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Week 1 Analysis

Strategic Intelligence and Foreign Affairs Initiative

Weekly Newsletter

Liberty University

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Ukrainian War Updates

BLUF

- Ukraine is implementing offensive war tactics, reclaiming territory seized by Russian troops, and continuing to develop its case against Russia for war crimes.

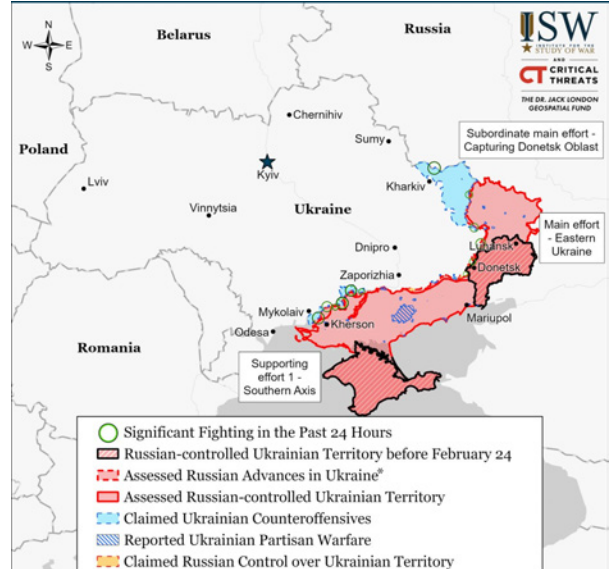
Analysis

Situation

- Significant fighting near Kherson
- Large-scale Russian retreat from Kharkiv
- Both sides taking heavy losses
- Putin is losing public support at home

Strategic Prediction

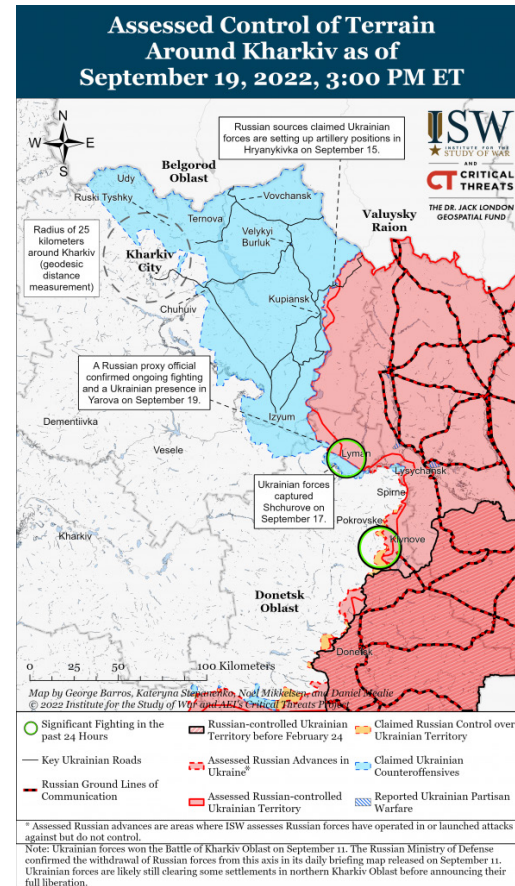
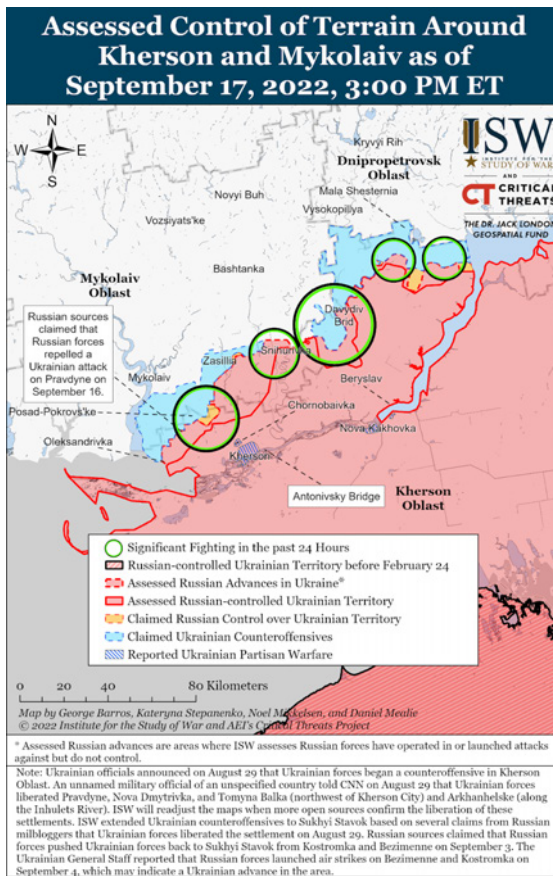
- Ukraine will begin running out of steam
- Russia becomes more dependent on irregular forces
- Return to pre-war positions in Northeast Ukraine



Ukraine’s Counteroffensives

- Diplomacy
 - Ukraine’s push to declare Russia a state sponsor of terrorism
 - Battles in the U.N.
 - Crimes against humanity
 - Defiance of Western values and international law
- Nuclear Weapons
 - Russia continues to face military and economic losses
 - Russia strikes Pivdenoukraiinsk nuclear power plant in Ukraine’s southern Mykolaiv region
- Attrition

Russia	Ukraine
80,000 Casualties	30,000-40,000 Casualties
4,000 Armored Vehicles	7,000-13,000 Civilian Casualties
Russia running low on missiles, ordinance, and soldiers	Ukraine facing resistance from Russia



Key Assumptions

- The Ukraine military leaders foresee that counter attacks and proactive measures against Russia will compel the troops to retreat.
- Ukraine's offensive tactics near Kherson have forced Russia to evaluate whether their troops should relocate from the east to the frontlines near Kharkiv.
- Russian troops are disorganized, lacking in morale, ill-equipped, and misinformed about the strengths of Ukraine's troops.
- Ukraine's success resulted from the nation's ability to disrupt Russian communication.

Conclusion

- Pressures mount from economic and military failures.
- Putin will turn to non-conventional weapons to assert his power.
- If Ukraine prioritized expediency in its counter-attacks, prevents Russia from discerning the nation's points of weakness and strength, and interferes with Russian communication, the nation may continue to liberate Russian occupied territory.

Sources

- [Lemonde](#)
- [Critical Threats](#)
- [WSJ](#)
- [Rand](#)
- [Reuters](#)
- [AEI](#)
- [Reuters](#)

China

BLUF

- As the Chinese Communist Party's 20th Party Congress approaches, the United States should expect China to continue to crack down on domestic dissent and to expand their international impact economically and militarily.

Analysis

20th Party Congress and Domestic Dissent

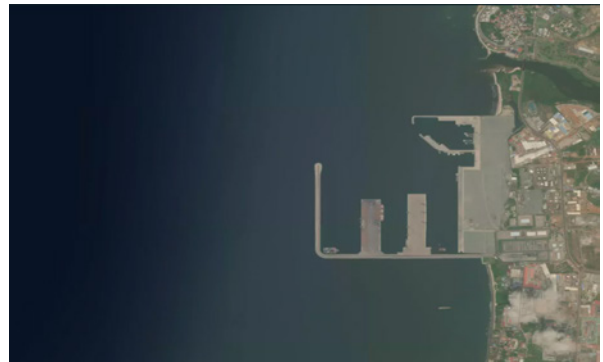
- Congress is set to begin on 16 October
- President Xi is expected to be selected for a third term and the next premier will be chosen.
- Recent backlash and dissent over the coronavirus have been seen and diminished throughout China.

Zhongxing-1E Satellite Launch

- On September 13, China launched the Zhongxing-1E satellite on a Long March 7A rocket into a geosynchronous orbit.
- The satellite will provide the following voice, data, radio, and television transmission services

Equatorial Guinea

- China has been the largest consumer of Equatorial Guinea's oil exports at 47.4%.
- Equatorial Guinea signed the Belt and Road Initiative in 2019
- Possible base is the Bata port in the Litoral province, it has the capability of refueling Chinese military vessels.



Ecuador

- Possible base for Chinese influence is the Guayaquil naval base, being the largest port in Ecuador
- The port and channel have been dredged to a depth of 12.4 meters.
- China has been illegally fishing around the Galápagos.



Conclusion

- China's increase in deployment of resources and materials into the African continent continues to increase their fiscal debt and material dependency, growing the Communist influence within the African countries. This continues to create more concern for the United States and their political allies.

Sources

- [Reuters](#)
 - [BBC](#)
 - [NY Times](#)
 - [The Diplomat](#)
-

Armenian and Azerbaijan Conflict

BLUF

- The Armenian-Azeri conflict is fueled by ethnic tensions and will likely remain confined to that region, but should it expand, major powers like the U.S. and Russia will become more involved.

Analysis

Overview

- Conflict has begun again between the Armenians and Azerbaijanis over the Nagorno-Karabakh region, with nearly 50 dead on both sides in an encounter on September 13th, 2022. Russia has since brokered a ceasefire between the two nations, which has remained upheld through September 18th. Though there are calls from Armenia and D.C. policymakers seeking international intervention, U.S. and other foreign intervention remains unlikely. Russia is likely to continue contributions toward maintaining regional stability to retain its sphere of influence and to avoid another international conflict while it is engaged in the war in Ukraine. The ceasefire is likely to be short-lived as conflict flare-ups have occurred since the conclusion of the first Nagorno-Karabakh War in 1994.

CONFLICT

Armenia-Azerbaijan tensions

Neighbouring countries long at odds over Nagorno-Karabakh, trade blame for the deadly clashes, accusing each other of shelling several border towns.



© Mapbox, © OpenStreetMap
Source: Al Jazeera | September 13, 2022

@AJLabs ALJAZEERA

Chronology

- 1994: Russia brokers a ceasefire that effectively ends the first Nagorno-Karabakh War that began in the late 1980s.
- 2008-2020: Clashes along the Nagorno-Karabakh border emerge sporadically between Armenian and Azerbaijani soldiers.
- 2020: New Nagorno-Karabakh War lasts six weeks within September to November.
- Sept 2022: Largest attack since the brief 6-week war in 2020, with nearly 50 deaths on both the Armenian and Azerbaijani sides reported.

Key Assumptions

Assumption	Evidence	Supported, Unsupported, Caveated
The Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict is fueled by ethnic tensions.	Historical chronology	Supported
The United States remains largely uninvolved in the	The U.S. has expressed that it will not involve itself despite the	Supported

conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan.	significant historical humanitarian aid and investment into the Azerbaijani Navy.	
Russia benefits from stability in the region to serve as a buffer against NATO and the Middle East.	Russian's involvement by negotiating ceasefires may be a way to continue Russia authority and increase its sphere of influence.	Caveated
The relations/stability between and within Azerbaijan and Armenia will crumble and collapse.	The two nations have demonstrated their resiliency and resistance to fall.	Caveated
The Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict will cease or be held at bay by the Russian negotiated ceasefire.	This is a long-term conflict that has taken the form of two wars since the late 1980s and several significant encounters between 2008 to 2022.	Unsupported
The Republic of Artsakh dominantly controlling the Nagorno-Karabakh region will gain autonomy and international recognition.	While this authority may be the dominant actor in the disputed region, it is a political faction that is supported by Armenia consisting of ethnic Armenians. Both Armenia and the Republic of Artsakh would prefer that Nagorno-Karabakh be ceded from Azerbaijan to Armenia. The international community has no incentive or long-term necessity to recognize the Republic as a legitimate state, so it is unreasonable to think international recognition would be granted.	Unsupported

Conclusion

- While flare-ups continue within the region, the conflict will most likely remain confined to the region due to the strong ethnic tensions that fuel the fight. Other countries are paying close attention to the region, but it is unlikely that major foreign powers will become involved unless further provocations force a need for increased aid.

Sources

- [NY Times](#)
 - [Aljazeera](#)
 - [Crisis Group](#)
 - [Reuters](#)
 - [Aljazeera](#)
 - CIA World Factbook: [Azerbaijan](#) and [Armenia](#)
-

North Korea Declares Itself a Nuclear State

BLUF

- On September 9th, North Korea declared itself a Responsible Nuclear State in which they are preparing to complete more nuclear weapons tests. Law promotes them as a responsible nuclear state because the law bans them from sharing nuclear arms or technology with other countries and committing to more tests to prevent miscalculations. This law also commits themselves to preemptive nuclear strikes to protect themselves.

Analysis

Nuclear Declaration

- This replaces older North Korean law mandating only retaliatory nuclear strikes.
- Response to South Korea's "Kill Chain" policy, which allows preemptive strikes in similar situations.

Implications

- Kim has taken all denuclearization talks and action off the table.
- Broad and ambiguous stipulations for nuclear attack gives pause to international action with regards to North Korea.
- Under certain precepts, nuclear capabilities are now subject to automatic military launch.

Strategic Predictions

- Renewed nuclear testing is imminent
 - Escalated rhetoric and UN identified preparations
 - Increased and enhanced ballistic missile testing in the past year
 - Likely next step in attempt to demonstrate force and power
- North Korea will proliferate nuclear technology to other countries
 - Long history of going against international limitations and agreements to end such action, self-imposed limitations will not be any more binding
 - Earlier this year sought deals to supply Russia with missiles and ammo
 - History of nuclear proliferation sales with the Middle East

Conclusion

- North Korea declaring itself as a Responsible Nuclear State should warrant a watchful eye from the United States on North Korea as they are increasing their nuclear weapons tests.

Sources

- [CRS Reports](#)
- [The Diplomat](#)
- [Reuters](#)
- [BBC](#)
- [US News](#)
- [The Guardian](#)
- [AP News](#)
- [BBC](#)

Activity at North Korea's nuclear test site

4 March



Source: Maxar, Middlebury Institute of International Studies

BBC

US Railroad Strike

BLUF

- Railroad workers were threatening to strike over scheduling, work life balance, and pay raise issues. A tentative deal was struck between Unions and the Rails; however, the deal hangs in the balance as Railroad workers are still unsure of the details on sick leave and days off. If any of the rail unions fail to ratify the new contract on Thursday September 22nd then 115,000+ railroad workers will head to strike.

Analysis

Overview

- Strike threatened: September 16th
- White House panel recommended that unionized workers get a wage increase of 24% between 2020-2025.
- Tentative deal to give workers a 14.1% pay increase has delayed strike.
- Ratification date: September 22nd
- Creates a short-term solution to the railroad strike
- Freight railroads are threatening to halt the transport of hazardous materials and sensitive cargo if strike is enacted.

SWOT

<p>Strengths U.S. Chamber of Commerce estimates a \$2 billion/day cost for a full rail shutdown, this prevents a full rail shutdown.</p>	<p>Weaknesses Would affect transport of fertilizer and chlorine, potentially causing shortages. Bulk shipments would stop on Monday. Amtrak to reduce passenger services on Tuesday.</p>
<p>Opportunities Could help to create a more stable relationship between railroads and Union workers.</p>	<p>Threats Proposal creates only a short-term solution.</p>

Conclusion

- The Union's failure to ratify the contract would lead to the first rail strike in 20 years and is projected to cost the United States \$2 billion a day. Furthermore, it will likely disrupt multiple supply chains, create more supply shortages, and economic setbacks across the country. However, a strike is not likely to occur in the next couple of weeks while the country awaits the outcome of the union votes.

Sources

- [WSJ](#)
- [The Hill](#)
- [Yahoo](#)
- [Labor Notes](#)

“The question shouldn't be what we ought to do, but what we can do” – Rory Stewart
