

The logo for SRM, consisting of the letters 'S', 'R', and 'M' in a bold, white, sans-serif font. A small red triangle is positioned between the 'S' and 'R'.

SRM

The title 'GRB' in a large, bold, white, sans-serif font, set against a red triangular background that points upwards and to the right.

GRB

The subtitle 'GLOBAL RISK BULLETIN' in a bold, white, sans-serif font, stacked in three lines, set against the same red triangular background.

GLOBAL
RISK
BULLETIN

The text 'VOLUME 7 | 2023' in a smaller, white, sans-serif font, positioned at the bottom of the red triangle.

VOLUME 7 | 2023

WORLD NEWS IN BRIEF

1 Argentina Civil unrest

Amid an ongoing economic crisis and political infighting as Argentina's October general elections approach, the government also faces increasing resistance by indigenous communities over the role of foreign corporations in extracting lithium reserves. Communities in the northwestern Jujuy province have further denounced a provincial-level constitutional reform by right-wing Governor Gerardo Morales that encourages increased mining without consulting relevant communities, while simultaneously restricting the right to demonstrate. These grievances prompted thousands of people to march on Buenos Aires in late July, as well as ongoing sit-ins in front of the Supreme Court. Protests in Jujuy's lithium mining regions, including blockades of some mining sites, have prompted a violent response from security forces, resulting in dozens of casualties. With right-wing presidential candidate Javier Milei having secured a majority in the country's August presidential primary elections, it is possible that unrest over land rights, environmental damage and resource extraction could escalate in the coming months ahead of the election, and if Milei becomes president.

2 Pakistan Terrorism

On 30 July, Islamic State (IS) carried out a suicide bombing attack at a political rally in the town of Khar, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province, killing at least 54 people and injuring more than 200 others. The political rally was organised by Jamiat Ulema Islam, a political party that has expressed strong support for the Taliban government in neighbouring Afghanistan, and the Taliban carries out frequent counter-terrorist operations against IS. The number of militant attacks has risen substantially in 2023, indicating increased intent and capabilities by various militant groups to carry out high-impact attacks, particularly in the Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa provinces. According to the Pakistan Institute for Conflict and Security Studies research organisation, militant attacks increased by 79 percent in the first half of 2023 compared to the same period in 2022.

3 South Korea Civil unrest

On 24 August, Japan embarked on its plan to release treated radioactive water from the damaged Fukushima

Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant into the ocean. The United Nations International Atomic Energy Agency has assessed that the impact of the radioactive water on people and the environment will be negligible, and the agency approved the plan in July 2023. However, Tokyo's decision has prompted significant criticism and concern from environmental activists and the fishing industry within the region. Demonstrators have staged multiple protests in Seoul and attempted to enter the Embassy of Japan on 24 August. In addition, mainland China imposed increased restrictions on Japanese food imports in July 2023, particularly relating to seafood; and as of August 2023, Hong Kong has indefinitely banned seafood imports from 10 Japanese prefectures, including Tokyo. The move to release the water will likely result in continued demonstrations by environmental activists and disruptions in the seafood industry in the coming months.

4 Lebanon Civil unrest

From 29 July to 3 August, rival Palestinian factions clashed in the Ain Al Hilweh refugee camp near the port city of Sidon, after suspected Islamist militants attempted to murder a member of a rival group. The fighting then escalated after militants from a rival group killed a Palestinian military general from the Fatah political faction. At least 13 people were killed, dozens injured, and thousands were displaced in the fighting. Amid fears that the clashes would spread, the Lebanese army sealed off the camp; shops and businesses in the settlement and Sidon were closed, and several Gulf countries, including Saudi Arabia and Bahrain, issued evacuation alerts and travel warnings to their citizens in Lebanon. Deep-seated tensions between rival groups occasionally escalate into violence, and renewed clashes are likely in the coming months.

5 Libya War

On 14 August, clashes broke out between the 444 Brigade and the Special Deterrence Force (SDF) militias in Tripoli, triggered by the SDF's arrest of the leader of the 444 Brigade, Colonel Mahmoud Hamza. The fighting ceased late the next day, following an agreement to transfer Hamza into the custody of a neutral party from which he was released to the 444 Brigade. At least 55 people were killed, and 146 others were injured, marking the worst clashes in Libya in 2023. The 444 Brigade and SDF are two of the largest

militias in Tripoli. Although both support the Tripoli-based government led by Prime Minister Abdul Hamid Dbeibah, inter-militia rivalry is common as each group competes for power and influence in the city.

6 Ethiopia War

In August, Amhara Fano militias clashed with security forces in Amhara Region over the government's decision to dismantle and integrate a regional special forces unit into the federal forces, and territorial disputes in the Tigray Region. The militias gained control of several towns in Amhara, including the domestic airport in Lalibela. Authorities responded by declaring a six-month State of Emergency in the state and deployed additional personnel to the area, subsequently driving out the militias from Lalibela, Gondar and the regional capital, Bahir Dar. While the clashes have since reduced in scale and frequency, the underlying grievances remain unaddressed, and there is potential for further outbreaks of fighting between militias and security forces in Amhara in the coming months.

7 South Africa Civil unrest

From 3 to 10 August, unionised taxi drivers affiliated with the South African National Taxi Council (SANTACO) went on strike in Western Cape Province to denounce the impoundment of taxis by City of Cape Town authorities. At least five people were killed, including a British national and police officer, and private and municipal vehicles, as well as public facilities, including a police station, were destroyed during violent demonstrations. The strike and associated protests caused significant travel disruptions, resulting in severe commercial impacts, such as labour shortages and disruptions to supermarket supply chains, particularly in Cape Town. Authorities have estimated that the economic cost of the strike to the provincial economy was over USD 260 million. Despite the strained relations between SANTACO and the authorities, the two parties have reached a legally binding agreement. The deal includes a dispute escalation and resolution clause and a mandatory 36-hour warning period before initiating strike action. These provisions have the potential to diminish the extent of disruptions in future strikes.

8 Gabon Political violence


On 30 August, senior military officials staged a coup, ousting President Ali Bongo Ondimba, dissolving state institutions and annulling the 26 August election results due to alleged polling irregularities. The coup leaders, referring to themselves as the Committee of Transition and

Restoration of Institutions (CTRI), appointed General Brice Oligui Nguema, a former presidential guard head and Bongo's distant cousin, as the interim leader, and outlined a 24-month transition to civilian rule. The African Union responded by suspending Gabon's membership. All borders, initially closed after the coup, have reopened, and previously enacted internet bans by the Bongo administration during the elections were lifted. Additionally, despite early reports of gunfire and pro-coup demonstrations in Libreville, the security situation across the country has remained stable. The coup in Gabon forms part of a trend of similar events in West Africa and the Sahel over the past three years, raising concerns of deepening political instability and the increased potential for further coups to occur in other countries in the region.

9 Ukraine War

In August, Ukrainian forces continued counter-offensive operations in southern and eastern Ukraine. Having launched the counter-offensive in June, Ukrainian forces have made limited advances despite the introduction of Western military equipment, including tanks and infantry fighting vehicles. Well-prepared Russian defensive lines and a lack of air superiority have prevented a repeat of the swift advances in Kharkiv and Kherson oblasts in 2022. However, the liberation of the village of Robotyne, Zaporizhzhia Oblast, at the end of August is a tactically significant development that could give Ukrainian forces further momentum. Having broken through the defences around the settlement, the Ukrainian military has indicated that the resistance will likely be less fortified as the counter-offensive pushes further south towards Tokmak and Melitopol.

10 Russia War

In August, Russia accused Ukraine of carrying out multiple drone and missile strikes on Russian and Russian-occupied territory in Ukraine. There have been several attacks on Moscow, although the city's air defence systems intercept most projectiles, and attacks typically result in minor property damage. However, they often result in temporary closures of Moscow's airports. Separately, Russia has also accused Ukraine of launching a naval drone at a Russian oil tanker in the Kerch strait, which caused significant damage to the vessel, as well as another missile strike on the Kerch bridge, linking the Crimean Peninsula to the Russian mainland. Ukraine typically refrains from commenting on attacks on Russian territory and has not claimed responsibility for the recent incidents. 

A COUP TOO MANY?

The implications of the Nigerien putsch

West Africa is no stranger to coups, yet the ousting of Niger's democratic government in July has prompted a regional and global response not yet seen in the region despite similar events in recent years. **Richard Gardiner writes** that Niger's geopolitical and commercial importance, compared to its neighbours Mali and Burkina Faso, raises the stakes for a resolution to the deepening crisis.

On 26 July, members of Niger's Garde Présidentielle (Presidential Guard, GP) staged a military coup and ousted President Mohamed Bazoum. Although this marked the sixth coup in West Africa in the past three years, the events in Niger have triggered a more robust international and regional response than reactions to other recent regime changes. The strategic importance of Niger from a political, security and commercial perspective underscores the perils of prolonged instability in the country for West African states and international partners.

Niger's strategic importance stems from a confluence of domestic, regional and global factors. Its proximity to Mali and Burkina Faso — the epicentres of Islamist militancy in the Sahel — along with President Bazoum's close relations with the West, has made Niger a strategic partner for US and French regional counter-terrorism initiatives in recent years. Furthermore, Niger's vast natural resources and its previous commitment to addressing pervasive human trafficking through its northern regions have led to robust global trade ties and cooperation, particularly with Western and European partners. Instability in the country is therefore worrisome, particularly with the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) regional bloc already facing the recent trend of coups d'état in West Africa and the longer term implications of such political upheaval on the bloc's cohesion.

Regional stability under threat

With a band of military juntas extending from Guinea in the west to Niger in the east, ECOWAS's ability to serve as a regional guarantor of democracy and stability has been undermined. While the union continues efforts to restore democratic rule through diplomatic means,

the option of military intervention remains on the table. However, discussions over the correct course of action have exposed the bloc's limitations to respond to crises within its own backyard. Domestic considerations have hindered consensus, such as in Nigeria, where President Bola Tinubu's efforts to build support for military intervention have been met with strong local resistance, particularly from northern constituencies due to their affinity with and proximity to Niger. Meanwhile, Burkina Faso and Mali — both suspended ECOWAS members — have threatened to support Niger against any ECOWAS intervention, an outcome which could result in a regional conflict.



Prolonged instability within Niger threatens to create domestic security vacuums, which would likely be filled by transnational Islamist militant groups and trafficking syndicates alike."

If diplomatic efforts fail, the ramifications of either the junta, known as the Conseil national pour la sauvegarde de la patrie (CNSP), remaining in power over the coming years or ECOWAS deploying to Niger would be profound. If the CNSP retains control, it will likely embolden the juntas within the region as their alliance grows while weakening the collective authority of ECOWAS. Conversely, a military



intervention risks a drawn-out conflict in Niger, likely resulting in significant flows of refugees into neighbouring countries that are ill-equipped to manage such an influx. Additionally, prolonged instability within Niger threatens to create domestic security vacuums, which would likely be filled by transnational Islamist militant groups and trafficking syndicates alike.

Islamist militants waiting in the wings

Adding to these concerns is the current uncertainty over US and French counter-terrorism operations based in Niger, which have been aimed at stemming ongoing Islamist insurgencies in Mali and Burkina Faso. Both the US and France have suspended their operations in the country, and with growing domestic anti-France sentiment, it is becoming increasingly unlikely that Niger will remain the French centre for regional counter-terrorism operations in the Sahel. While there has not been any overt anti-US sentiment on display at recent demonstrations in Niamey or from the junta itself, Washington would find it difficult to justify any long-term commitment to the new military regime. By permanently halting counter-terror activities, both the US and France have much to lose. Not only has the US played a pivotal role in training Nigerien forces, but it has also utilised the country as a base for intelligence operations from its drone facility in Agadez, which is the only one of its kind in the region. Similarly, Niger has served as a base for French operations since the end of Operation Barkhane in Mali following a collapse in relations with Bamako. The potential departure of the US and France would likely stretch Niger's capacity to counter two Islamic State-led insurgencies in the western

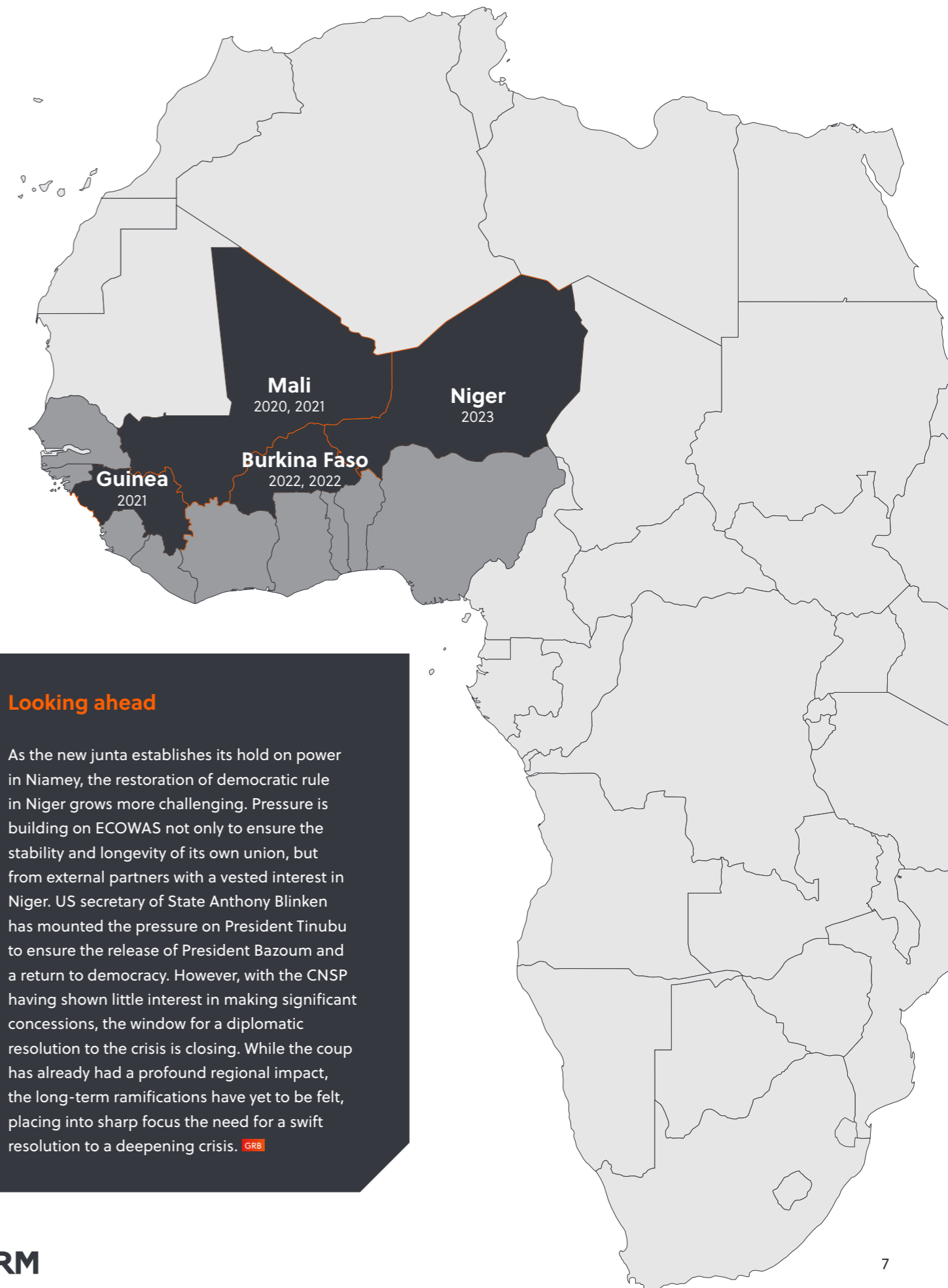
and south-eastern parts of the country to its limit, likely resulting in a further spread of Islamist militancy in the region.

Commercial consequences

Deepening insecurity, political instability and deteriorating relations with external partners are also likely to have negative consequences on the commercial environment in Niger. Border closures have already played havoc with cross-border trade; road haulage from Benin has ground to a halt, while Niger and Nigeria stand to lose over USD 200 million in annual bilateral trade. Yet the impact of these events goes far beyond West Africa, driven primarily by Niger's significant natural resources, including its uranium reserves. These reserves hold a crucial position in European energy supplies, especially as the EU strives to reduce its reliance on Russian fossil fuels. France, which receives 15 percent of all uranium imports from Niger, has stated it has enough reserves for another two years. However, the current political situation, combined with an increasingly hostile environment for foreign mining companies in Niger, has the potential to impact long-term yields.

Similarly, Benin has commented that the ECOWAS sanctions are not expected to impact short-term operations of the Niger-Benin oil pipeline, running from eastern Niger to the Benin coast, which is due to be completed by the end of 2023. Yet, the long-term outlook is more uncertain, especially considering the escalating tensions between Porto-Novo and Niamey and the potential for the CNSP to boost its stake in the mining and extractive sectors, as the juntas in Mali and Burkina Faso have already done.

Successful military coups in ECOWAS since 2020



Looking ahead

As the new junta establishes its hold on power in Niamey, the restoration of democratic rule in Niger grows more challenging. Pressure is building on ECOWAS not only to ensure the stability and longevity of its own union, but from external partners with a vested interest in Niger. US secretary of State Anthony Blinken has mounted the pressure on President Tinubu to ensure the release of President Bazoum and a return to democracy. However, with the CNSP having shown little interest in making significant concessions, the window for a diplomatic resolution to the crisis is closing. While the coup has already had a profound regional impact, the long-term ramifications have yet to be felt, placing into sharp focus the need for a swift resolution to a deepening crisis. [GRB](#)

SILVER OR LEAD

The challenges confronting Ecuador's next administration

Tamsin Hunt assesses Ecuador's security environment following the assassination of presidential candidate Fernando Villavicencio and explores the deep-seated challenges facing the incoming administration.

On 9 August, Ecuadorian presidential candidate Fernando Villavicencio was shot and killed by criminal elements while leaving a campaign event, shining the global spotlight on rising crime and associated political tensions in the small Andean country. Taking place just days before the snap presidential elections on 20 August, Villavicencio's death has not only exposed the degree to which organised crime groups have expanded their influence

and consolidated control throughout the country, but also the extensive security challenges facing Ecuador's next president.

Political assassinations

Political killings have become increasingly common in Ecuador as a result of organised crime groups' conscious and successful efforts to influence local government and electoral processes in order to sustain and expand various criminal enterprises.

Political killings in Ecuador 2022 – 2023

Pedro Briones, political leader and organiser, was killed in San Mateo, Esmeraldas in August 2023

Fernando Villavicencio, presidential candidate, was killed while leaving a campaign event in Quito in August 2023

Agustín Intriago, newly elected Mayor of Manta, Manabí was killed in July 2023

Ecuador

Javier Pincay, mayoral candidate in Portoviejo, Manabí survived an assassination attempt in December 2022

Luis Chonillo, Mayor of Durán, Guayas survived an attack in May 2023

Omar Menéndez, mayoral candidate for Puerto López, Manabí was killed in February 2023

Peru

Colombia





According to the Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project, only seven incidents of violence against an elected official or their families took place between 2018 and 2021. By 2022, that number had escalated to 36, followed by another 18 in the first seven months of 2023 in the lead-up to the February local elections, and the August presidential vote. Consequently, the August presidential election took place under military guard. The armed forces took control of security at all electoral precincts a full three days prior to the polls; a total of 96,000 police and military officers were deployed countrywide; and voters were advised against carrying any packages or backpacks amid stringent security measures. The election passed without major incident, and a healthy 82 percent of Ecuadorian voters turned out to make their mark on the ballot. The election result may have been inconclusive – forcing frontrunners Luisa González and Daniel Noboa to head to an October run-off – but regardless of who wins, the rising issue of political killings, with its roots in organised crime, looms large.

Rampant crime

A pressing issue for the next administration will be addressing violent crime in the country. Ecuador's homicide rate has increased five-fold, from 5.8 per 100,000 in 2016 – one of the lowest in Latin America – to a staggering 26.1 in 2022. Further, extortion and kidnapping have become common in most major cities. The government increasingly resorts to imposing states of emergency – particularly in the

coastal provinces of Manabí, Esmeraldas and Guayas – in repeated (but inadequate) efforts to stem the rising tide of crime. By corollary, businesses are often forced to close early due to safety concerns and curfews, army patrols in urban streets have become a familiar sight, and hundreds of thousands choose to migrate out of the country every month rather than face violence and unemployment at home.

Corroded institutions

Although violent crime was at the forefront of every presidential candidate's campaign ahead of the August election, resolving the issue will be no easy task for the next administration. The high rate of violent crime is but a symptom of deeper, structural problems. Each previous administration has had a hand in eroding Ecuador's security and judicial institutions over the past decade, weakening the country's ability to control the transnational drug trade and combat rising crime. President Rafael Correa's administration (2007-2017) closed down the Special Investigations Unit in 2009, and effectively dismantled the US-backed narcotics surveillance and security system between 2009 and 2014. The next administration under Lenín Moreno (2017-2021) fared a little better but demolished the Correa-era Ministry of Justice and cut the prison budget by 30 percent. The prison system – weakened by years of overcrowding and underfunding – is now strongly under the influence of criminal gangs and corrupt officials. As a result, weapons are freely available to inmates, and deadly prison riots have become frequent.



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Enabled by successive governments' neglect, criminal elements have penetrated deep into state institutions, including the police, judiciary and the army, creating a permissive environment in which criminal gangs operate with near impunity. Individuals on the ground have little institutional support, and local officials and political leaders are often faced with a choice between accepting either a bribe or a bullet – a choice between silver or lead – perpetuating the cycle of institutionalised criminality.

Economic underperformance

Added to this, economic challenges in Ecuador are mounting. Rampant crime and frequent states of emergency are weighing on investor confidence and local business

activity, limiting Ecuador's growth prospects and the country's ability to shed its dependence on oil exports. Poverty remains high, at 27 percent in June 2023, and formal employment is extremely low, at around 35 percent. Elevated rates of poverty and unemployment will only serve to create an ideal environment for criminal gangs, increasing recruitment opportunities in communities desperate for income. To relieve the pressures of violent crime on the economy, Ecuador's next administration is faced with the tough task of curbing the power and influence of entrenched organised crime groups.

Time is short

The world will be watching to see if the next administration can meaningfully address violent crime and alleviate economic pressures, or fall into the all-too-common political trap of papering over the cracks in pursuit of the next election win. Given that the winner of the October 2023 run-off election will have only 17 months in office – the remainder of former President Guillermo Lasso's term – the likelihood of any incoming administration overhauling the current situation is low. As long as short-term measures that bring temporary relief to Ecuador's challenges remain the modus operandi, the power and influence of criminal gangs will be largely unchecked, and the country's security environment will continue to deteriorate over the coming year. 



GOING THROUGH THE MOTIONS

Will Colombia's largest remaining rebel group commit to lasting peace?

While a ceasefire agreement with the Ejército de Liberación Nacional (ELN) militant group signals a positive development in President Gustavo Petro's peace plan, the six-month truce – and negotiations for the group's eventual dismantlement – faces significant odds, **writes Erin Drake.**

On 3 August, the Colombian government and the Ejército de Liberación Nacional (ELN), the country's largest remaining militant group, signed a six-month ceasefire agreement. The ceasefire lays the groundwork for peace talks, with the aim of eventually demobilising the ELN. Under the former government of Iván Duque, such a truce was largely off the table and all prospects for cooperation collapsed when ELN killed 22 people in a vehicle bombing targeting a police facility in Bogota in 2019. In contrast, President Gustavo Petro has adopted a more lenient posture and has focused on good faith negotiations, though as seen in the past, agreements with the ELN have often failed.

With five high-ranking ELN rebels accused of plotting to assassinate the attorney general just six days after the August ceasefire came into effect, concerns are escalating over the group's commitment to maintaining the ceasefire, and over the longer-term challenges facing ongoing peace talks.

Will the ceasefire hold (this time)?

Amid historic distrust between the Colombian government and the ELN, there is longstanding precedent for ceasefires to collapse. Some ELN cells have traditionally been resistant to cooperation with the government, and internal dissent has also previously led to ceasefire violations and collapses, including a truce in September 2017 which faltered after only 101 days.

While the current ceasefire, in place until January 2024, establishes a cessation in attacks targeting security personnel and vice versa, the ELN has stated that it will continue its defensive operations, signalling that any perceived move by state security forces to target the group will likely lead to a

How powerful is the ELN?

The group comprises between 2,000 and 5,000 members, and is mostly active in the Pacific region and along the border with Venezuela. While the group is driven by leftist political ideology, it has also engaged in criminal activities such as extortion, trafficking and illegal gold mining to finance training and obtain resources and equipment. Near the border with Venezuela, the ELN imposes illegal mining taxation schemes targeting transport routes in the Cerro Yacapana mining region. It also regularly collaborates with local and transnational armed groups who move contraband through the region. The ELN has even established an uneasy truce with dissident Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia (FARC) rivals in the area. Its engagement in smuggling, and cooperation with other criminal organisations, affords it access to weapons and equipment like long-range assault rifles and explosives, as well as safe haven in Venezuela when escaping Colombian security officials.

However, the group’s organisational capabilities are offset by its decentralised structure and a lack of unified leadership. This also renders strategic decision-making difficult to achieve, especially regarding critical decisions around ceasefires and possible demobilisation. The ELN lacks the capabilities to stage a widespread and coordinated insurrection, despite likely retaining an intent to do so. Nevertheless, cells stage regular ambushes and bombings against security patrols and commercial infrastructure, mostly in remote rural areas, as a means of disrupting local state authority. In March, for example, ELN militants killed nine security personnel during an attack targeting an oil pipeline in El Carmen, in the northern Norte de Santander Department.



ELN’s area of operations (2022-2023)



resumption in hostilities. The group has also indicated that its financing activities, including kidnapping, trafficking and extortion, will continue during the ceasefire. As such, while the truce may see a decline in activities like ambushes on pipelines and patrols, the ELN’s role in organised crime and associated violence will persist. In turn, the potential for skirmishes with security forces during, for example, normal anti-smuggling operations (rather than counter-terrorism activities, which are suspended under the agreement), could also drive sporadic ceasefire violations.

Challenges to peace

There are further challenges to an eventual peace agreement. Firstly, it is unclear whether the government will offer conditional amnesty like it did for FARC in 2016, where in many cases, those guilty of serious crimes, including hostage taking, torture and other war crimes, were eligible for more lenient sentencing such as reparative labour and restrictions on movement. The ELN will likely expect at least these conditions, and have

also made demands that will be difficult for Petro to grant, including the eventual release of ELN prisoners, participation in Congress, changes to the country’s economic model, and ‘subsidies’ to offset the profits obtained from kidnappings and extortion. Should the government be unwilling to meet these demands, a comprehensive peace plan with the buy-in of most ELN factions could be challenging to secure.

Petro’s ability to negotiate a mutually acceptable peace plan will also hinge on public support. The public has generally supported negotiations with the group. However, it is possible that a failure to address violence against the civilian population, or acquiescence to the ELN’s more ambitious demands, could reflect negatively on Petro’s government in the October 2023 local elections, potentially restricting his ability to compromise on certain aspects of a deal.

Developments in the wider political sphere could also shape the trajectory of negotiations. Petro’s approval ratings have dropped as his administration has faced a series of scandals in 2023, including controversies



Petro’s commitment to a peace plan may not be enough to convince all factions of the ELN that demobilisation is an attractive option.”

surrounding key allies. Most recently in July and August, the admission by Petro’s son that he had accepted around USD 386,000 from criminal groups to finance Petro’s election campaign (and to pocket for himself) has further tarnished the president’s image. Disruptive political scandals could make it increasingly difficult for Petro to maintain momentum on his security agenda, as similar scandals during previous administrations have seen embattled political leaders turn their focus to securing their position, with security issues falling by the wayside.

A long road ahead

Petro’s commitment to a peace plan may not be enough to convince all factions of the ELN that demobilisation is an attractive option. Militants who are now more incentivised by the lucrative trafficking trade than by the prospect of being arrested, or a potentially difficult reintegration into civilian life, will likely be harder to convince of a peace agreement’s merits. The potential refusal of dissident ELN cells to dismantle, coupled with multiple armed groups and FARC dissidents who continue to operate in Colombia with relative impunity, will thus continue to drive threats of militancy in the coming years.

Nevertheless, the ELN ceasefire and peace talks form only one part of Petro’s extensive peace plan, and if the ceasefire holds, this will likely reduce ELN attacks against security forces and infrastructure in the coming months, as well as associated civilian casualties. Petro’s efforts might, at the very least, also signal to remaining insurgent groups that the current government is serious about securing a sustainable and lasting peace, which could see these groups moving closer to the negotiating table. GRB



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