accords in the coming years. And, as the conflict unfolds, it is increasingly evident that for each regional player, navigating an appropriate response is deeply embedded in unique historical, geographical and domestic factors far beyond their foreign policy position.

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Map of Israel in relation to the primary stakeholders in this conflict



Iran

Traditionally anti-US and strongly anti-Israel, Iran is one of the most influential players in this conflict. When Hamas attacked Israel, Iran responded with encouragement and (verbal) support. Some officials have even suggested that Iran was directly complicit in the 7 October attack, although the true extent of Iran's involvement remains subject to debate. That said, and although Iran is unlikely to risk direct involvement on behalf of Hamas as the conflict continues, many are watching whether long-time Iranian proxy, Hezbollah, will leverage this new conflict to push forward with Iran and its own interests in the region.

Increased Iranian support for Hezbollah could prove critical to establishing a new and complicating second front along Israel's border with Lebanon which would divide Israeli

forces. Meanwhile, the continued backing of Iran's various proxies across Syria, Iraq and Yemen will sustain ongoing agitation for US and Israeli regional interests. This could pave the way for increased Iranian aggression across its sphere of influence, threatening to disrupt maritime lanes in the Strait of Hormuz or Bab Al Mandab, and worsen existing insecurity in parts of the Middle East – even in the absence of direct Iranian involvement in the conflict.

Saudi Arabia

Saudi Arabia treads along one of the most delicate lines in the region. In recent years, the kingdom has pursued economic reforms aimed at diversifying its oil-based economy to adapt to the global energy transition; and introduced policies looking to attract foreign investment

and resolve long-standing conflicts in the region. In January 2021, for instance, Saudi Arabia ended its four-year blockade of Qatar; in early to mid-2023, it took steps to normalise relations with Iran and engaged in peace talks with Houthi rebels in Yemen; and just prior to the conflict, it came close to establishing formal diplomatic ties with Israel.

However, Hamas's aggression, as well as the deepening crisis in Gaza, has served to place the Palestinian cause at centre stage of regional security, making the option of renewed talks with Israel and cosying up to Israeli ally, the US, particularly complicated. When (or if) rapprochement talks resume, they will likely be accompanied by stronger Saudi demands for Israeli concessions for the Palestinian people, a solution US brokers will need to take seriously if still seeking a foreign policy win.

Qatar

Qatar also holds a unique position in this conflict. Qatar is a close ally of the US – it houses the United States Central Command (CENTCOM) for the region in Doha; is reportedly home to the political bureau of Hamas; and maintains close relations with Iran. Qatar has expertly managed this balancing act for years, and this places the country in a critical position at the negotiating table. Publicly, the presence of Hamas (and other militant groups) in Qatar causes concern among Western leaders, but it also creates opportunities for back-door dealing and negotiations that are not possible elsewhere. In past years, for example, Qatar has played an integral part in negotiating for prisoner swaps and hostage releases between the US and its rivals in Iraq, Syria, Afghanistan and Iran, and will likely do the same in negotiating for de-escalation and the release of the more than 200 hostages held in Gaza. Nevertheless, Qatar's efforts will be weighed down the longer the conflict goes on, and by the actions of its less savoury allies.

Egypt

Egypt is one of the regular mediators between Israel and Palestinian groups, and therefore plays a critical part in efforts to de-escalate conflicts – both past and present – between the opposing sides. Egypt falls ideologically on the Palestinian side, but it also maintains important economic and security ties with Israel and the US. The US provides key military aid and counterterrorism support for Egypt, allocating USD 1.3 billion per year in military and other aid, and bilateral trade agreements with Israel were expanded

as recently as March 2023. In addition, already struggling with a severe economic crisis, Egypt can ill afford a refugee emergency spilling over its shared border with Gaza. With this in mind, the conflict is unlikely to change Egypt's core position. Egypt may disapprove of Israel's actions if the humanitarian situation in Gaza worsens, but a scenario in which Egypt abandons its bilateral relationship with Israel – and by extension, the US – is unlikely.

Jordan

Jordan too, is a long-time arbitrator between Israel and Palestinians, and enjoys unparalleled influence in the West Bank due to its shared border. A staunch supporter of the Palestinian cause, Jordan's bilateral relations with Israel have always been tense, and further strained over the years by stalled bilateral projects and trade disagreements. Following the particularly deadly blast at the Al Ahli hospital in Gaza, in which hundreds of civilians were killed, Jordan cancelled an emergency summit between US President Joe Biden and Arab leaders, and called for three days of public mourning. Meanwhile, thousands of Jordanians have taken to the streets to protest Israel's actions in Gaza, clashing with police outside the Israeli embassy in Amman, and issuing calls to cross the border into the West Bank and join the fight. Nonetheless, Jordan and Israel share strong regional security interests, and Jordan retains a strong incentive to help prevent the conflict spreading to the West Bank and spilling over its borders. Consequently, its government will continue to work towards a ceasefire, while working to avoid an escalation that could encompass its own territory. As Israel's bombardment of Gaza continues, regional and international stakeholders grow wary of the ramifications for the Middle East and the world. Increasingly, the US – the unequivocal friend of Israel – must strike a balance between outward support for its ally and efforts to de-escalate and contain the conflict; a position made increasingly difficult the longer the fighting goes on. All the while anti-Israel – and anti-US – sentiment is on the rise, evidenced by the nationwide pro-Palestine protests that have targeted Israeli, US and other Western interests, as well as a spate of militant attacks targeting US troops stationed in Iraq and Syria. The 7 October attack and subsequent Israel-Hamas conflict are clear gamechangers in the state of play in the region, and with fighting continuing, it will be a while until a new status quo is clear in the Middle East. ^{GRB}

THE PEOPLE HAVE SPOKEN

Persisting threats to Arévalo's transition
to power in Guatemala

Despite Bernard Arévalo's landslide victory in the 2023 run-off elections in Guatemala, significant opposition from members of the country's political and economic elite have cast doubt on whether outgoing president Alejandro Giammattei will facilitate a smooth transition of power in January 2023. Continued politically motivated investigations by the attorney general and her prosecutors have prompted ongoing civil unrest and political instability, **writes Shannon Lorimer.**

While Guatemala has nominally been a democracy for over 30 years, extreme levels of state capture by elites has weakened the country's democratic institutions and driven civil unrest. Bernardo Arévalo's progressive, anti-corruption electoral campaign struck a chord with voters exasperated by widespread government corruption and impunity. This popular support for change catapulted him into the top two candidates for president in the June 2023 elections, and in August 2023, he won the run-off elections against former First Lady Sandra Torres by a landslide. His electoral victory unnerved President Alejandro Giammattei's administration, who responded with ongoing attempts to undermine the electoral process, prompting Arévalo's extensive support base to mount large-scale protests in support of democracy.

Politically motivated attacks target Arévalo's Movimiento Semilla

In the lead-up to the election, Guatemala's courts disqualified any candidates who ran on anti-corruption platforms and who seemed likely to win the popular vote. Arévalo's unanticipated success, having polled at 0.7 percent before the June election, triggered a backlash from the incumbent administration and its allies, who for years have benefitted from a previously untouchable network of patronage and corruption. Arévalo's presidency threatens to undo this entire network. Once he emerged as a stronger contender, both he and his party, Movimiento Semilla (Seed Movement),

became the target of several politically motivated investigations, including attempts to suspend his party for allegedly falsifying signatures when it formed in 2017. Following domestic and international pressure, this attempted suspension was blocked by the Supreme Court of Justice. The attacks continued after he won the run-off elections, and despite Giammattei committing to a peaceful handover of power, several international figures have cautioned of the current administration's reluctance to relinquish control of the country. Brazilian President Lula da Silva, warned of the risk of a coup that would prevent the president-elect from taking office. Francisco Mora, the US's ambassador to the Organization of American States (OAS), warned against attempts to undermine democracy in Guatemala, and denounced efforts to suspend Arévalo's political party as anti-democratic.

The attacks have been spearheaded by Attorney General María Consuelo Porras. Porras took office in 2018 and was renominated by Giammattei as attorney general for a second four-year term in 2022, despite numerous allegations of corruption. Since taking office, she has continuously blocked and subverted corruption investigations in Guatemala to safeguard her political allies and curry political favour. Protesters are determined to see Porras removed from her position, but she has refused to resign. Giammattei in turn claims he is unable to fire her without interfering in her investigations. This is a convenient stance for him to take as Porras has been widely viewed as undermining the elections in service of Giammattei and his allies.



Protesters in stalemate with Giammattei administration

In response to the ongoing political attacks on Arévalo’s party and the electoral process, in the first half of October, protesters comprising thousands of farmers and members of indigenous groups established more than 120 roadblocks around the country, blocking traffic, closing shops and subsequently disrupting the supply of fuel and food, bringing the country to a standstill. According to Luis Pacheco, the head of 48 Cantones de Totonicapán, one of the largest indigenous organisations in the country, the aim of the protests was to paralyse the country indefinitely. But, while protesters are on track to bring this mandate to fruition, Giammattei’s administration has maintained its stance and refused to concede to the demands of the protesters, warning that riot police will forcibly dismantle or remove roadblocks. The deployment of police has escalated the protests, causing clashes between police and activists.

Limited impact of previous anti-government protests

In 2015, tens of thousands of Guatemalans participated in similar anti-government protests, which at the time were unprecedented. Protesters demanded the resignation of President Otto Pérez Molina after a UN commission exposed his involvement in a corruption scandal. The protests were prompted by messages and hashtags on social media and drew participation mostly from members of the urban middle class. Although the protests were successful in ousting Molina from the presidency, the opposition lacked a better candidate to replace him, and subsequently the protest action failed to elicit more long-lasting change. Molina was replaced by Jimmy Morales, who faced

numerous allegations of corruption during his time in office and terminated an international commission investigating high-level corruption in a move suspected to shield him and his family from prosecution. Guatemala has continued to experience democratic backsliding in the subsequent years, continually falling short of democratic norms according to several global indices.

The October 2023 protests have a few key differences which have the potential to translate into more meaningful change. These protests have been led by the 48 Cantones de Totonicapán and have been more widespread and coordinated than the 2015 protests. They have featured a wider demographic that includes indigenous groups, farmers, students, middle class, public sector and informal sector workers. Protests have extended further than just the major cities, with numerous demonstrations and blockades in rural areas. Unlike the 2015 protests, the political aims of the demonstrations have also been clearly defined. Protesters want to see a smooth transition of power and the resignation of prosecutors attempting to undermine the election results. Finally, Arévalo’s support base is vast. If the judiciary or congress continue to push a legislative coup, the public outcry and disruptions to the economy will be too significant to ignore.

Although Giammattei has publicly committed to a peaceful handover of power in January, his silence on the attorney general’s ongoing investigations into the Semillo Movement has raised concerns about continued attempts to cling to power. But with such broad public support for Arévalo, attempts by Giammattei’s administration to subvert the democratic process, even through a legislative coup, are unlikely to succeed. ^{GRB}

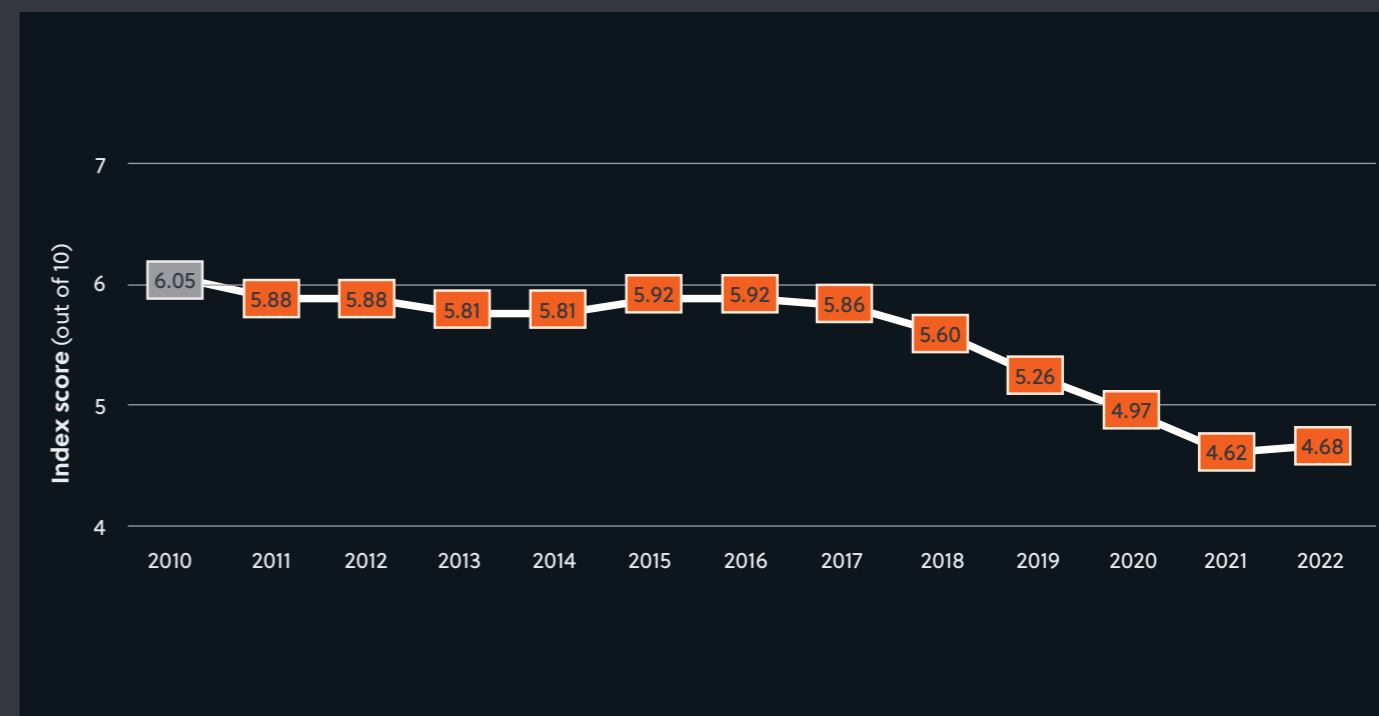
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Democratic backsliding:

Democracy index in Guatemala from 2010 to 2022

According to their scores on the index, countries are designated as one of four regime types: full democracies (8-10), flawed democracies (6-8), hybrid regimes (4-6) or authoritarian regimes (0-4). Over the last decade, Guatemala has transitioned from a flawed democracy with generally free and fair elections to a hybrid regime, where elections are regularly subject to electoral fraud and government pressure against opposition and critics.



Graph adapted from The Economist Intelligence Unit Democracy Index 2022.

Key:

- Flawed democracies
- Hybrid regimes
- 6.0 - 8.0
- 4.0 - 6.0



ON THE BRINK

Tensions escalate between Serbia and Kosovo

A recent clash between Kosovar security forces and ethnic-Serb gunmen in northern Kosovo, and the subsequent build-up of Serbian forces on the Kosovo border, has prompted concerns of renewed conflict. **Richard Gardiner considers** what these events mean for the security situation in one of Europe's most divided territories.

On 24 September, a group of Serb gunmen opened fire on Kosovar security forces at the Banjska Monastery in Mitrovica District, a majority ethnic Serb area in northern Kosovo. The ensuing gunfight, which killed four Serb assailants and one Kosovar police officer, prompted Serb authorities to deploy forces along the border with Kosovo. The incident and sudden troop build-up follows already increased tensions between the Serbian and Kosovar governments over the past 12 months. With the monastery clashes representing the worst outbreak of fighting in the territory in over 20 years, and accusatory rhetoric hardening on both sides, concerns have risen over whether war between Serbia and Kosovo is about to break out.

The shadow of Kosovo's past

Persistent ethnic tensions, unresolved war crime cases from the 1998-1999 Kosovo War, and Kosovo's declaration of independence in 2008 have sustained strained relations between Kosovo and Serbia. Despite some efforts to

Normalisation efforts

In February 2023, after more than a decade of negotiations, Kosovo and Serbia verbally agreed on a plan for normalising ties. The agreement hinged on Serbia's partial recognition of Kosovo's statehood and acceptance of Kosovo's bid to join multilateral institutions, while Kosovo would support the formation of 10 Serb-majority municipalities in Kosovo, granting them greater administrative autonomy. However, in September 2023, just prior to the Banjska attack, negotiations collapsed again amid distrust from both sides.

normalise ties, limited progress has been made and talks break down frequently. Recent negotiations in 2023 have taken place amid growing and sometimes violent unrest in Serb-majority districts, including attacks against Kosovo police and NATO peacekeepers, as ethnic Serbs reject Kosovar Prime Minister Albin Kurti's intensifying efforts to enforce the Kosovo government's control in those areas, including with a bolstered presence of counter-terrorism police.



A Serbian invasion?

The likelihood of a Serbian-led invasion into northern Kosovo remains low at this stage. Serbia's military posturing was likely a show of force rather than preparation for an invasion, and by 2 October this presence was reduced by half, with Serbian president Aleksandar Vučić denying the build-up had even occurred. Serbia has responded similarly in the past, including in May 2023, when it deployed forces to the border in response to clashes between Kosovar police, NATO personnel, and Serb protesters.

Vučić has also said that Serbia has no intention of invading Kosovo, a move that would seriously damage Serbia's diplomatic objectives at a time when Vučić has been working to enhance relations with Western countries in the hopes of EU membership. An invasion will certainly dash these ambitions. Given the now-bolstered presence of NATO peacekeeping troops at the Serbia-Kosovo administrative border, and in the wider region, an intervention risks conflict that would be diplomatically and economically devastating, including possible blockades of the landlocked country. Despite increasingly close ties with long-time ally Russia, which remains bogged down by the war in Ukraine, it is also unclear to what extent Russia will be willing or able to provide military assistance or resources to Serbia in the event of an invasion.



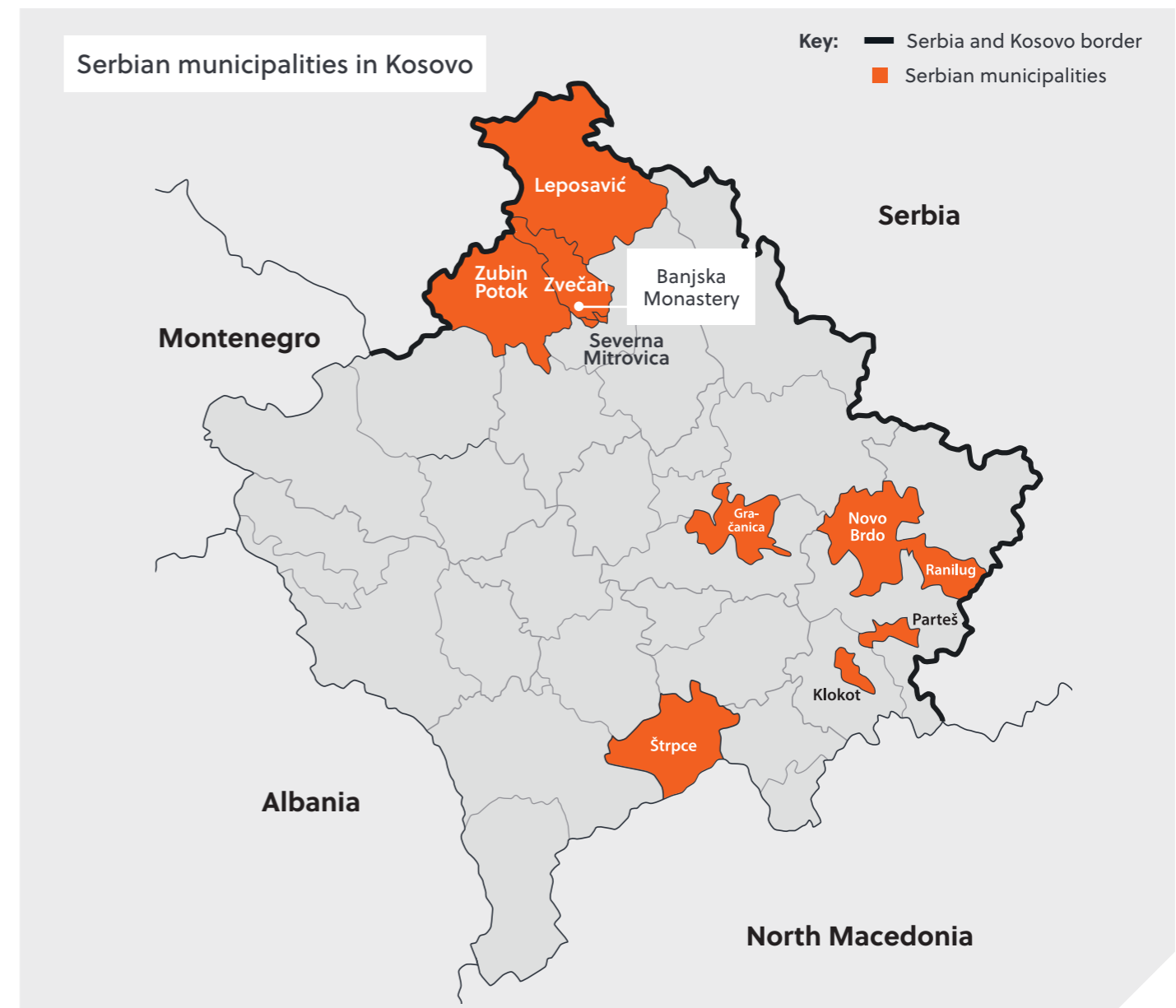
Heightened diplomatic tensions and dynamics on the ground in northern Kosovo still point to the potential for prolonged instability and sporadic flare-ups of violence.”

The power of the proxies

While war is unlikely, heightened diplomatic tensions and dynamics on the ground in northern Kosovo still point to the potential for prolonged instability and sporadic flare-ups of violence. While Vučić and Kurti met for talks in Brussels in late October, tensions remain high with no hint that either side will compromise on critical points. Kosovo, which is carrying out an EU-monitored investigation into the Banjska clash, blames Serbia for leveraging its relationship with Serbian nationalist militants in Kosovo to instigate a state-sponsored act of terrorism. But Vučić has denied involvement and Milan Radoičić, deputy leader of the Kosovo-based Serb

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EUROPE



List party and an ally of Vučić, has admitted to staging the attack without the Serbian government's knowledge or assistance, due to "different views" on resisting Kosovo's increasing efforts to control Serb enclaves.

Irrespective of Vučić's knowledge of the attack, Radoičić's claim of responsibility, plus protests against Kosovo, and mounting far-right calls in Belgrade for Kosovo to be reclaimed by Serbia, suggest nationalist militants and other pro-Serbia groups intend to disrupt and resist Kosovo's efforts to govern in the north. Following the Banjska clash, some Serb militants like Radoičić may be emboldened to stage further attacks against Kosovar security forces, particularly if they perceive the Serbian government's Kosovo strategy as capitulating, and if Kosovo makes further efforts to consolidate control over northern districts. With strong links to organised criminal networks, and likely sympathisers in Serbia, such groups certainly have the access to weapons and financial

resources needed to stage more regular attacks on security targets. Frustrations will likely also sustain unrest in Serb-dominated districts like Zvečan, Leposavić and North Mitrovica, driving further skirmishes between protesters, and NATO and Kosovo security personnel, which could periodically escalate into wider violence and further delay diplomatic proceedings.

Looking ahead

In the absence of enough political will, and given the region's prevailing ethnic tensions and history of political violence, a sustainable political resolution to the long-term dispute seems unlikely over the next 12 months. Rather, northern Kosovo is set to remain in a state of ongoing instability, with the Banjska clash acting as a warning that without sincere efforts to address historical and ethnic grievances, such flare-ups could become more frequent, and more violent. GRB



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