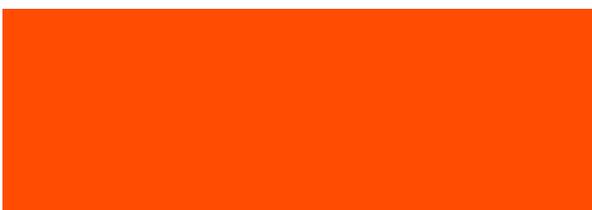


Security Exchange
InTouch Monthly - January 2022





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AFRICA

Burkina Faso: Another government falls in West Africa

Following the recent coups in Mali and Guinea, last month saw the army seize power in another West African nation, Burkina Faso. Earlier in January, the government announced that eight soldiers had been arrested in connection with a coup plot. Then on 23 January reports emerged of heavy gunfire at several army barracks in the capital, Ouagadougou, and other parts of the country. The government initially denied reports of a coup, but on the following day a group of mutinous soldiers appeared on state television to announce that President Roch Marc Christian Kabore had been deposed.

The troops, who are calling themselves the Patriotic Movement for Safeguard and Restoration (MPSR), closed the country's borders and dissolved the government. The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the African Union (AU) responded by suspending Burkina Faso, actions that they also took when the governments were toppled in Conakry and Bamako. The measures did nothing then and are unlikely to have any significant impact on the new junta in Ouagadougou. Lieutenant Colonel Paul-Henri Damiba has declared himself head of state, and no timeline has been given for a return to constitutional order. ECOWAS held a summit in Ghana's capital Accra on Thursday to discuss the coup in Burkina Faso. During his opening address, Ghana's President Nana Akufo-Addo said the bloc needed to "address this dangerous trend collectively and decisively before it devastates the entire region."

The takeover in Burkina Faso was the sixth successful coup in Africa in the last 18 months (Sudan, Chad, Guinea, Burkina Faso and two in Mali), while this week also saw a failed attempt in Guinea-Bissau. The UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres denounced what he called "an epidemic of coup d'états" and called on the Security Council to work together, despite their geopolitical divides, to "make sure that there is effective deterrence." This call for international unity seems unlikely to be heeded, especially as tensions between the US and Russia grow over Ukraine. Moscow is also pursuing its own strategy in West Africa, most notably in Mali where Russian military advisors have been deployed in recent weeks. There are also reports that mercenaries from the Russian Wagner Group are already operating in the country. Russia's influence is on the rise at a time when France, the former colonial power in the region, is under increasing pressure. Mali's military government ordered the French ambassador to leave the country last week in response to comments by French Foreign Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian, who said the junta was "illegitimate" and accused Russian mercenaries of "helping themselves to the country's resources in exchange for protecting the junta."

The coups in Mali and Burkina Faso share many similarities. Both countries are fighting jihadist insurgencies that have been increasing in scale and violence in recent years. Before they fell, the governments in Bamako and Ouagadougou both faced widespread protests over their alleged failure to provide security. There has also been public anger at the international forces from the UN in Mali (MINUSMA) and the French, which operates in both countries and the wider Sahel region as part of Operation Barkhane. Supporters of the new military government in Burkina Faso were seen waving Russian flags, and a deployment of mercenaries and/or troops from Moscow is highly likely in the coming months.



Ghana

20 January 2022: Dozens feared dead after Bogoso blast

Dozens of people are feared dead following a large explosion near the mining town of Bogoso in western Ghana. According to police, a vehicle carrying explosives hit a motorcycle on Thursday, resulting in the blast. "It is a truly sad, unfortunate and tragic incident, and I extend, on behalf of Government, deep condolences to the families of the deceased, and I wish the injured a speedy recovery," said President Nana Akufo-Addo on Twitter. Police have urged local communities to open public places, including churches and schools, for survivors of the accident.

Cameroon

23 January 2022: Sixteen killed in nightclub fire, Yaounde

At least 16 people have been killed in a fire at a nightclub in Yaounde. Officials said fireworks were lit inside the Liv's Night Club in the Bastos district in the early hours of Sunday. "We are still at the level of investigations to find out the names and nationalities of the dead and the wounded," government spokesman Rene Emmanuel Sadi said on Sunday. Cameroon is currently hosting the African Football Cup of Nations tournament.

Guinea

24 January 2022: Ruling junta establishes transitional council

Guinea's junta has established a council to serve as parliament as the country transitions to elections. On Saturday, transitional president Colonel Mamady Doumbouya named the 80 members of the newly-formed National Transitional Council (CNT), which will be responsible for deciding the date of the next elections and return to civilian rule. The creation of this council follows a coup in September that ousted President Alpha Conde.

Madagascar

24 January 2022: Tropical storm causes flooding and leaves 34 dead

Tropical storm Ana caused widespread flooding across Madagascar on Monday, killing 34 people and displacing more than 55,000. According to the Madagascar's meteorology department the storm, which hit the country over the weekend, will continue to bring torrential rains through Monday. Officials have urged residents to leave low-lying areas of Antananarivo and surrounding areas and evacuation efforts are underway.

Uganda

25 January 2022: Chief of Military Intelligence fired

Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni has fired Chief of

Military Intelligence Major General Abel Kandilho. The dismissal comes after financial sanctions were placed on Kandilho by the US Treasury Department over alleged human rights abuses. He has been replaced by Major General James Birungi and is expected to be appointed as Uganda's envoy to South Sudan.

Mozambique

26 January 2022: Dozens killed in road accident

The Mozambican government declared two days of mourning on Tuesday following a road accident that killed 28 people in Mirongone village, Zambezia province. The accident occurred on Saturday afternoon when a truck carrying six passengers veered into oncoming traffic and collided with a minibus carrying 25 passengers.

Kenya

27 January 2022: Five wounded in attack by al-Shabaab militants in Lamu

Suspected al-Shabaab militants attacked a vehicle carrying five court officials on Wednesday. All five officials were wounded in the attack, which occurred at Lango La Simba, between Lamu and Witu.

Cote d'Ivoire

27 January 2022: Pirates attack shipping vessel off the coast of Abidjan

A product tanker was targeted by pirates in the Gulf of Guinea on Monday. Reports stated that contact was lost with the tanker, which was stationed approximately 54 nautical miles off the coast of the Port of Abidjan before it was confirmed that pirates had boarded and hijacked the vessel on Monday evening. The pirates stole cargo from the vessel before leaving, and all crew members were reportedly unharmed and accounted for.

South Africa

31 January 2022: Suspects shoot at residence of councillor in Eastern Cape

Police are investigating after shots were fired at the home of senior ANC Amathole District Municipality councillor and mayoral committee member Nanziwe Rulashe in Baysville, East London on Sunday morning. Local news sources reported that armed suspects fired several shots through the bedroom window of the property, but nobody in the house was injured. Earlier in the week, Councillor Rulashe was captured on video as she was dragged out of the municipality's head offices and assaulted by security guards following a heated exchange.



AMERICAS

Canada: Truckers protest against Covid rules

Thousands of Canadians have been massing outside parliament in a demonstration that began as a movement by truckers challenging government vaccine mandates, but quickly shifted to a wider array of anti-government grievances. Nicknamed the 'Freedom Convoy', the demonstrations began with dozens of trucks driving through the streets of British Columbia on their way towards Ottawa and other Canadian cities over the weekend.

The truckers, who first organized the protests against government Covid regulations requiring them to show proof of vaccination at the US border, were now joined by thousands of Canadians who were critical of pandemic restrictions enforced by Prime Minister Justin Trudeau. The demonstrators clogged the streets around parliament, bearing flags and signs denouncing the country's public health measures, ignoring Ontario's social distancing and mask-wearing protocols.

The Ottawa police force, supplemented by the Ontario Provincial Police and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, watched on as protesters chanted peacefully. Their demands were directed at the Governor General, Canada's head of state, and appointed members of the Senate, to reverse all pandemic laws and rules. "The vast majority of the people that have either come on board to participate in the truck convoy or those donating to support it financially have just reached a point of frustration and exasperation with these lockdowns and continuation of restrictions that they want someone to speak up and say 'enough' to the federal government" said Jay Hill, the Maverick Party's interim leader.

Despite 77 percent of Canada's population being fully vaccinated, hundreds of people in the crowd said they believed vaccines were potentially harmful and ineffective. PM Trudeau said the protesters were "a fringe minority" and reiterated that 90 percent of Canada's truckers are fully vaccinated. "You probably noticed some empty shelves at your grocery store," said Erin O'Toole, the (then) leader of the Conservative Party. "That's because Justin Trudeau put in place a mandate that all truckers entering this country, either Canadian or American, have to be fully vaccinated." O'Toole was ousted on 2 February by parliament, citing his poor performance in an election defeat to the Liberals last September and his lukewarm support for the protests. Additionally, Conservatives said O'Toole had moved the party too far to the middle during the campaign, announcing major policies without consultation; Experts said the empty shelves in Canadian shops were most likely linked to the global supply chain disruptions and Covid-19 infections.

PM Trudeau said the protests, which have been going on for over a week, would not lead to a reversal of the vaccine mandate, as the US still requires Canadian truckers crossing into its territory to be vaccinated. Moreover, Canada's Transport Minister, Omar Alghabra, said there had been no significant decline in cross-border truck traffic since the vaccine mandate was put in place. In a speech on Thursday morning, PM Trudeau ruled out the use of armed forces against the protesters and said the government will simply "have to deal" with the protests with patience.



Peru

10 January 2022: Passenger bus attacked and robbed in La Arena

A passenger bus carrying more than 20 people was attacked and robbed in La Arena, Piura yesterday evening. The incident took place between Los Altos and Las Malvinas at around 19:30 local time. According to reports, this marks the second robbery of passenger buses in the area in a span of four days. No arrests have been reported.

Haiti

10 January 2022: Around 60 bus passengers taken hostage by gang in L'Estère

Around 60 passengers were held hostage after a Saint-Jean Baptiste public transport bus was hijacked in L'Estère yesterday morning. The hijacking took place at La Croix Perisse during the early morning hours. According to reports, the passengers were taken hostage by the Kokorat Sans Ras gang, who demanded a ransom for the release of the hostages.

Jamaica

11 January 2022: Three people killed in Providence Heights shooting

Three people were killed in a shooting in Providence Heights, Saint James Parish yesterday evening. The incident took place at around 21:00 local time. According to police, the incident was criminal gang-related and is the second fatal shooting incident in St James over the past three days. No arrests have been reported.

Panama

12 January 2022: Three injured after prison clashes in Las Garzas

Three people were injured during an armed attack inside a prison in Las Garzas, Panamá yesterday. The incident took place in the La Nueva Joya prison, where two inmates were shot. Police say the incident was a dispute between rival criminal gangs who inexplicably got a hold of firearms. One prison guard was injured by inmates after the shooting. Authorities confiscated the weapons after handling the situation.

El Salvador

12 January 2022: Two killed after army patrol attack in San Salvador

Two people were shot and killed in San Salvador earlier this morning. The incident took place on El Roble Avenue, in the Boquín neighbourhood at around 02:00 local time. Police say an army patrol was ambushed by unidentified criminals. No arrests have been reported.

Brazil

19 January 2022: Hundreds of military personnel occupy neighbourhood in Rio de Janeiro

Hundreds of heavily-armed police personnel occupied the Jacarezinho neighbourhood in Rio de Janeiro earlier this morning. The occupation comes as a renewed effort to bring security and public services to slums previously dominated by gangs and drug dealers. Police drove armored personnel cars into the neighbourhood, patrolling streets and entering homes in a four-hour operation.

Mexico

24 January 2022: Two tourists killed, one injured after shooting in Playa del Carmen

Two tourists were killed and another was injured after a shooting in Playa del Carmen, Quintana Roo on Friday afternoon. The incident took place at a beach near the Xcaret Hotel at around 14:30 local time. According to reports, the victims were Canadian nationals with "extensive" criminal records. Police have identified the suspects but are yet to make any arrests.

Colombia

27 January 2022: Four FARC dissidents killed in clashes with army in El Tambo

Four FARC dissidents were killed in clashes with the National Army near El Tambo, Valle de Cauca yesterday afternoon. The incident took place in Baraya, at around 16:00 local time. According to reports, the clashes took place during an operation executed by the National Army against criminal activity in the area.

Trinidad & Tobago

28 January 2022: Two people shot and killed in San Fernando

Two people were shot and killed in San Fernando yesterday afternoon. The incident took place at the parking lot of the South Park mall on Tarouba Road, at around 12:00 local time. No arrests have been reported.

Venezuela

28 January 2022: Civilians protest hyperinflation in Caracas
Authorities in the Capital District reported a civilian protest in Caracas yesterday. The demonstrators gathered in the Quinta Crespo municipal market, led by the councilman of Libertador, in order to protest against hyperinflation and stagnant wages.



ASIA

Myanmar: A year after the coup

Over the last 12 months, deadly clashes between armed rebel groups and the military regime in Myanmar have become an increasingly regular occurrence, growing more violent and displacing more communities every month. As the country marks one year since the controversial military coup which deposed the civilian government of Aung San Suu Kyi, the security situation there remains unstable, as deadly battles continue to rage on a daily basis.

In the weeks following the coup, widespread public unrest and disobedience saw the military crack down hard on dissent, resulting in hundreds being killed and thousands more being detained as the junta suppressed opposition. Since the 1 February 2021 coup, the military regime in Myanmar is suspected to have killed over 1,400 people amid brutal crackdowns, with more than 11,000 detained in total - some 8,000 of whom are still thought to be in detention. Despite the crackdowns, pockets of resistance have grown, with People's Defence Forces (PDFs) evolving at a local level alongside regional rebel armies, such as the Kachin Independence Army (KIA), the Karenni Democratic Front (KDF), and the Chinland Defence Force (CDF).

Local PDFs have been coordinating intense opposition attacks on junta forces alongside these armed groups, with figures showing clashes have become increasingly deadlier over the last six months. The widespread fighting has resulted in a shift from the nationwide public unrest and violent demonstrations which initially broke out in response to the coup. The current situation is now close to civil war. While most civilian deaths incurred in the weeks following the coup were the result of military crackdowns, now, most fatalities are linked to fighting which has broken out as a result of combat between anti-junta forces and the military. Additionally, many PDF members have essentially given up their previous civilian jobs and lives to fight against the military regime - a typical indicator of civil war.

The UN Human Rights chief, Michelle Bachelet, has also suggested the situation in the country is widely seen as a civil war and has called for stronger global action to be taken over the issue, with the specific aim of restoring a democratic government. Rights groups have also called on the UN to pass an arms embargo on the Myanmar junta, which would prohibit the sale of weapons and dual-use technology to the regime. Concerns have been raised over support for the junta from Russia and China, especially following sightings of Russian armoured vehicles unloading unidentified cargo - presumed to be weaponry - in Yangon in January.

Obtaining an accurate picture of reliable figures relating to clashes remains difficult, due to several reasons: junta propaganda; exaggerations by PDFs and armed groups; and limitations faced by journalists. Independent reporting in Myanmar has become heavily restricted since the military seized power - making it hard to corroborate events and confirm casualty figures. In January 2022, the military regime launched a media crackdown which saw several independent reporters detained. While no official reasons for the arrests have been released, the regime previously stated it would take actions to prevent reporting that it deemed to be false or likely to cause public unrest.

Further arrests are also reported to have been carried out in the lead-up to the one-year anniversary of the coup. It's claimed pre-emptive military operations saw some 58 people arrested last week in an apparent bid to curtail dissent ahead of a planned nationwide strike. The so-called 'silent strike' has been taking place in most major towns and cities, with



people choosing to desert the streets and close businesses in peaceful demonstration of their opposition to military rule. By remaining indoors, those taking part in the strike hope to avoid violent clashes with security forces. Some protests have also been held, although there has been minimal reliable reporting covering the demonstrations.

The junta has described the civilian resistance as a terrorist movement. By labelling the PDFs and allied rebel armed groups as terrorists, it's clear the military hopes to justify action taken against them. Military propaganda is not a new phenomenon for the country, as the military has retained powerful influence over government affairs for decades. In their own attempt to influence the narrative surrounding the coup, a collective of PDFs issued a public apology to ethnic militias for previously believing propaganda against them, which painted the armed rebel groups as seeking to dismantle the country.

The new alliance between PDFs and ethnic militias has now developed into calls for a federal democratic state led by civilian governments. Myanmar is made up of over 130 ethnic groups - something the ultra-nationalist ideology of the armed forces fails to represent. The military's long history of portraying ethnic minorities as un settlers of a unified Myanmar is largely what has led to the country being plagued by dozens of mini civil wars and brutal regional crackdowns for the last few decades. The military's near-constant embattlement with ethnic militias over the years is seen by some as the world's longest-running civil conflict, shaping the military into a ruthless, cult-like entity. An armed civilian uprising against the junta is an entirely uphill challenge - one which needs international intervention if it is to have any hope of success.



Pakistan

4 January 2022: Covid-19 cases highest in two months

Covid-19 cases have risen by more than 700 over the last 24 hours - the biggest single day jump in figures to be recorded in two months. The increasing rate of infection has prompted authorities to warn of a fifth wave of the virus. A growing number of Omicron cases have also been detected, particularly in Karachi city.

Kazakhstan

5 January 2022: President declares emergency amid unrest

Kazakhstan's President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev has declared states of emergency in the country's largest city of Almaty, and in the oil-rich western region of Mangistau following mass unrest, which has been triggered by a rise in fuel prices. Tokayev has also accepted the resignation of the cabinet led by Prime Minister Askar Mamin, and ordered the acting cabinet to reinstate price controls on liquefied petroleum gas and to broaden price controls to petrol, diesel, and other consumer goods.

Tonga

10 January 2022: Eight killed in Papua floods

Eight people have died amid floods in Papua province following heavy rainfall. The downpours have led to numerous rivers to break their banks flooding large parts of the province. Major landslides have also been reported in several districts, with an estimated 7,000 people displaced. Affected areas include North Jayapura Utara, South Jayapura, Abepura, Heram, and Muara Tami.

Thailand

12 January 2022: Two killed in Narathiwat police shooting

Two civilians have allegedly been shot dead following a police shooting incident in the southern Narathiwat province. The shooting apparently happened over the weekend, during the early hours of Sunday morning, at around 02:00 local time in the Muang district. It's claimed the police officers opened fire on a car a police checkpoint in the Ban Kamphaeng area of Kaluwo when the driver failed to stop.

Australia

12 January 2022: Kidnap victim released in Sydney

A person who was reportedly kidnapped and held ransom in Sydney has been released following the payment of a ransom. The victim was allegedly abducted in the Condell Park area on Sunday 9 January at around 19:30 local time and was released two days later, on Tuesday evening, after a payment of three million AUD (around £1.59m; \$2.16m) was made. Police are investigating the incident, with

preliminary reports suggesting potential links to a criminal motorbike gang are suspected.

Afghanistan

18 January 2022: Twin quakes kills dozens

Twin earthquakes have reportedly killed dozens of people in western Afghanistan. At least 26 fatalities have been reported after back-to-back earthquakes hit the Badghis province. The US Geological Survey (USGS) shows that 4.9 and 5.3 magnitude earthquakes hit the Qadis district of Badghis on Monday, causing building collapses and significant damage. The death toll could increase as rescue efforts continue. Around 700 houses are thought to have been damaged. The Muqur district is also thought to have been affected, although further details, including casualties, remain unavailable.

Bangladesh

19 January 2022: Twenty-five injured in Jashore mob attack

Some 25 people have reportedly been injured in a mob attack on a bus in Jashore, Khulna division. The attack apparently took place on Tuesday in the Pajia area, along the road connecting Keshabpur and Kolagachi. According to local reports, the bus was attacked due to an altercation between the driver and the passengers. Two people have been arrested in connection with the incident.

India

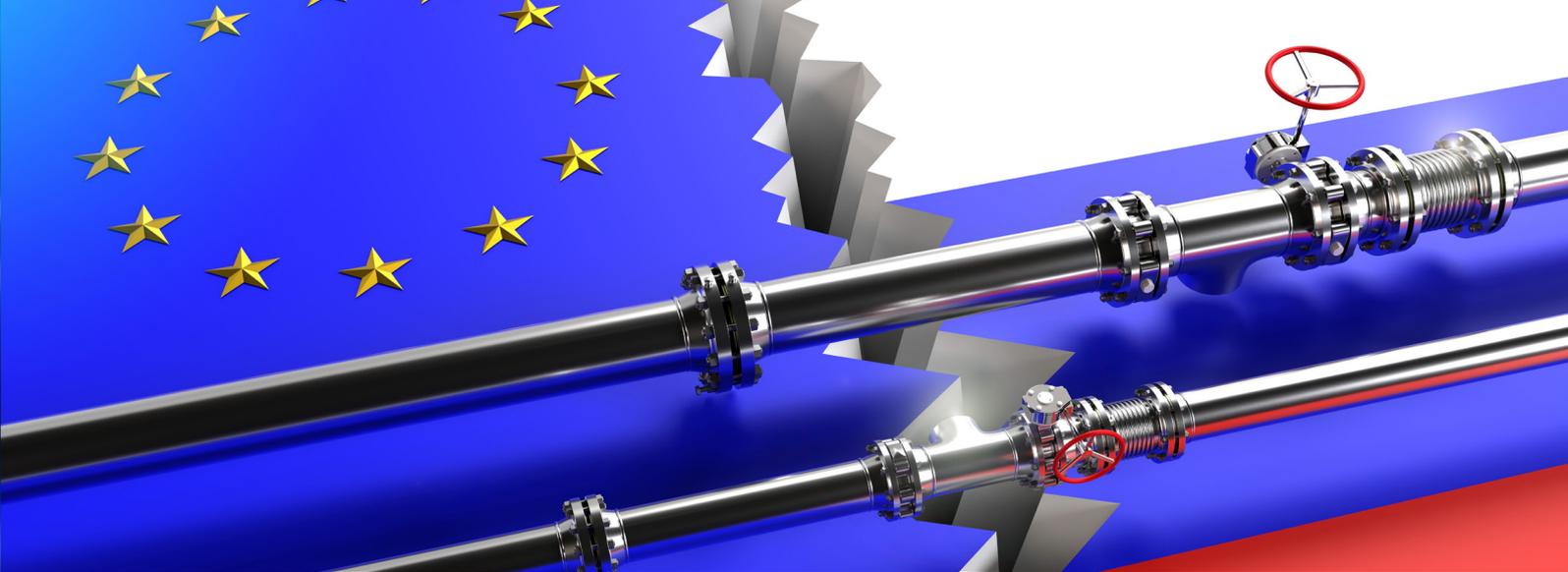
27 January 2022: Protesting mobs burn train carriages

Large hoards of protesters have reportedly set fire to train carriages as they demonstrate over railway jobs. The angry mobs have been convening in eastern India to burn empty train carriages in protest over alleged recruitment flaws limiting access to railway jobs. Police have been forced to violently disperse crowds with tear gas and baton charges. Among the worst affected areas includes Bihar state, where protests began on a small scale on Monday but have quickly escalated and spread to neighbouring Uttar Pradesh. At least a dozen arrests have been made so far.

Japan

28 January 2022: Doctor killed in Fujimino shooting

A doctor has died following a shooting incident in Fujimino, north of Tokyo. According to reports, a 66-year-old man attacked three medical workers visiting his home on Thursday, taking one of them hostage at gunpoint. One nurse was left injured in the street outside, while the third medical worker managed to flee to a police station. The incident turned into an 11-hour siege, during which, the 44-year-old doctor sustained a fatal gunshot wound.



EUROPE

Russia: Europe's energy crisis

In recent months, Europe has been affected by a worsening energy crisis which has dramatically spiralled since the beginning of the year. Rising energy prices were triggered by several key external and internal factors - affecting the livelihood of millions of Europeans and jeopardising the post-pandemic economic objectives and the zero-greenhouse gas emissions goal of the EU's Green Deal. Weather and economic stability are among the key features impacting gas supply. The winter of 2020/21 was colder than previous years - particularly in Europe and Asia - impacting major liquefied gas (LNG) customers and competitor markets. In addition to this, a reduction of exports by the USA of LNG cargos enhanced the demand for the resource. Demand for gas also rose due to the increased demand from states recovering from the economic effects of the pandemic, such as China - which became the biggest LNG importer in the first quarter of 2021. Gas accounts for approximately 22 percent of Europe's electricity consumption, while rising prices made the EU benchmark power contract double in 2021, and wholesale electricity prices rose to 7.5 times the average values of 2010-2020.

The EU imports almost 39 percent of its gas from Russia, amounting to 70 percent of Moscow's natural gas exports. In 2021 alone, the gas export market from Russia was worth approximately \$50bn. The economies of the EU and Russia are deeply linked and drastic change in any direction typically has a significant impact either way. Additionally, heightened tensions in Eastern Europe amid the deteriorating security situation between Russia and Ukraine and possible invasion, could also have a significant impact. The invasion could trigger economic sanctions on Russia targeting its energy exports. Both the US and UK have threatened extensive sanctions, while German Chancellor Olaf Sholz urged prudence and consideration for the possible consequences for European members during an interview given in January. The statement is particularly important in the German context, since the nation has a dependency on Russian gas - more so than other EU members.

The suspected manipulation of gas prices by Moscow has occurred on more than one occasion to create shortages and gain political concessions from Europe - for example: cuts to gas supply to Ukraine in 2009 and 2010. In this instance, the move led the EU to increase the integration of its gas markets to strengthen its position; however, this was not enough to eradicate the dependency on Russian energy. Germany - with the two pipelines, Nord Stream 1 and 2 - has strengthened the country's energy security but enhanced the continent's reliance on Russian gas. The move has been strongly condemned by the White House, but the US, as a major gas exporter, has direct economic interest in opposing the pipeline.

Although there is no immediate way to substitute Russian gas at present, the EU is looking for alternatives to cut prices and increase strategic autonomy through alternative supply sources. The EU has funded the construction of new pipelines between southern Europe and the Maghreb. The pipelines connect Italy (through the Green stream and the Trans Med) and Spain (through the Medgaz and Med Europe pipelines) with North Africa. Azerbaijan is also being considered by the EU as an alternative to Russian gas, while the development of relationships with Asian actors remains ongoing.

As of today, the European dependence on Russian gas is a key element shaping the continent's energy crisis. This exacerbates the climatic and economic factors which already triggered price increases, contributing to 'the perfect storm'. In the coming weeks it will be clear how this element will affect the possibility of a common NATO and European position in the context of a Russian invasion of Ukraine.



Denmark

11 January 2022: Former intelligence head accused of leak

The former head of Danish intelligence, Lars Findsen, has been accused of leaking highly classified information. Findsen is being held in custody and is one of four former intelligence staff to have been arrested amid investigations last month. A media ban on identifying Findsen among the suspects was lifted by the Copenhagen District Court on Monday. Findsen has denied the allegations - the precise details of which have yet to be revealed by Danish authorities.

Netherlands

12 January 2022: Escaped Dutch teenager shot dead in gun battle

A Dutch teenager has been killed in a gun battle with police in southern Belgium. The victim had escaped from a Dutch juvenile offenders' institution in Breda before taking two staff members hostage and driving across the border. The two hostages escaped unharmed before the teen opened fire on police in Sint-Lenaarts. He was fatally wounded in the exchange.

Bulgaria

13 January 2022: Protesters storm parliament over Covid-19 health pass

Protesters in Sofia have attempted to storm parliament as they demonstrated against the government's mandatory Covid-19 health pass. The demonstration took place on Wednesday 12 January, outside the National Assembly of the Republic of Bulgaria, with an estimated 3,000 people in attendance. Police intervened in the attempt to storm the parliament building, resulting in several protesters being injured. Clashes allegedly lasted for around one hour, with no arrests made.

UK

14 January 2022: Thirty migrants rescued off French coast

Thirty migrants have been rescued off the French coast, while one man has reportedly died. A major rescue operation was launched by French rescue services off the coast at Berck-sur-Mer after a dinghy carrying a large group of migrants attempting to cross the English Channel came into difficulty and a man fell overboard. The drowning is the first fatality in the Channel so far this year. The man was believed to be in his 20s and of Sudanese origin. Some of those rescued were also suffering from hypothermia.

Austria

15 January 2022: Thousands protest against mandatory vaccinations

Thousands of people joined protests in Vienna against mandatory vaccinations on Saturday. "The government must go!" the crowd shouted at the rally. Austria is set to be the first country to pass a mandate of vaccinations against Covid-19 in the European Union. There have been more than 1.4m cases in the country and over 14,000 deaths.

France

17 January 2022: Far-right candidate guilty of hate speech

Far-right candidate Eric Zemmour has been found guilty of hate speech and fined 10,000 euros by a court in Paris. The case against Zemmour was in relation to a TV appearance in which he described unaccompanied migrant children as "thieves," "rapists", and "murderers". Zemmour is known for his anti-immigration and anti-Islam views. According to reports, Zemmour's lawyers plan to appeal the decision.

Portugal

17 January 2022: Lisbon council fined over protester data sharing

Lisbon council are being fined for allegedly sharing details of protester information and data with foreign embassies. Lisbon City Hall has been lumped with a 1.25 million euro fine (about \$1.4m; £1m) for passing the details to the embassies outside which demonstrators had been picketing. Some 225 breaches of demonstrators' personal data have been recorded between 2018 and 2021, when details were shared with several countries, including Russia.

Germany

24 January 2022: Gunman dead after injuring several in Heidelberg incident

A lone gunman has shot himself dead after opening fire inside a lecture hall at Heidelberg University, leaving several other people injured. The incident occurred on Monday afternoon and the suspect - thought to be a university student - is said to have used a "long gun". It's believed at least four people have been injured, including some with serious injuries. A large operations remains underway at the university's campus in Neuenheimer Feld. People are advised to avoid the area.

Greece

25 January 2022: Thousands stranded on motorway amid snowstorm

Thousands of motorists have been rescued after becoming stranded on a motorway overnight amid a snowstorm near Athens. Groups were taken to the city's airport for shelter, as dozens of cars remained trapped on the road by the snow. Efforts to clear affected roads remain ongoing.



MENA

Syria: Prison battle offers reminder of Islamic State threat

On 20 January a car bomb exploded outside the al-Sina prison in the Ghweiran neighbourhood of al-Hasakah. The prison housed an estimated 4,000 jihadist fighters, many of them from the Islamic State (IS) group. Following the initial blast, hundreds of heavily armed gunmen swarmed the complex in a coordinated attack as IS prisoners inside fought and overpowered guards. Heavy fighting took place for over a week as the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) fought to recapture the prison from IS, which they did by the end of January. Hundreds were killed and around 400 prisoners are missing and thought to have escaped, according to the SDF. The attack was the most significant operation carried out by IS since their caliphate across Syria and Iraq collapsed in 2019.

While IS has remained active in both countries, conducting frequent but small-scale attacks against state security forces and rival groups, the assault on the prison is significant. It was evidence of the group's capabilities in Syria and sparked fears of an IS resurgence. It also highlighted the fact that large numbers of IS militants are detained in makeshift facilities across the country; in the case of al-Sina including hundreds of teenagers and children. The prison was squalid, overcrowded and the building itself was previously a school with a large wall built around its exterior. The SDF does not have the adequate resources to properly hold the IS militants, yet there is no process for them to be tried or released. The incident also exposed security and intelligence failings; there are multiple SDF checkpoints surrounding the prison, which the IS fighters were able to either evade or bribe their way through. It also took the SDF a week to recapture the facility, even with support of aircraft from the US-led international coalition.

In the aftermath of the prison attack, the SDF warned that IS intends to use it as a platform to take and hold more territory for a new caliphate. IS propaganda channels have been busy releasing articles about the group's strengths with renewed vigour, aimed not only at its fighters in the region but its affiliates around the world. However, in the early hours of Thursday morning, US special forces carried out an operation in the northern town of Atmeh, close to the border with Syria. US President Joe Biden later announced that IS leader Abu Ibrahim al-Hashimi al-Qurayshi died in the operation. US officials said he detonated an explosive device, killing himself and several members of his family. President Biden said it was "a final act of cowardice."

Qurayshi had been appointed as the group's leader in 2019 following the death of his predecessor, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi. While the killing of another IS leader is a significant political victory for Washington and its allies, and shifts the narrative away from a resurgent IS so quickly after the al-Hasakah attack, in reality the impact is likely to be small. The group is decentralised, one of the reasons why it has been so difficult to defeat. It survived the death of Baghdadi and it will survive the death of Qurayshi.



Libya

10 January 2022: Security forces break up migrant protest

The Libyan security forces have broken up a protest by migrants at a former UN-run facility in Tripoli. Hundreds of people took part in the sit-in at the community centre before troops intervened and made arrests. Those detained were sent to a detention centre in the nearby town of Ain Zara, while others were forced to flee. There are also unconfirmed reports that at least one person was shot during the unrest.

Tunisia

14 January 2022: Police fire water clash with protesters in Tunis

Tunisian police have fired tear gas and water cannons at protesters in central Tunis. Hundreds of people gathered on Habib Bourguiba Avenue in the capital on Friday to protest against the president. The water cannons were fired as one crowd approached the Interior Ministry, while a group of demonstrators broke through a police cordon. Opposition groups including Ennahdha, which was the largest party before Saied suspended parliament, have been calling for mass protests against the president over his moves to re-write the constitution.

Palestinian Authority

18 January 2022: Palestinians wounded in Israeli raid on village near Nablus

At least 20 Palestinians have been wounded during a protest in a village outside Nablus in the occupied West Bank. The Palestinian Red Crescent Society (PRCS) said most of the wounded suffered from tear gas inhalation, while one person was shot with rubber-coated bullets. Members of the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) targeted Burqa on Monday night.

Iraq

21 January 2022: Eleven soldiers killed in suspected IS attack

Eleven Iraqi soldiers have been killed in a suspected Islamic State (IS) attack in Diyala province. Gunmen targeted the troops as they slept in the al-Azim district early on Friday morning. Military reinforcements were sent to the area following the attack.

Turkey

24 January 2022: Istanbul hit by heavy snowfall

Istanbul has been hit by snowfall, prompting officials to issue travel warnings. Intercity bus services have been suspended until Tuesday morning, while public offices closed at 15:30 local time. Universities have also been

closed for two days. There have been several significant road accidents caused by the winter conditions; on Sunday three people died and 18 were wounded when a bus crashed into a ditch on a road connecting the Trans-European Motorway (TEM) to the Northern Marmara Motorway.

UAE

24 January 2022: Houthis launch missiles at Saudi Arabia and UAE

Yemen's Houthi rebel group has launched several missiles at Saudi Arabia and the UAE. In a statement, the UAE said it intercepted and destroyed two ballistic missiles over Abu Dhabi on Monday. "The remnants of the intercepted ballistic missiles fell in separate areas around Abu Dhabi," the UAE defence ministry said. Meanwhile, Saudi state media said that a ballistic missile wounded two people in Jizan in the early hours of Monday morning. A second missile was intercepted near Dhahran Al Janub.

Yemen

25 January 2022: Saudi-led coalition conducts fresh strikes against Houthis

The Saudi-led coalition has launched fresh strikes against Houthi targets in Marib and Al-Bayda. The coalition announced that 50 Houthi militants have been killed and nine military vehicles destroyed. Saudi state TV also announced that the coalition had launched operations against "legitimate targets" in Sana'a. Earlier it was announced that internet services had been restored in Yemen after a four-day outage, caused by previous coalition airstrikes.

Jordan

27 January 2022: Military kills 27 in shootout with smugglers at Syrian border

The Jordanian military has killed 27 suspected smugglers in a shootout at the border with Syria. The army said the suspects were attempting to transport an amphetamine known as Captagon. Several smugglers fled back to Syria following the exchange. Jordanian officials said Lebanon's Iran-backed Hezbollah are responsible for the smuggling from southern Syria.

Egypt

31 January 2022: Fire erupts in historic area of Cairo

A fire erupted in a historic area of Cairo on Sunday night. At least 11 people were wounded in the blaze, which started in a three-storey building in the Al-Hussein neighbourhood of the city, close to the historic Al-Hussein Mosque which is a UNESCO World Heritage Site.