



# FOCUS 2018

The Norwegian Intelligence Service's  
assessment of current security challenges





The Norwegian Intelligence Service's annual report Focus is one of four threat and risk assessments published each year. The other three are published by the Norwegian Police Security Service (PST), the Norwegian National Security Service (NSM) and the Directorate for Civil Protection and Emergency Planning (DSB).

■ **The Norwegian Intelligence Service (NIS)** is Norway's foreign intelligence service. Although subordinate to the Norwegian Chief of Defence, NIS does not concern itself exclusively with military matters. NIS's main mission is to warn of external threats to Norway and high-priority Norwegian interests, to support the Norwegian Armed Forces and the defence alliances Norway is part of, and to assist in political decision-making processes by supplying information of significance to Norwegian foreign, security and defence policy. This year's assessment, Focus 2018, contains NIS's analysis of the current situation and expected developments in geographic and thematic areas considered particularly relevant to Norwegian security and national interests. The assessment has a one-year timeframe and is published in the first quarter of 2018.

■ **The Norwegian National Security Authority (NSM)** is responsible for preventative national security. NSM offers advice on and supervises safeguarding of information, objects and infrastructure of national significance. NSM also has a national responsibility to detect, alert and coordinate responses to serious ICT attacks. In its report Risiko 2018 NSM assesses the risk of Norway being subjected to espionage, sabotage, acts of terror and other serious incidents. The assessment is published in the first quarter of 2018.

■ **The Directorate for Civil Protection and Emergency Planning (DSB)** is responsible for maintaining an overview of various risks and vulnerabilities in society. The DSB has published scenario analyses since 2011. The analyses discuss the risks of major incidents in Norway; incidents for which we should be prepared. The analyses include natural events, major accidents and malicious acts. The timeframe is longer than the annual assessments published by the other three agencies.

■ **The Norwegian Police Security Service (PST)** is responsible for preventing and investigating crimes that threaten national security. PST's annual threat assessment discusses incidents, mainly in Norway, that could affect Norwegian security and harm national interests in the year ahead. Incidents include threats from foreign intelligence services, relevant intelligence targets and the services' pattern of operation in Norway. The assessment also discusses threats from non-state actors, particularly the threat of politically motivated violence by extremist groups or individuals. The analysis has a one-year timeframe and is published in the first quarter of 2018.

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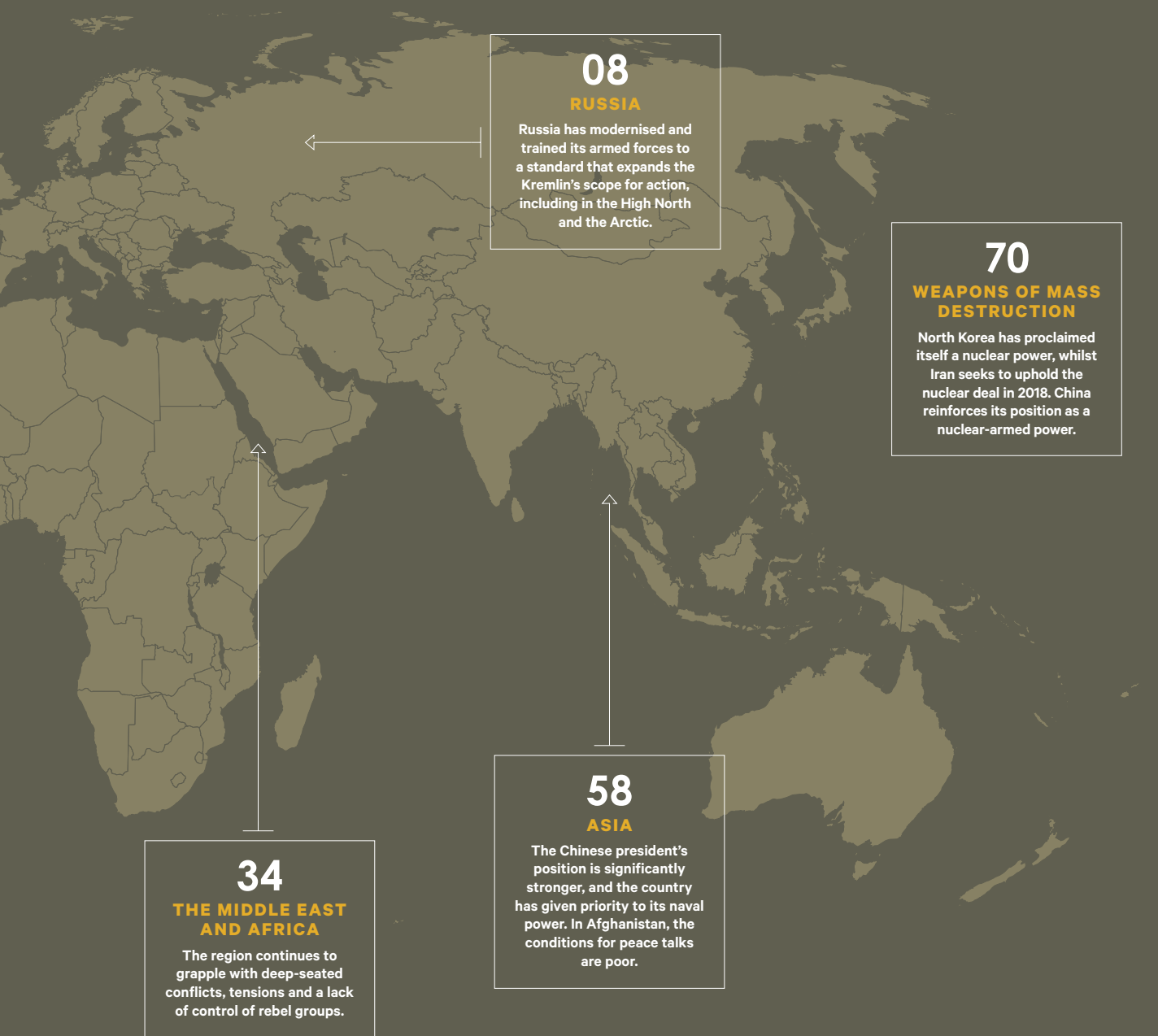
## CYBERSPACE

Russian intelligence and security services make active use of social media in order to exert influence and collect intelligence.

# 48

## INTERNATIONAL TERRORISM

Despite ISIL's military defeat, foreign fighters in Syria and Iraq could make use of the skills they have acquired.



# Preface

Lieutenant General Morten Haga Lunde

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**F**ocus is the Norwegian Intelligence Service's annual unclassified assessment of key development trends across the geographic and thematic areas the service is tasked with monitoring. Focus offers a prognosis for expected developments in the year ahead.

At the start of 2018, we are seeing two persistent trends developing in parallel to one another. One is a decline in governments' legitimacy and their ability to exercise authority at the national level, seen predominantly in the Middle East, Africa and Asia. Non-state actors, including terrorist groups that threaten Europe and Norway, have considerable scope for action in these areas.

The other is a shift towards an international order whereby several great powers with long-term aims seek to strengthen their own position at the expense of other great powers and their scope for action. They use a combination of traditional instruments of power and more subtle means – including intelligence, influence and cyber sabotage operations – to pursue their aims.

What these two parallel trends mean is that Norway is facing an extremely complex and rapidly changing threat environment. My hope is that Focus 2018 will provide a deeper understanding of matters that affect Norway's security and interests.

**Lieutenant General Morten Haga Lunde**  
Director Norwegian Intelligence Service

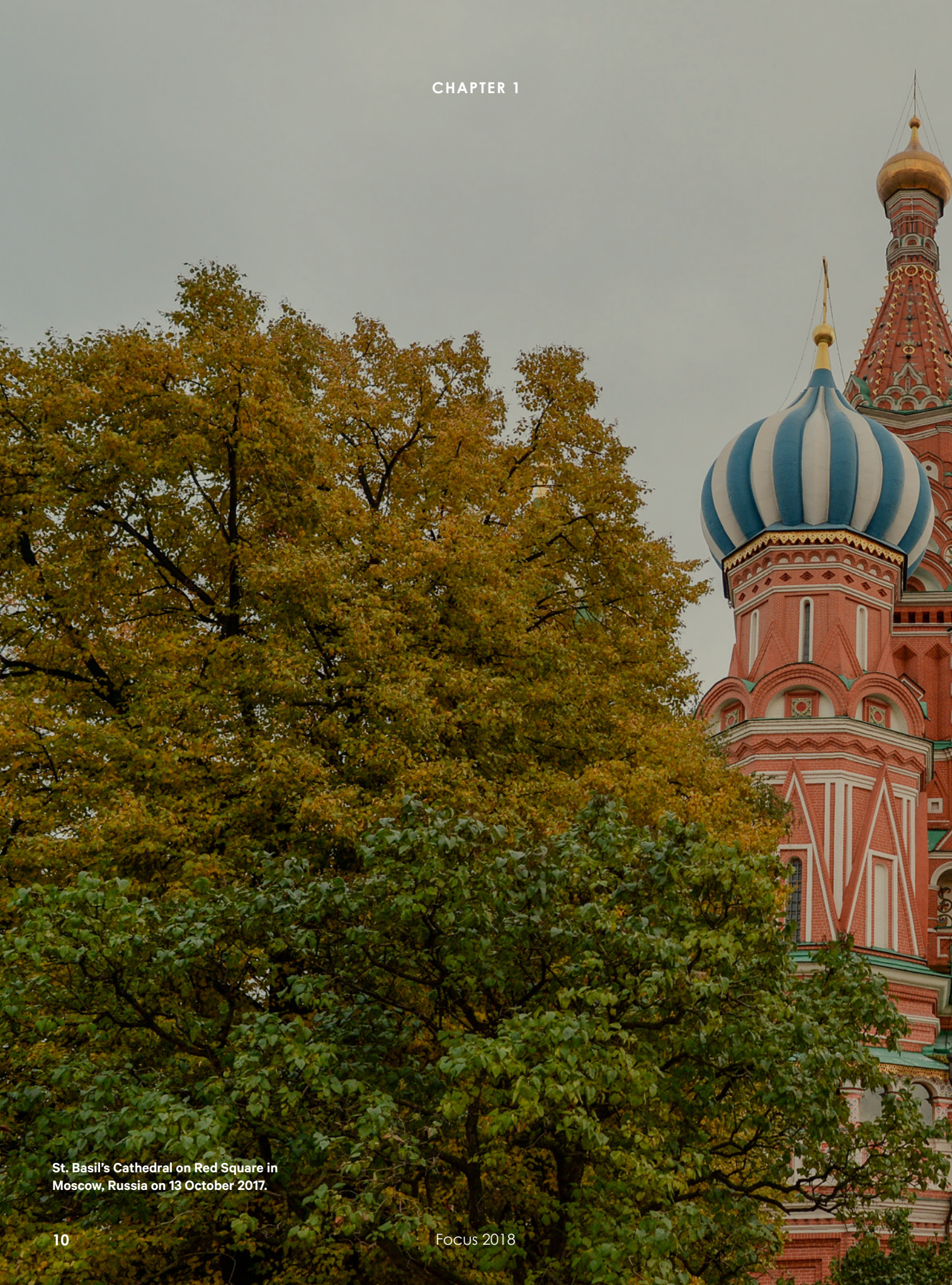
*Editing concluded on 1 February 2018.*







## CHAPTER 1



St. Basil's Cathedral on Red Square in Moscow, Russia on 13 October 2017.





# RUSSIA

**Power has become increasingly centralised to the president's office. The authorities have tightened domestic control in order to avoid political opposition. NATO is increasingly portrayed as a threat. Despite persistent budget deficits, Russia will continue to strengthen its Arctic presence and to pursue its destabilisation policy towards Ukraine.**

### SUMMARY

■ At the start of the year, the March 2018 presidential election looms large in Russia. There are no candidates capable of challenging Vladimir Putin. Recent years' re-shuffles in the state apparatus have led to increased centralisation of power into the hands of the president. Additionally, the authorities have tightened internal control to stem political and social unrest.

■ Meanwhile, Russia is facing tough economic and social challenges. Economic growth is not strong enough for the country to avoid persistent budget deficits. This situation limits the authorities' scope for action and highlights the need for structural reforms to secure future economic growth. The political and economic elite will resist any fundamental economic reform that could threaten their power base.

■ The Arctic's strategic and economic significance ensures that the region remains a high priority for the Russian authorities. Increasingly, Russia is emphasising the threat posed by NATO to Russian interests in the Arctic. In consequence, the authorities are seeking to enhance their ability to maintain a presence in and exert control over the waters of the High North.

■ The Russian objectives of exerting control over neighbouring states and preventing their integration into NATO and the EU remain unchanged. The Kremlin will seek to strengthen cooperation with former Soviet states and continue its destabilisation of Ukraine. The conflict in Ukraine, combined with Russia's frosty relationship with the West, restricts Moscow's freedom of action on the foreign policy front. The authorities are therefore looking for new international arenas on which to play a central role; Russia's involvement in Syria should be considered in light of this.

■ Russia has modernised and trained its armed forces to a standard that expands the Kremlin's scope for action, including in the High North and the Arctic. In 2017, Russian activity near Norwegian borders reflected this development, with the deployment of reinforcements and instances of more provocative behaviour. It stands to reason that we may be headed for a new normal in the High North, characterised by Russian reinforcements training more in the Arctic and more active use of the military to signal Russian views.

■ Russia continues its destabilisation of Ukraine and military involvement in Syria, and has proved capable of conducting operations across long distances. This will likely continue in 2018, with submarine deployments to the Atlantic and the Mediterranean.



A photograph of two Russian servicemen in white winter gear and goggles, riding a snowmobile in a snowy, arctic environment. In the background, there is a metal structure, possibly a radio tower or antenna. The scene is set in a vast, open, and cold landscape.

RUSSIA

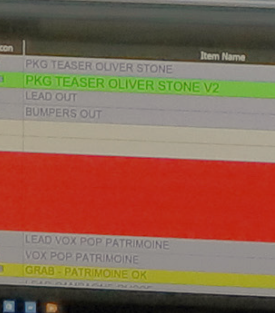
**Russia has modernised  
and trained its armed  
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North and the Arctic.**

Russian servicemen on patrol at the Nagurskoye military base on Alexandra Land, part of the remote Arctic archipelago of Franz Josef Land, Russia.



Russian broadcaster RT, formerly known as Russia Today.

RUSSIA



[ DOMESTIC POLICY ]

## THE AUTHORITIES TIGHTEN INTERNAL CONTROL

President Vladimir Putin's position is strong. Recent years' reshuffles in the state apparatus have further increased the president's power. Furthermore, the authorities have tightened internal control in order to handle political opposition and social unrest.



2018 is an election year, and the Russian authorities' main priority is continuity and stability. They have taken a number of steps to tighten control and secure popular support, and sweeping personnel changes in the lead-up to the presidential election have strengthened the president's control of both the regions and the central administration. Developments in the past year have reinforced the political system's authoritarian characteristics, and concentrated political and economic power among a small elite circle.

The large-scale replacement of governors in 2015–17 illustrates a long-standing trend in Putin's Russia of establishing a strong central power and weak regional autonomy. Russia's poor economic performance has had a major impact on the regions, and the governor reshuffles have widened the distance between regional politicians and the people. Only a minority of the new governors have links to the regions they have been set to govern, and fewer than before have experience from local businesses, parliamentary assemblies or other positions involving close contact with the local population.

The governors' lack of regional affiliation carries a heightened risk of conflict between central and regional elites, and of poor governance in regions that have traditionally required governors with deep insight into the local balance of power and challenges. Collectively, the replacements illustrate the strict limitations placed on the regions' democratic processes.

In addition to being motivated by economic efficiency concerns, the Kremlin is likely seeking to use the governor reshuffles to create an image of change and improvement prior to the presidential election. The Kremlin's intention is to spark hope of social and economic betterment, thereby cementing the president's already strong popular support.

The central and regional personnel changes come on top of a continued tightening of control of civil society. The authorities are working to control people's online and social media activity, with a view to restricting opinion-sharing and organising opposition to the authorities. The legal system is increasingly becoming a tool for the government and is being put to active use against the opposition and foreign actors inside Russia. Moreover, Russian media remain under state control, with the result that due process, freedom of speech and freedom to organise are all severely restricted.

Protests in Russia rarely have a nation-wide reach. The Russian opposition consists of several relatively small and fragmented groups. Large geographic distances and variations in economy, demography and industries have made it rare for protests to spread across regional

borders. The anti-corruption demonstrations staged by Aleksey Navalny in March and June 2017 were therefore deviations from the norm. As economic challenges look set to mount in the years ahead, protests based on economic issues may have greater power to mobilise at the national level.

**«The authorities are working to control people's online and social media activity, with a view to restricting opinion-sharing and organised opposition.»**

The opposition lacks candidates genuinely capable of challenging Putin in the March presidential elections. Its inability to mobilise across geographic distances on single issues makes the opposition's activities manageable for the authorities, and demonstrates the leadership's relative strength vis-à-vis the opposition.

The combination of regional economic challenges, local issues and national campaigns that resonate locally could potentially become a greater challenge to the authorities. Regional discontent is unlikely to pose a threat to domestic stability in 2018, but will continue to challenge the government in the coming presidential term.

### **Long-term economic challenges to persist.**

**The slight increase in economic growth seen in 2017 has eased some of the pressure on the authorities. Nevertheless, persistent budget deficits will limit their freedom of action. Future economic growth will increasingly depend on structural reforms, changes that the political and economic elite will resist for fear of losing their power base.**

Although not in crisis, the Russian economy is facing severe long-term challenges. After contracting for two years, it grew by approximately 1.8 per cent in 2017. However, this modest positive development came from a poor starting point, and can mostly be ascribed to the oil price, which has recovered from its 2015–16 nadir.

A lack of diversification means that the Russian economy will remain heavily dependent on petroleum. The falling oil price, continuation of Western sanctions and subsequent recession all continue to restrict the →

## RUSSIA



government's economic freedom of action, including its ability to fully finance the defence sector. Despite the fact that all parts of the government budget have been cut in recent years, budget plans for the coming years continue to run deficits. As a result, the negative budget balance will continue to deplete financial reserves. The authorities will have to compensate by increasing government borrowing – which is modest – and will consequently have to spend more on servicing debts than in the past.

The current moderate rate of growth will not suffice in the longer term, and future economic growth will depend on the government's willingness and ability to reform the economy. Due to the close links between the elite and the economic system, the Russian authorities are


unlikely to introduce post-election changes that could challenge the elite's interests.

Although unemployment rates remain low, the proportion of people living below the poverty line continues to increase. Endemic corruption, increasing poverty rates and economic differences between the regions are all challenges which foster discontent. The population is ageing, and the proportion of working-age people is becoming critically low. Structural weaknesses and socioeconomic challenges, combined with continued Western sanctions, limit the Russian economy's long-term growth potential. As a result, the Russian leadership is less well equipped to meet new crises going forward.



A pedestrian passes by a billboard with an image of Russia's President Vladimir Putin and the slogan 'Strong president – Strong Russia!' in Moscow.





The new OKEAN-class vessel  
Polyarnaya Zvezda sailing in  
the Barents Sea.

RUSSIA

[ THE ARCTIC ]

## RUSSIA SEEKS LEADERSHIP ROLE AND CONTROL.

The Arctic's strategic and economic significance ensures that the region remains a high priority for the Russian authorities. In 2018, they will continue to work to improve Russia's ability to maintain a presence and exert control in the Arctic, whilst simultaneously seeking to promote continued international cooperation in selected areas.



The Russian coastguard took receipt of three new vessels in 2017, and two more are under construction. The introduction of new capabilities constitutes a significant reinforcement of Russia's ability to exert control in the waters of the High North.

Meanwhile, Russia depends on international cooperation to extract resources from the Arctic. In order to achieve its regional ambitions, it is therefore essential for Russia to balance the desire for a high degree of national control with a stable and predictable climate for international cooperation. A conference called 'The Arctic: Territory of Dialogue', which took place in Arkhangelsk in March 2017, exemplifies how Russia promotes international cooperation and investment in the region, albeit under Russian control and leadership.

The rapprochement between Russia and China in the Arctic is largely due to the fact that, owing to Western sanctions and recession, Russia is left with few other options. In summer 2017, the Arctic was officially incorporated into China's so-called Silk Road initiative, a political initiative linking China more closely to the rest of the world. Chinese involvement in the Arctic includes participation on the Arctic Council, research, alternative future transport routes and investment in Russian energy and infrastructure projects. Russia seeks Chinese investment in order to realise its own projects, but will be wary of granting China greater influence or an increased presence in the Arctic.

Chinese investment has been instrumental to the timely completion of the prestigious Yamal LNG project. The start of production on the Yamal Peninsula also enables continued development and investment in the export of liquefied natural gas. A number of deals have already been signed with Chinese investors to start planning another LNG plant, the so-called Arctic LNG-2. For Russia, greater Chinese involvement presents both possibilities and challenges in the Arctic. Russia's enduring need for foreign capital and technology, combined with continued Western sanctions, creates opportunities for capital-rich non-Western actors.

Developments in the export of natural resources to the Asian market is one of the reasons why Russia is investing in the North-East Passage as an international trade route. In August 2017, an ice-going tanker from the Yamal LNG

plant conducted a test journey from Melkøya, Norway to a South Korean port via the North-East Passage. The journey took two-thirds of the time it takes to travel via the Suez Canal.

### **«Russia seeks Chinese investment in order to realise its own projects, but will be wary of granting China greater influence or an increased presence in the Arctic.»**

The sanctions regime continues to prevent Western participation in exploration drilling and development of hydrocarbon deposits on Russia's Arctic continental shelf. This, combined with the fact that oil prices are now much lower than they were when the companies obtained their licenses, has made Russia – like the rest of the world – more hesitant to launch high-cost offshore projects.

Nevertheless, Russia has an ambition to develop these petroleum resources in the longer term, and exploratory activity on Russia's northern continental shelf was at similar levels in 2017 as in 2016. In 2018, companies will continue to map parts of the shelf in greater detail, including by using 3D technology obtained by state-controlled actors in 2017.

The single greatest limiting factor for activity and projects in the Arctic is the Russian economy. However, the Arctic's strategic and economic significance ensures that the region will remain a high priority despite economic fluctuations.

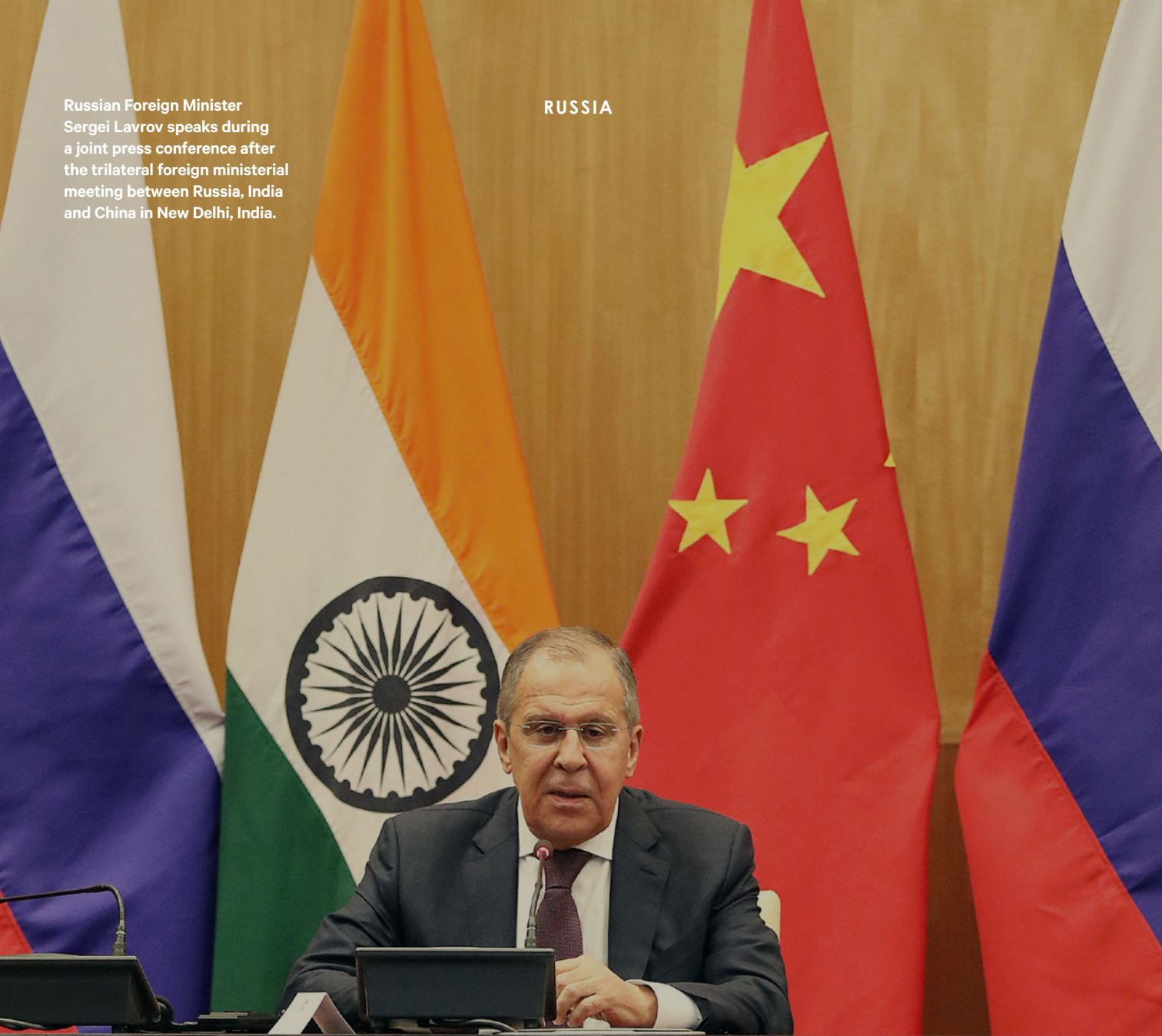


Developments in the export of natural resources to the Asian market is one of the reasons why Russia is investing in the North-East Passage as an international trade route.



Russian Foreign Minister  
Sergei Lavrov speaks during  
a joint press conference after  
the trilateral foreign ministerial  
meeting between Russia, India  
and China in New Delhi, India.

RUSSIA



[ FOREIGN POLICY ]

## RELATIONSHIP WITH THE WEST TO REMAIN STRAINED.

Security policy tensions with the West limit Russia's freedom of action, and the Russian authorities are therefore actively seeking new international arenas on which to play a central role.

Tense relations with the West will continue to frame Russian foreign policy in 2018. The Russian authorities believe that NATO is boosting its military capability, including the development of a missile defence, near Russian borders, and considers this activity a key threat. One of the Kremlin's main aims is to prevent the EU and NATO from expanding into its near abroad. One of the ways it is seeking to achieve this aim is by exploiting internal political divisions within and between states.

Meanwhile, Russia is seeking to strengthen its position as an actor and mediator in key conflicts where the West will be forced to deal with the Kremlin in order to find solutions.

In order to present itself as a counterweight to the West, the Kremlin will seek to strengthen Russia's role outside its near abroad. Tense relations with the United States will prompt Russia to seek out arenas where the Americans will be forced to heed Russian views. This is particularly apparent in conflict zones such as the Middle East, and on sensitive international issues such as the North Korean nuclear programme, where Russia may decide to take on the role of mediator.

Due to economic recession, Russia has increased cooperation with China, especially in the field of energy, where Western sanctions have made it difficult to gain access to technology and investment. Relations between Russia and China are characterised by limited trust, and there is often a wide gap between stated ambitions and realised projects. The Sino-Russian partnership largely relies on economic deals and shared views on key international issues.

### **Russia exerts growing influence in the Middle East.**

**Russia has succeeded in achieving a number of the aims behind its military operation in Syria. Moreover, the Kremlin's political efforts have helped realise its ambition of serving as an alternative to the United States as a key external supporter of Middle Eastern countries. Russia will continue and seek to expand its presence and influence in the region.**

In 2018, Russia will continue to build on what the leadership considers a successful strategy in the Syrian conflict. Through its military and political involvement, the Russians have helped entrench the Assad regime's position whilst securing a Russian presence in the Mediterranean in the form of permanent military bases. Moreover, Moscow has taken the lead on finding a political solution for Syria's future.

Moscow will seek to strengthen its influence in the Middle East through political, economic and military means, and by acting as a mediator in the region's conflicts. In the longer term, deals signed with key regional actors such as Turkey, Iran, Israel, Saudi Arabia and Egypt for the sale of defence materiel, energy collaborations and trade could serve Russian military and economic interests; in this way, Russia will be able to exert influence on political developments in both Syria and the Middle East as a whole.

Meanwhile, Russia will seek to maintain its collaboration with the United States in areas where the two countries have shared interests, including counter-terrorism.

### **The near abroad to remain Moscow's top priority.**

**Russia continues to increase its influence in former Soviet states, and retains its destabilisation policy towards Ukraine.**


Political developments in the former Soviet Union have a direct impact on Russian security and national interests, and Russia will therefore remain politically, economically and militarily active in these countries. It will be important for the Kremlin to develop organisations such as the Collective Security Treaty Organisation (CSTO) and the Eurasian Economic Union, in an effort to link their member states more closely to Russia. However, Russia's recession hampers its ability to draw neighbouring countries into closer, more committed economic partnerships.

Russian positions on the Ukraine conflict remain unchanged, and Russia's long-term aim continues to be to influence Ukraine's foreign policy orientation. Russia will continue supporting the rebels in eastern Ukraine in order to put pressure on Kiev and attempt to destabilise the political situation in the country.

One of Russia's key foreign policy aims is to become a great power with influence over major international issues. In 2018, we will therefore see Russian attempts at enhancing the country's presence in regions other than those mentioned above. In Afghanistan, Russia will remain in contact with the key political actors, including the Taliban, in order to protect Russian security policy interests. In Libya, Russia will continue to support General Haftar and play a key diplomatic role, while the political and military cooperation with Egypt will also remain a priority.

To summarise, in 2018 we will see Moscow focusing on its interests in Russia's near abroad, whilst increasing the scope and intensity of its presence and involvement in other regions.





Surface-to-air missile launchers and S-300 anti-aircraft systems move to firing positions during the Russian military exercise Zapad-2017.

RUSSIA

[ THE RUSSIAN ARMED FORCES ]

## TOWARDS A NEW NORMAL NEAR NORWEGIAN BORDERS.

Russia has modernised and trained its armed forces to a standard which offers the Kremlin increased scope for action, including in the High North and the Arctic. Throughout 2017, Russian activity near Norwegian borders mirrored this trend, with the use of reinforcements and instances of more provocative behaviour. It stands to reason that we may be headed for a new normal in the High North, characterised by Russian reinforcements training more in the Arctic and more active use of the military to signal Russian views.

Militarily, the Kola Peninsula is extremely important to Russia. The strategic submarines, whose home bases are found in the fjords near the border to Norway, patrol the waters of the High North to offer strategic deterrence, aimed in particular at the United States. The main mission of the forces located on the Kola Peninsula is to protect the submarines and their bases. Their ability to perform this task is enhanced with the addition of new equipment and increased training, which in turn increases Russian scope for action near Norwegian borders. In recent years, the region's economic significance has increased as well, as potential energy deposits have become the subject of greater attention. As a result, the High North and the Arctic have been central to Russia's military armament programmes.

At the overarching military level, Russia has grouped much of the Russian Arctic under the Northern Fleet's joint strategic command. Cold War bases are being rehabilitated, and new bases are under construction along the North-East Passage. Investment in mobile systems, special forces and long-range precision-guided weapons enhances Russian military capability in all areas. The reinforcement concept ensures that the armed forces are able to achieve short-term local superiority relatively quickly.

The reinforcement concept is trained regularly by rail and air, as seen during the autumn exercise in 2017 when Kola was reinforced with a significant number of troops. Since 2013, the transfer and training of airborne forces has become part of the new normal. The airborne units are considered an elite force and are characterised by high levels of training, high mobility and short response times. They may be transferred and inserted into an area of operation very quickly, either by aircraft, helicopter or parachute.

Training is important to the airborne forces' ability to operate in Arctic conditions, and to cooperate with local units. Current developments must be seen in light of Russia's investment in the High North, where large distances and a lack of infrastructure make the use of airborne forces highly relevant. Developments in general, and the reinforcement concept in particular, enhance the Northern Fleet's ability to plan, coordinate and lead large-scale, complex operations. During Sergei Shoigu's time as defence minister, we have also seen the resumption and expansion of snap exercises. This heightens Russia's military capability in the High North, and shortens warning times for force build-ups near Norwegian borders.

The new normal in Russian exercise activity involves larger and more frequent exercises near Norwegian borders. To summarise, we expect a high level of military activity in 2018, with snap readiness exercises, strategic sorties and testing of new weapons systems. Combined

with developments in the Russian armed forces near Norwegian borders and changes to operational patterns, this suggests that we are headed for a new military normal in the years ahead.

### **Military power increasingly important to Russian foreign policy.**

**Through its military involvement in Syria, Russia has proved capable of conducting military operations across long distances. This trend is likely to continue in the years ahead, with the continued deployment of submarines to the Atlantic and Mediterranean.**

Russia is using military power abroad with considerable success. Politically, the country has proved a credible partner capable of responding quickly and projecting power forcefully. Russian forces have gained considerable experience with planning operations and conducting campaigns. Both during the Ukraine conflict and the Syrian operation, Russia has proved capable of coordinating various instruments of state power in pursuit of a common foreign policy goal. This includes the ability to conduct and maintain operations across long distances over time, an ability that will be honed in the years ahead.

Russia has also given priority to establishing a permanent military presence in the Mediterranean. Over the next two years, the Black Sea Fleet's new cruise missile-carrying submarines will offer the option of continuous patrols if necessary. Meanwhile, a support hub in the Russian-controlled part of Tartus port will be modernised and expanded. Regardless of whether the Black Sea Fleet's submarines are used in the Black Sea or intermittently deployed to the Mediterranean, they increase overall capability and endurance in the region.

Elsewhere, Russia's military advisory support to Libya's General Haftar is expected to continue, and the military cooperation with Egypt to develop further. Russia's involvement in Afghanistan is expected to increase in the years ahead; Moscow will likely consider giving the Afghan government support to acquire military equipment whilst simultaneously strengthening its dialogue with the Taliban.

Russia's military engagements abroad continue to serve as arenas for testing, demonstrating and marketing new military equipment. Long-range precision-guided weapons form part of what Russia terms 'non-nuclear strategic deterrence', and the country has used its involvement in Syria to launch a number of long-range land-attack missiles. Although the primary purpose is to evaluate missile function and train planning mechanisms, →

it also serves as a show of force to the outside world. In other words, the demonstrations form the centrepiece of a broadly based information campaign, in which deterrence likely outweighs the military-tactical impact on the Syrian civil war. Moreover, media attention helps market products from the Russian arms industry, including combat aircraft, helicopters, air defence systems and tactical weapons systems.

### Defence economy under pressure, yet modernisation continues.

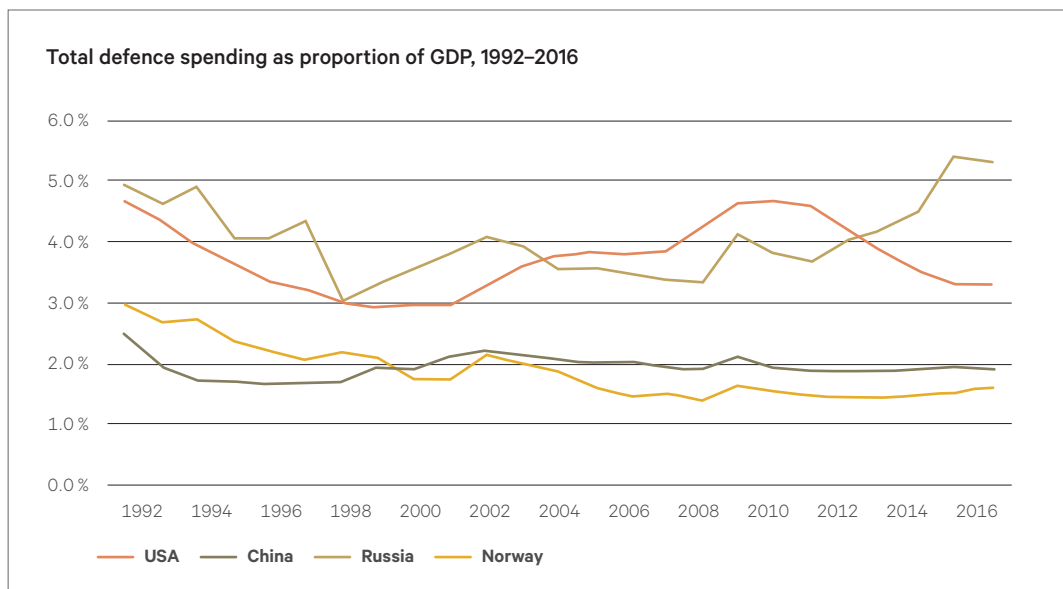
**Budget cuts will not prevent new state-of-the-art equipment from entering operational service. GPV-2027, the armament programme for the coming decade, is expected to be launched in 2018.**

The Russian leadership's desire for a powerful military endures, despite a real-term budget cut of 14 per cent in 2017 compared to 2016. According to the budget plans further, albeit smaller, cuts are planned for the coming years.

As a proportion of federal spending, defence allocations will likely stabilise at a slightly lower level than in recent years. Both in the current (revised) budget period and the budgetary guidelines for the coming three years, spending on the budget item 'National defence' is planned to amount to approx. 17 per cent. By comparison, defence spending exceeded 20 per cent in 2015 and 2016.

If the budgets for the period to 2020 are realised as planned, the armed forces will be facing cuts. However, it remains uncertain whether the cuts will be as extensive as planned. The political circumstances in play when the 2017 budget and the 2018-19 budget plans were formulated are liable to change quickly, including the need to limit the deficit and spare social spending from cuts in the lead-up to the presidential election. Allocations could increase should the security situation require it, or if the budgetary balance proves healthier than planned – for instance if the oil price recovers more strongly than planned for. Regardless, defence spending is highly likely to remain substantial, measured both as a proportion of GDP and as a proportion of state spending.

The successor to the GPV-2020 armament programme, GPV-2027, was meant to be launched in 2016, but has been postponed by President Putin. The programme was originally intended to finance, develop and deliver new high-tech weapons systems, yet the ambition level will likely have to reflect the Russian economy. There is no official information regarding the scope or contents of the new armament programme. There is a possibility that GPV-2027 may reallocate economic resources from the navy to the army and airborne forces; such a reallocation may be motivated in part by the threat environment, in part by the low priority given to acquiring tanks and armoured vehicles in GPV-2020. The new armament programme will be launched in 2018 at the earliest.





## THE RUSSIAN ARMED FORCES



The DOLGORUKIY-class strategic submarine Yuriy Dolgorukiy.

## RUSSIA SUMMARISED

President Putin's position is stronger than ever, yet Russia is facing some tough economic and social challenges.

### Ukraine

Russia continues to pursue its destabilisation policy towards Ukraine. The long-term aim, to influence the orientation of Ukrainian foreign policy, remains unchanged. Russia will continue supporting the rebels in eastern Ukraine in order to pressurise Kiev.

### The High North and the Arctic

Russia's presence in the region is growing, and the area has been central to the country's military modernisation programme. For Norway, this is noticeable in the form of heightened Russian activity. We may be headed for a new normal in the High North.

THE HIGH NORTH

RUSSIA

■ MOSCOW

■ MINSK  
BELARUS

■ KIEV  
UKRAINE

■ CHIŞINĂU  
MOLDOVA

● ALEPPO  
SYRIA  
■ DAMASCUS

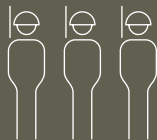
### Syria

Through its military involvement in Syria, Russia has proved capable of mounting military operations across long distances. This trend will likely continue in the year ahead, with continued submarine deployments to the Atlantic and the Mediterranean.

## The Russian Armed Forces



The Russian coastguard has received a boost through the addition of three new vessels, with a further two in construction. The new vessels improve the coastguard's ability to exercise control in the waters of the High North.



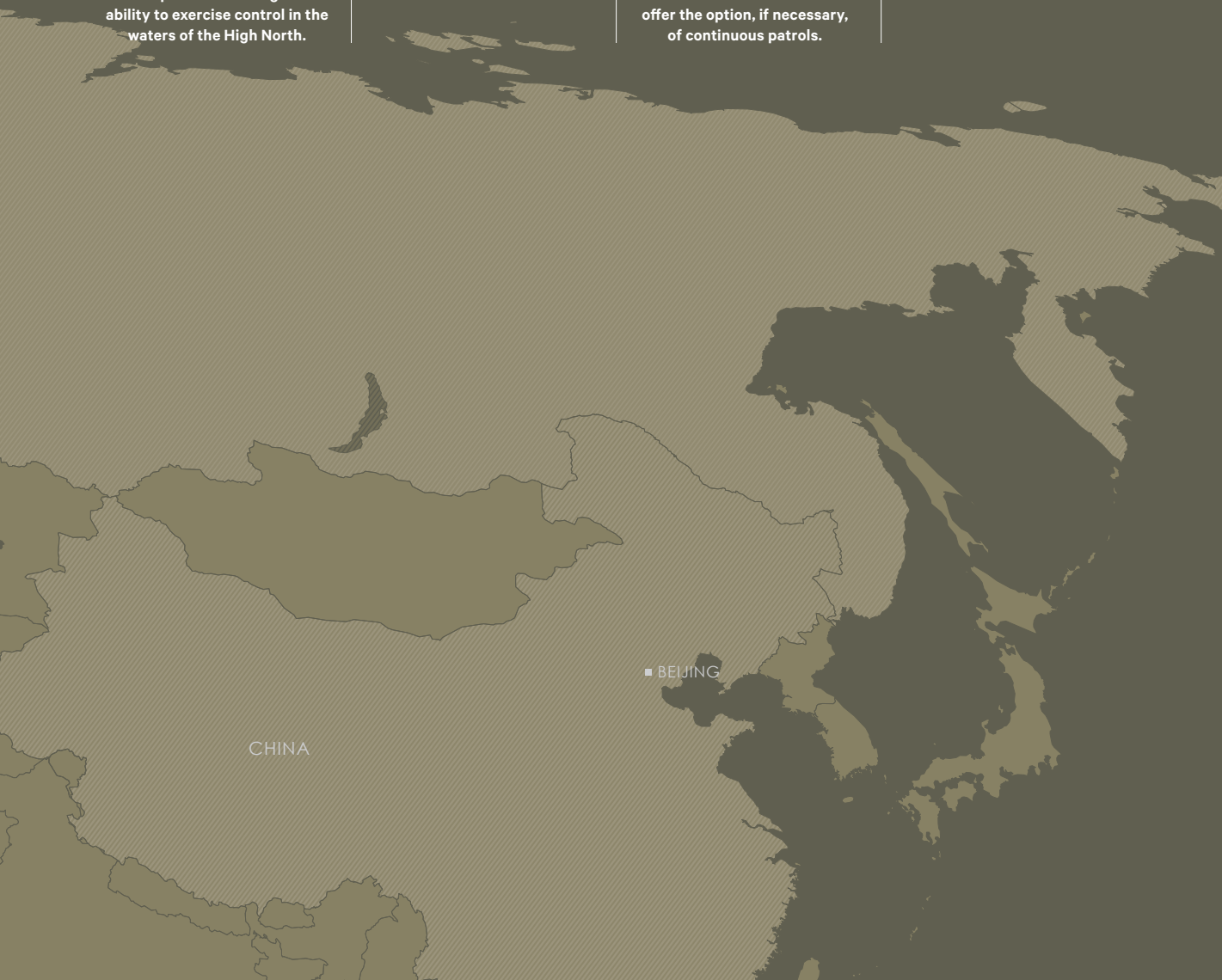
We expect larger and more frequent exercises in areas near Norwegian borders. Russia has grouped much of the Russian Arctic under the joint strategic command OSK Northern Fleet.



Another Russian priority is to secure a permanent military presence in the Mediterranean region. In the near future, the Black Sea Fleet's new submarines will offer the option, if necessary, of continuous patrols.



New and modern equipment is entering service. The postponed ten-year armament programme GPV-2027 is expected to be launched in 2018.





# CYBERSPACE

**Russian activity presents a growing challenge to Western democracies.  
Cyber-based intelligence collection poses the most serious threat to Norway.**

## CYBERSPACE



### SUMMARY

■ In January, it transpired that one of Norway's regional health authorities, the South-Eastern Norway Health Authority, had been the target of extensive and alarming computer network operations. The case illustrates the complexity of the current threat environment, as well as the vulnerability of critical national infrastructure.

■ In cyberspace, three types of activity may come to pose a particularly serious threat to Norway: influence, intelligence and sabotage. Russian influence operations against Western countries have intensified in recent years, including attempts at influencing democratic processes and public opinion. This activity presents a growing challenge for Western democracies.

■ Nevertheless, intelligence remains the most serious cyber-based threat to Norway. Various actors are trying to compromise and infiltrate Norwegian authorities and businesses. Their primary purpose is to collect information on traditional political and military targets, secondarily industrial espionage.



**Russian influence operations against Western countries have intensified in recent years, including attempts at influencing democratic processes and public opinion.**

### **Increase in Russian influence operations.**

**Recent years' Russian influence operations against elections can be divided into three separate tracks: contact with political parties and individuals, media campaigns and computer network operations making active use of collected information.**

Russian actors keep in contact with a wide range of parties and individuals in Europe. The Russian actors range from representatives from the Presidential Administration, the Duma and the Federation Council, political parties and movements, diplomats and private companies to influential individuals with links to the intelligence and security services. This activity has targeted parties on the extreme right and left in several European countries. Much of the activity can be termed normal diplomacy or lobbying, yet in some cases it involves the exchange of services or money. Examples include meetings with high-profile Russian politicians, free travel or large payments for appearing as expert commentators in the Russian media. It can also include consulting services, loans to political parties or businesses being promised access to the Russian market.

**«The activity is primarily directed at traditional political and military targets, such as the diplomatic service and the armed forces.»**

Russia also exerts influence through media campaigns in social and traditional media. In the lead-up to elections in France and Germany, coverage of the election campaigns was clearly skewed in both Russian-language media outlets and Russian media broadcasting in German and French. Typical messages conveyed were criticism of centre candidates and established options, and claims that populist candidates were being undermined in the Western political systems. In Germany, there were a number of skewed news items on migration.

Russian intelligence and security services use social media actively to influence and collect intelligence. Disinformation and propaganda is disseminated through videos, news items and blog posts from profiles real or fake. In this way, the Kremlin is able to draw attention to specific topics, present alternative truths and distort

the public debate. Examples include robotised spam campaigns on Twitter and the use of hijacked or fake profiles on Facebook, the work of so-called 'troll factories'.

The purpose of these activities may be to influence political elections or decision-making processes, for instance with the aim of lifting Western sanctions against Russia or having Crimea recognised as part of Russia. However, the aim of influence operations is not always to change an election outcome or specific political decisions; the purpose may also be, in the longer term, to sow doubt regarding political processes, discredit individuals or create confusion and division. Russia has proved willing to shoulder the political costs of this type of operation in the past.

### **Persistent intelligence activity against Norway.**

**Intelligence collection poses the most serious threat to Norway in cyberspace. The primary purpose is to collect information on traditional political and military targets, and secondarily to conduct industrial espionage.**

Campaigns and operations have been targeting Norwegian authorities and businesses for years. The activity is primarily directed at traditional political and military targets, such as the diplomatic service and the armed forces. Other targets include parts of the public administration, academic institutions, power companies and industrial firms. The computer network attack on the South-Eastern Norway Health Authority in January served as indubitable proof that intelligence activity against Norway is not confined to traditional political and military targets.

For much of this activity, the choice of targets and methods used points in the direction of secret services with substantial resources for computer network operations, resources which they use to develop malware and conduct operations.

The most common infiltration methods include targeted emails with attachments or links, the planting of malware on compromised websites and the direct exploitation of technical vulnerabilities. Foreign actors are becoming increasingly adept at composing credible emails and websites. The infiltration of Norwegian authorities and organisations is also part of complex operations directed at final targets outside of Norway.



### **Development of digital sabotage capabilities to continue.**

**Long-standing Russian interest in energy companies and industrial control systems suggests an ambition to sabotage power infrastructure.**

Cyberspace offers state actors a wealth of new opportunities for sabotaging other states' civilian and military target. Civilian targets may include systems of critical importance to modern, industrialised societies, such as control and administration systems used by power, telecommunications, transport and financial services companies. Typical military targets include command and control systems, as well as communication, navigation and surveillance systems.

Recent years' developments suggest that Russian actors have used cyberspace to sabotage targets in Ukraine. In 2016, an IT system used to control rail traffic was destroyed, and a large transformer north of Kiev was

shut down. In both incidents, the attackers had infiltrated the necessary computer networks six months or more in advance, gaining a robust foothold and full network administrator rights. When backdoors and access rights were in place, much of the activity took place using standard system tools.

The sheer scale of the compromise suggests that many more targets could have been affected, with more long-term, complex damage as a result. Consequently, it may be inferred that the aim was not to do as much damage as possible, but rather to gain experience and knowledge of sabotage operations. Over time, these experiences will enable Russia to conduct sabotage operations against power supply systems or disrupt the transport of people, supplies or military forces in a future military conflict. Actors with assumed links to Russia have for some time been mapping energy companies and industrial control systems in several European countries, as well as the United States.



# CYBERSPACE SUMMARISED

Russian activity presents a growing challenge to Western democracies.  
Cyber-based intelligence collection poses the most serious threat to Norway.

■ MOSCOW

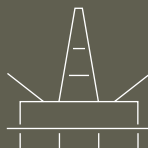
## Three types of cyber threat

Data storage and processing is becoming intrinsic to all human activity, and our perception of reality is increasingly being conveyed through digital systems. Developments are not limited to infrastructure, industrial processes and service provision, but also include opinion formation and social interaction. The growing significance of cyberspace challenges physical borders and the structural balance of power. Cyber threats take advantage of technical vulnerabilities and human weaknesses in cyberspace, for instance through:



### Intelligence

The purpose of intelligence is to collect digitally stored information that is otherwise unavailable, and exploit it systematically. Intelligence operations are primarily aimed at political, military, technological and economic targets that are of interest to other nation-states. The Norwegian Intelligence Service monitors state and state-sponsored threat actors closely.



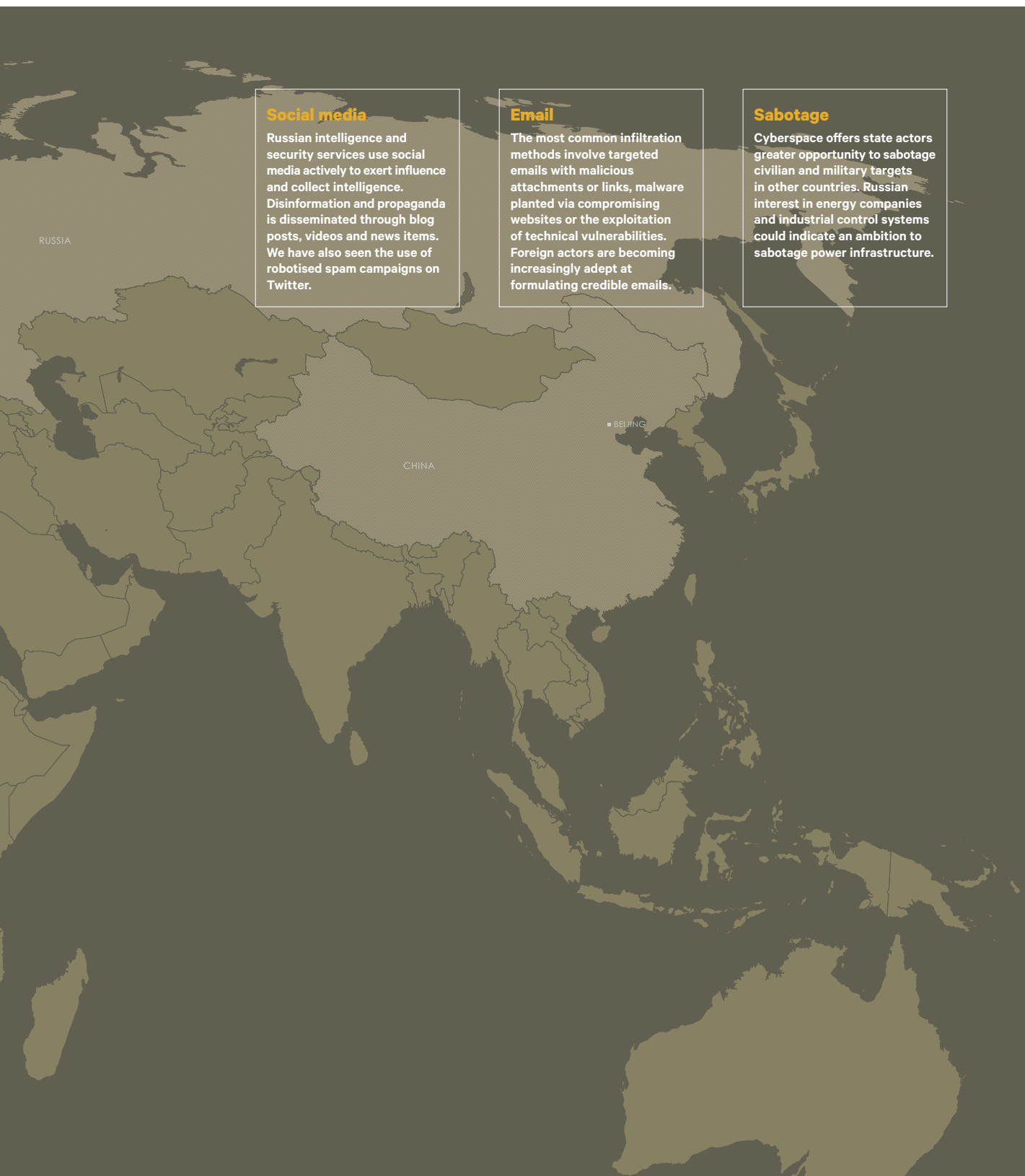
### Sabotage

The term sabotage encompasses damage, destruction and disruption. By threatening civilian targets such as electric power, telecoms, transport and banking infrastructure, other states could pressure or coerce Norway. Military sabotage could take the form of attacks on command and control, communications, navigation and surveillance systems.



### Influence

Influence denotes the use of social media and news outlets to suppress or manipulate people's perception of reality through denial and disinformation. The aim is to discredit a country's authorities, confuse the populace and, if applicable, demoralise military personnel, for the overarching purpose of adapting the strategic room for manoeuvre to one's own advantage.



**Social media**

Russian intelligence and security services use social media actively to exert influence and collect intelligence. Disinformation and propaganda is disseminated through blog posts, videos and news items. We have also seen the use of robotised spam campaigns on Twitter.

**Email**

The most common infiltration methods involve targeted emails with malicious attachments or links, malware planted via compromising websites or the exploitation of technical vulnerabilities. Foreign actors are becoming increasingly adept at formulating credible emails.

**Sabotage**

Cyberspace offers state actors greater opportunity to sabotage civilian and military targets in other countries. Russian interest in energy companies and industrial control systems could indicate an ambition to sabotage power infrastructure.



A fighter from the Syrian Democratic Forces, an American-backed, Kurdish-led group, walks past damaged buildings in Raqqa, Syria; the city was until recently ISIL's stronghold.

## CHAPTER 3





# THE MIDDLE EAST AND AFRICA

ISIL's loss of territory in Syria and Iraq will mark the two countries going forward. President Assad's position is stronger than ever, and the Kurds will seek rewards for their anti-ISIL efforts. Tensions are expected to rise across the Middle East, and non-state actors enjoy enduring scope for action in war-torn African states.

## SUMMARY

■ ISIL is likely to lose all territorial control in Syria and Iraq in 2018. The state project has failed, and ISIL will revert to being an underground movement.

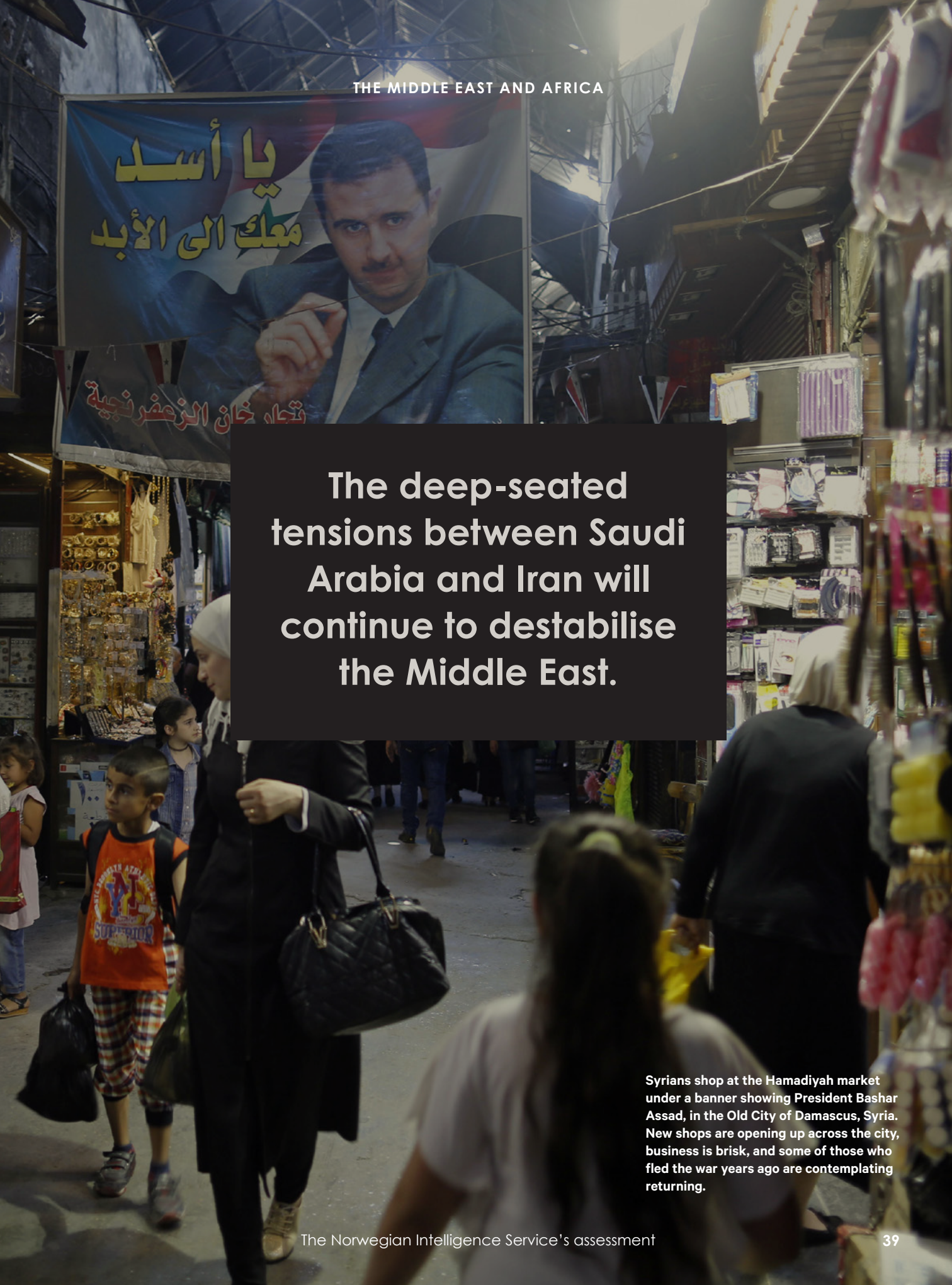
■ Participants in the anti-ISIL effort will seek to use their strengthened position to secure long-term political, military or economic gain. In Syria, Russia will seek to dictate the terms of the diplomatic negotiations. President Assad has strengthened his control, and will seek to destroy any remaining opposition in 2018. The Kurds will attempt to convert territorial control taken from ISIL into increased autonomy.

■ In Iraq, the conflict between Sunni-based, Shia-based and Kurdish political groups will intensify. Victory over the armed Sunni Arab resistance and the successful outmanoeuvre of a Kurdish attempt at independence has strengthened the Shia-dominated central power in Bagdad. Prime Minister Haidar al-Abadi will use the victory to boost his candidature in the lead-up to the 2018 parliamentary election.

■ The deep-seated tensions between Saudi Arabia and Iran will continue to destabilise the Middle East. The antagonism between the two countries will be a key driver of many of the region's conflicts, including those in Yemen, Iraq, Syria and Lebanon. Without a clear hegemon, the great power game in the Middle East will pick up and further exacerbate tensions in the region. Russia will consolidate its stepped-up engagement in the Middle East in the year ahead, and China will expand its involvement.

■ In Africa, war-torn states are struggling to establish territorial control and a monopoly of violence, and the authorities lack legitimacy. Non-state actors will gain increasing scope for action in fragmented states such as Libya, Mali and South Sudan.





**The deep-seated tensions between Saudi Arabia and Iran will continue to destabilise the Middle East.**

Syrians shop at the Hamadiyah market under a banner showing President Bashar Assad, in the Old City of Damascus, Syria. New shops are opening up across the city, business is brisk, and some of those who fled the war years ago are contemplating returning.



A full-page photograph showing a man in a military uniform standing in a street filled with rubble and damaged buildings. The man is looking off to the side. The background shows multi-story buildings that have been severely damaged, with debris scattered on the ground.

A fighter from the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) stands next to damaged buildings in Raqqa, Syria, on 25 September 2017.

## THE MIDDLE EAST AND AFRICA

[ THE MIDDLE EAST ]

### ISIL'S STATE PROJECT HAS FAILED.

ISIL is likely to lose all territorial control in 2018. In Syria and Iraq, the fight against ISIL has become a race between military actors seeking to position themselves geographically and control energy resources and critical infrastructure. The actors will seek to translate control into political capital or economic gain.

**I**SL lost territory at a rapid pace in 2017, and the remnants of the organisation will be militarily defeated in 2018. The group can only avoid total military defeat if its opponents decide that an all-out victory is unnecessary; in Iraq, this is unlikely. There, reclaiming ISIL territory is important in order to secure political gain in the decisive 2018 parliamentary elections. The prestige and symbolism that comes from declaring victory over ISIL is strong in Iraq, and a key reason why the entire Euphrates River Valley and Anbar must be taken militarily as soon as possible. The likelihood of a long-term isolation of ISIL, or negotiations with it, is therefore low.

In Syria, the picture is somewhat different, as many actors and foreign states have taken part in the fight against ISIL. Many of these stakeholders are rivals, and control of the recaptured areas is contingent on the interests of the external actors. The desire to be crowned victor over ISIL is strong within the regime, supported by Russia and Iran, and among the Kurdish-dominated SDF, supported by the United States. The desire for all-out victory is nevertheless subordinate to the parties' need to prevent rivals from gaining control of areas that are of significant economic and geopolitical value. Should the regime secure control of all strategically important territory, Damascus could choose to limit its fight against ISIL and instead isolate the group, allowing regime-supported opposition to handle the situation or negotiate with ISIL in the areas where it retains a presence, thus allowing the group to maintain a foothold in Syria.

## **«As ISIL loses ground, there are signs that the group is reorganising and establishing itself as an underground movement.»**

As ISIL loses ground, there are signs that the group is reorganising and establishing itself as an underground movement. The preconditions for this strategy are most favourable in Iraq, where the group can conduct pinprick attacks to sabotage state-building efforts and increase sectarian tension. In parts of Iraq, this has been a frequently used tactic since 2015. Attacks will target security structures, infrastructure and reconciliation attempts. ISIL's long-term strategy is contingent on continued conflict between the different communities and their supporters, and on the Syrian and Iraqi authorities'

inability to meet the needs of the local Sunni Muslim population. This could create favourable conditions for fresh outbreaks of Sunni revolt, which in turn could be exploited and aligned with ISIL's ideology.

## **Underlying conflicts to re-surface in Syria and Iraq.**

**As ISIL is defeated, underlying conflicts will once again come to the fore in Syria and Iraq.**

After seven years of civil war, leaving 400,000 dead and 11 million refugees, the Syrian conflict is entering a new phase where the geopolitical differences and conflict lines are becoming increasingly prominent. Russia is supporting the Assad regime militarily and is leading the diplomatic Astana process, where it collaborates with Turkey and Iran to control the situation on the ground through de-escalation zones. The process is designed to calm the civil war, and facilitate a permanent stabilisation of Syria through negotiations with Syrians and external parties. The regime's recapturing of ISIL-controlled areas in eastern Syria has largely been facilitated by Russia's military and diplomatic measures.

The Assad regime has defeated the Syrian opposition militarily and will tighten its grip on power in the coming year. However, increased territorial control does not mean that all opposition has been vanquished. The al-Qaeda associate Hayat tahrir al-sham will challenge regime control in the north-west, and the Kurds have widespread control in the north-east. The main causes behind the civil war remain unsolved, and when questions regarding rebuilding and distribution of power are brought to the table, the civil war's main lines of conflict will resurface. Instability and a high level of conflict will continue to characterise Syria in 2018.

In Iraq, the fight against ISIL has united forces that are fundamentally at odds with each other, and when ISIL is defeated, the conflicts between them will resurface. There are four aspects in particular that will affect Iraq's stability going forward: Kurdish independence ambitions, the 2018 parliamentary election, the Sunni Arabs' situation and Iran's grip on Iraq.

The Kurds have strengthened their negotiating position in Syria and Iraq, and they will seek to translate their anti-ISIL efforts into increased autonomy. In Syria, the Kurds will seek to negotiate increased autonomy in 2018. An independence referendum was held in Kurdish-controlled areas in Iraq in September 2017. The initiative united rivals in Baghdad against the Kurds, whereupon the Iraqi authorities pushed back the Kurds militarily in all →





Vehicles belonging to the Kurdish Peshmarga Forces seen near Altun Kupri between Kirkuk and Erbil, Iraq.



A fighter from the Christian Syrian militia burns an ISIL flag on the front line in western Raqqa, northeast Syria.

contested areas, including Kirkuk. The May 2018 parliamentary election will prove decisive to the prospect of a negotiated solution between Baghdad and Erbil.

The parliamentary election in May will also be significant to the ongoing Shia Muslim power struggle. The Shia majority will be divided between those who favour Iran and seek a Shia Muslim majority government, and the Iraqi nationalists who have formed alliances across sectarian fault lines. The outcome of the political power struggle in Baghdad will impact on Iranian and Saudi influence in Iraq in the years ahead.

## «In Syria and Iraq, the underlying conflicts and social challenges that gave rise to ISIL remain in place.»

The election revives the question of the Sunni Arabs' role and future in Iraq. The marginalisation of the Iraqi Sunni population heightened instability and facilitated ISIL's growth. The fight against ISIL has caused great damage to Sunni areas and has further increased Iraqi communities' distrust of the Sunni Arabs. Although they are a fragmented group with a weak position in Baghdad, economic and political processes here will look at improving their position. The prospect of stability in Iraq is contingent on an improvement of the Sunni population's position; however, little real progress has been made.

Iran's influence in Iraq has become stronger in recent years. Baghdad's weak central government allowed the neighbouring country to assume a key role as supporter for Shia Muslim groups. Iran has also collaborated closely with parts of the Iraqi state and security apparatuses. ISIL's 2014 offensive led to a vigorous mobilisation of Iraqi Shia militias, many of which are under considerable Iranian influence. Thus, the fight against ISIL leaves behind a network of Iran-aligned Shia militias in Syria and Iraq, which will cause friction for years to come.

The underlying conflicts and social challenges that gave rise to ISIL remain in place in Syria and Iraq. Assad remains in power in Syria, while Sunni Arabs in Iraq have become further marginalised. The victors of the fight against ISIL will need to address these challenges to prevent similar movements from resurfacing.

### Saudi-Iranian rivalry to intensify.

**The deep-seated tensions between Saudi Arabia and Iran will continue to destabilise the Middle East. The divide between the two countries will be a key driver of many of the region's conflicts, such as those in Iraq and Yemen.**

Tensions between Saudi Arabia and Iran are deep-seated. Both are competing for the position of the world's principal Muslim nation. Riyadh views a regionally dominant Iran as an existential threat at home and abroad. Tehran views Saudi Arabia as an obstacle to its key strategic objective: normalisation of relations with the outside world, economic integration in the global economy and acceptance of Iran as a regional great power.

Domestic policy issues in both countries help fuel the antagonisms. The authorities in Iran fear that latent popular discontent will escalate into protests, as seen in several Iranian cities in January. It is convenient for the regime to use the Saudi conflict to deflect attention from domestic challenges, and the authorities were quick to blame the unrest on Saudi interference. In Saudi Arabia, King Salman's son, Muhammad bin Salam, is about to consolidate power. The young crown prince has caused discord within the Saudi political elites by challenging royal custom. He seeks to confront Iran in order to emerge as a strong leader, and to be acknowledged as Saudi Arabia's true ruler.

The rivalry between Iran and Saudi Arabia will continue to be a key driver of many of the region's conflicts going forward, particularly in Iraq, Syria and Yemen. In the Palestine conflict, Iran and Saudi Arabia are both attempting to control Hamas to strengthen their grip on the conflict. The Qatar crisis, too, centres on that small, rich Gulf state's relationship with Riyadh and Tehran respectively. In 2017, Saudi Arabia and the United States joined forces to reduce Iran's influence and offensive role in the Arab part of the Middle East. Tensions are therefore increasing in several of the countries in which Iran is a central actor, for instance in Lebanon.

Another trend affecting regional rivalry in the Middle East is the growing involvement of other great powers. Russia has been increasing its involvement in the Middle East since 2015, when it entered the Syrian conflict militarily. Through the Astana agreement with Turkey and Iran, Moscow has established a diplomatic mechanism that can be used to bring together local and regional enemies. In parallel, Russia has established firm bilateral ties to countries including Saudi Arabia, Egypt and Turkey through agreements regarding the sale of defence materiel, trade, finance and petroleum. →



China's involvement in the Middle East is less visible, yet growing. China's economic dealings with the Middle East are characterised by large investments and trade deals, and its political involvement is increasing. Moreover, China's first overseas military base was set up in Djibouti at the entrance to the Red Sea in 2017. Thus far, Beijing has avoided taking sides in the regional conflicts; however, a larger presence would make this harder, especially in relations with Iran and Saudi Arabia.

In some areas, all the great powers have coinciding interests. This includes in particular counter-terrorism, preservation of the territorial state system and the prevention of full-scale war between Iran and Saudi

Arabia. In other areas, they are competitors with diverging interests, including over Iranian sanctions, access to petroleum and currency. Great power rivalry in the Middle East will therefore increase, offering regional rivals more room for manoeuvre. Involvement in neighbouring countries, military or otherwise, would be less risky for states that are supported by a great power with a veto on the UN's Security Council. Moreover, regional powers such as Saudi Arabia and Iran may also play the great powers up against each other to improve their own scope for action. Thus, increased great power rivalry will further complicate the regional conflicts.



Saudi Arabia's Crown Prince and Minister of Defence Muhammad bin Salman Al Saud attends the opening ceremony of the G20 Leaders' Summit in Hangzhou, China on 4 September 2016.





Hundreds of newly trained al-Shabaab fighters perform military exercises in the Lafofe area, some 18 km south of Mogadishu, in Somalia.

## THE MIDDLE EAST AND AFRICA



[ AFRICA ]

### NON-STATE ACTORS TO GROW STRONGER IN NORTH AFRICA AND THE SAHEL.

In Africa, war-torn states are struggling to establish territorial control and a monopoly of violence. The authorities have little legitimacy, and non-state actors will gain increasing scope for action in fragmented states such as Libya, Mali and South Sudan.

In the year ahead, Libya will be characterised by political crisis and a struggle for control. The rivaling state structures have failed to establish a robust security apparatus capable of governing the entire country. Most of Libyan territory is therefore still being controlled by armed militias, many of whom are opposed to the UN-supported unity government. The unity government is also being challenged by Khalifa Haftar, the strongman of eastern Libya, and his militia forces. Although there is considerable external pressure to initiate political dialogue, there are a number of factors that could spoil these initiatives, including fresh violence between competing militias, interference by other countries or attacks by militias that are unwilling to surrender power locally. As a result, there is little prospect of a Libyan government with real authority and nationwide territorial control in the coming year.

In Mali, too, competing militias will undermine the state's ability to control its own territory. The government is not in control of the northern regions, while political power struggles in Bamako prevent progress in the peace process. Non-state actors will therefore continue to fight for their own interests rather than focus on the long-term advantages of a lasting, albeit uncertain, peace agreement. The lack of government presence in Mali's northern regions has also forced the local population to cooperate with armed groups to ensure its own survival. Many of these groups have therefore succeeded in exploiting the security vacuum to gain increased access to local communities and boost recruitment in this part of the country. In 2017, the largest jihadi groups in Mali set up the umbrella organisation Jamaat Nasr al-Islam wal Muslimin (JNIM), thereby improving the capabilities of militant Islamists. JNIM is a threat across much of the country, and its operational freedom in Mali will also pose a threat to neighbouring countries in the coming year. This will elevate the terrorist threat in the entire region.

Whereas competing government structures attempt

to seize control in Libya, and equivalent organisations in Mali seek to restore it, South Sudan has yet to create real state institutions following its secession from Sudan in 2011. Key powerbrokers in the young state have failed to deliver the services promised to the people. President Kiir and the important opposition group SPLM-IO both lack the willingness and ability to make real compromises. Moreover, the president's position has weakened as a result of disagreement among his own people, declining regional support and the emergence of new groups that have taken up arms against the regime. The government army's attempt at defeating the groups has increased popular discontent further, and the economic collapse has made it difficult for the president to retain his supporters. It is therefore unlikely that South Sudan will be able to establish a sustainable state project in 2018.

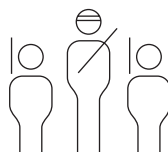
In Somalia, the optimism that followed the 2016 parliamentary election and the February 2017 presidential election has been replaced by power struggles in Mogadishu and rivalry between the central and state authorities. Political power struggles other than the united front against al-Shabaab have come to the fore, and al-Shabaab's striking power reflects the authorities' weakness. Somali authorities have nonetheless been able to improve security in Mogadishu, and national security forces have gradually taken over the African Union's responsibility for the al-Shabaab offensive outside the capital. However, the Somali security forces appear weak and fragmented, and they have had limited success in forcing al-Shabaab out of its core areas. Because of its powerful position outside the capital, al-Shabaab is still capable of conducting larger attacks. The Somali state apparatus will remain weak and fragmented in the coming year. Moreover, there are few indications that the authorities will be able to establish the popular trust and legitimacy needed to wage an effective battle against al-Shabaab.

### Political crises abound

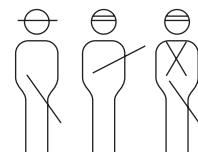
Powerlessness results:



Most of Libya's territory remains under the control of armed militias.



The population of northern Mali cooperates with armed groups for their own security.



The Somali state apparatus will remain weak and fragmented in 2018.



## THE MIDDLE EAST AND AFRICA SUMMARISED

Many states in the region continue to suffer from a lack of government control. Tensions between the Middle Eastern powers are expected to rise, and war-torn African states struggle with a lack of government legitimacy.

■ TRIPOLI

LIBYA

● TIMBUKTU

MALI

■ BAMAKO

### Libya

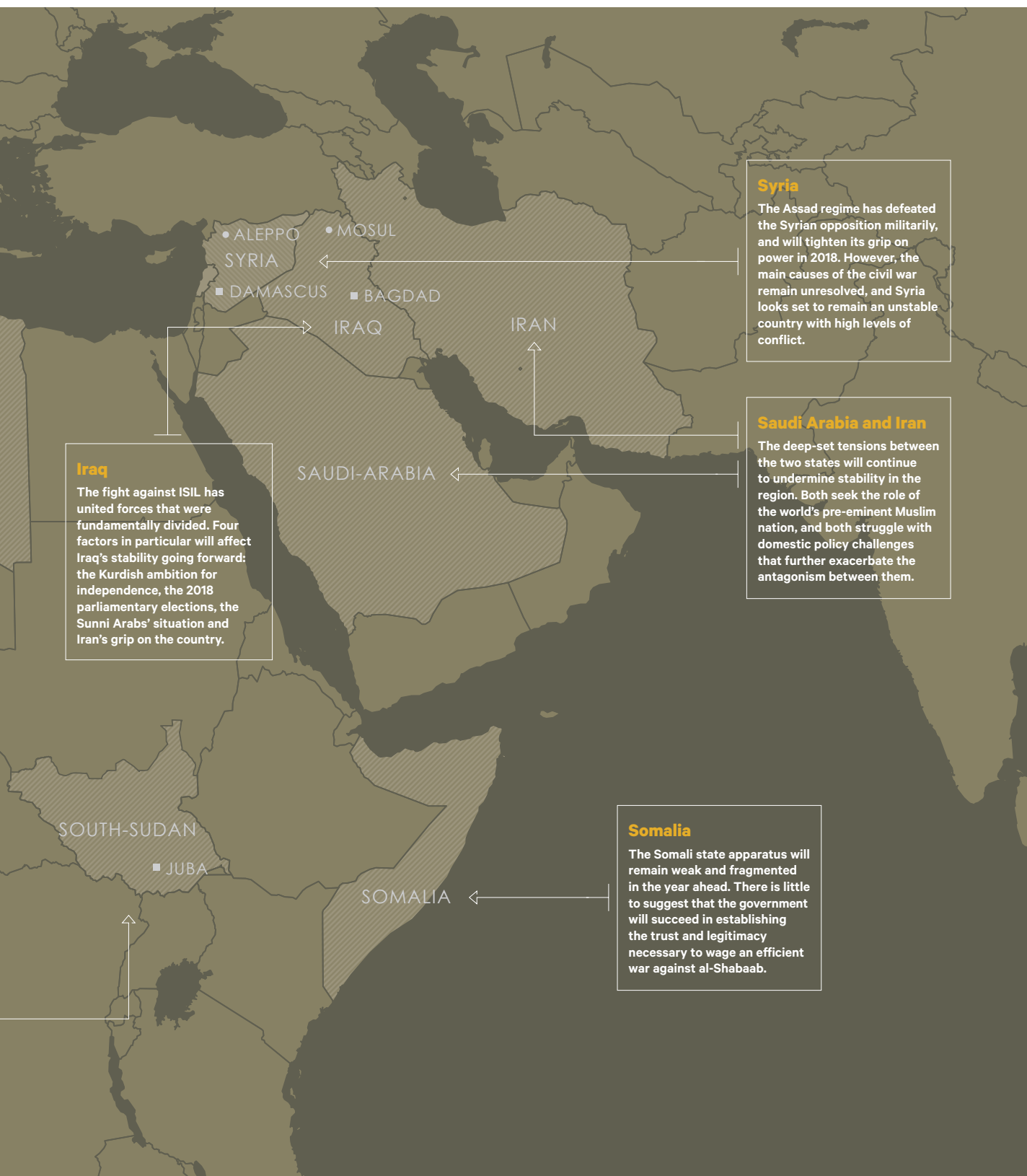
A majority of Libyan territory is controlled by armed militias, many of whom are opposed to the UN-supported unity government. Libya will continue to suffer from political crisis and struggles for control in 2018.

### Mali

Competing militias undermine the government's ability to control its own territory. Political power struggles in Bamako prevent progress in the peace talks, and the government lacks control of the northern parts of the country.

### South Sudan

The country has failed to establish state institutions following its secession from Sudan in 2011. The population has failed to receive the services they were promised, and the president and main opposition are incapable of reaching any real compromise.





# INTERNATIONAL TERRORISM

Although ISIL's military defeat has weakened the organisation, its former activities could inspire terrorist attacks in Europe. There is reason to believe that al-Qaeda will give priority to building local alliances in order to grow stronger in the longer term.



## INTERNATIONAL TERRORISM



Members of the emergency services work at the scene where a truck crashed into the Åhlens department store at Drottninggatan in central Stockholm, killing five people including an 11-year-old girl.

### SUMMARY

■ As ISIL has been defeated militarily in Syria and Iraq, the organisation has lost its capacity for large-scale recruitment of foreign fighters. However, past recruitment and mobilisation will have effect for years to come.

■ Foreign fighters in Syria and Iraq have accumulated expertise and established networks that could be utilised by new groups. Moreover, the notion that ISIL was able to establish the caliphate could still inspire individuals in Europe to conduct terrorist attacks, primarily using simple means.

■ Al-Qaeda is marked by decades of counter-terrorism measures, and appears as a loose network of affiliates rather than a centralised organisation. However, the network is making preparations to enable future growth. The building of local alliances is central to these preparations, and the group will likely prioritise this project over attacks in the West.



**As ISIL has been defeated militarily in Syria and Iraq, the organisation has lost its capacity for large-scale recruitment of foreign fighters.**

Syrian government soldiers celebrate victory against ISIL in the eastern city of al-Bukamal in Syria.



## From proto-state to underground movement.

**After suffering territorial losses, ISIL is in the process of reorganising itself. In the year ahead, the main priority will be to destabilise parts of Syria and Iraq in order to secure its existence and future growth. Sectarian conflict is an important instrument. From its core areas in Iraq and Syria, ISIL will attempt to conduct attacks against local powerbrokers and Western interests in the Middle East.**

ISIL will move from controlling areas to becoming an underground movement hidden among the Sunni Muslim population it used to control. Although this transition means that the organisation will become fragmented, central functions will likely survive, including external attack planning and propaganda.

One of ISIL's main priorities will be to destabilise parts of Syria and Iraq. It is likely that the group will use terrorist attacks, executions and threats in order to create instability and force the civilian population in areas it used to control into collaboration.

Sectarian conflict is ISIL's main instrument for achieving instability and securing scope for action. Shia Muslims are central to its enemy perception, and the group is promoting itself as the guardian of Sunni Muslims. Consequently, Iran has been identified as a main enemy alongside the United States, Russia, Turkey and Saudi Arabia. The group will be seeking to exploit tensions between regional actors by conducting terrorist attacks elsewhere, including against Western and Russian interests in the Middle East.

**«ISIL will likely be able to draw on existing funds for a long time, and cover the resource requirements of an underground organisation.»**

ISIL is working to secure its financial reserves. Its revenues have dropped sharply since 2015, yet the loss of territorial control has simultaneously reduced spending on state-building projects. ISIL will likely be able to draw on existing funds for a long time, and cover the resource requirements of an underground organisation.

ISIL's core organisation is unlikely to relocate from Syria and Iraq. ISIL's top leadership has its background from Iraq and Syria and has strong power political interests there. Should ISIL succeed in creating destabilised safe havens along the border between Syria and Iraq, the

leadership would prefer to relocate there. Regardless, ISIL is likely to maintain networks outside its core areas in Syria and Iraq, particularly in Afghanistan, Sinai and Libya. The networks are important despite their lack of territorial control, as they enable ISIL to portray itself as a global organisation. However, ISIL is unlikely to invest significant leadership or financial resources in these networks; rather, the group will offer ideological and propagandistic support.

## The terrorist threat to Europe to persist.

**In the long term, ISIL's position as a point of reference for global jihadism will diminish. However, the effects of past recruitment and mobilisation will have effect for years to come. In the short term, ISIL will continue to recruit and inspire individuals loosely connected to it to carry out attacks in Europe. The attacks will mainly be carried out using simple means, by individuals already living in Europe.**

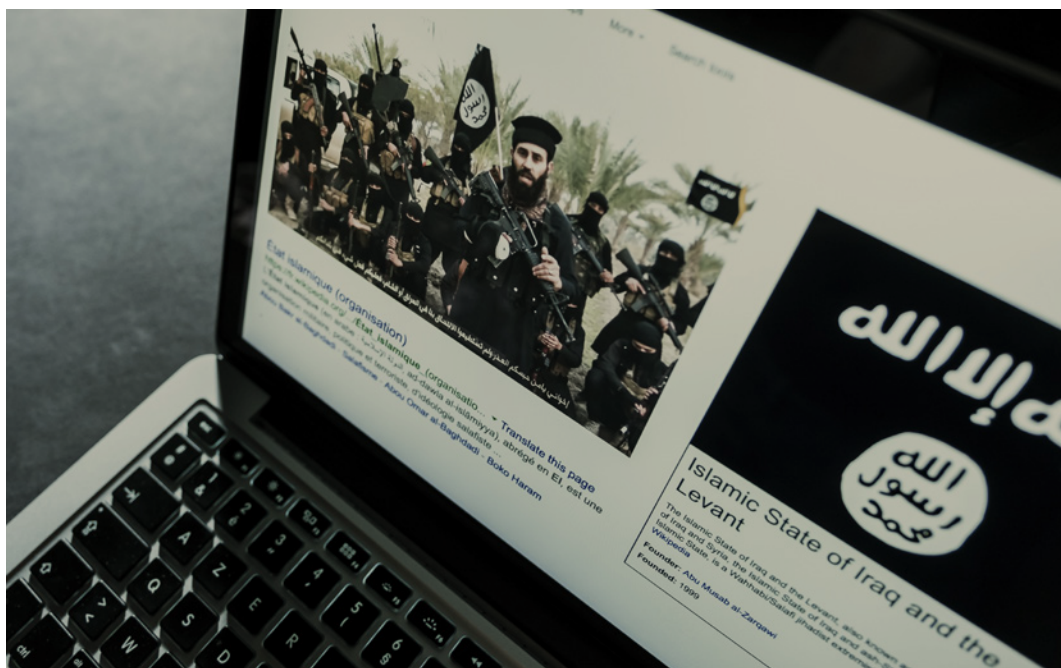
ISIL's widespread ideological mobilisation and recruitment in the period 2014–16 will pose a terrorist threat to Europe for years to come. The number of people exposed to violent extremist propaganda is high, also in a historic perspective; no other modern conflict has mobilised as many foreign fighters. ISIL has recruited more than three times as many people to Syria and Iraq in five years as the total mobilisation in support of the mujahedin in Afghanistan between 1979 and 1989. Foreign fighter networks from Afghanistan and other post-1970 conflict zones have played a key part in the establishment of several terrorist organisations, including al-Qaeda.

Consequently, ISIL will influence the threat environment in Europe for many years, by and large regardless of whether the core organisation in Iraq and Syria survives. Foreign fighter networks could also form the nucleus of new terrorist organisations. Polarisation and growing socioeconomic differences in many European countries could broaden the recruitment base.

Over time, ISIL's military defeat and loss of the so-called caliphate will reduce its appeal in the West. ISIL has based its support around making supporters feel that they are taking part in a historically important project – the establishment and defence of a caliphate. An ISIL without territorial control, however, is unlikely to hold as much appeal as before, as it breaks with the key prerequisites ISIL itself introduced – success and a physical presence.

In 2018–19, ISIL is expected to inspire and recruit supporters in Europe to conduct relatively simple terrorist attacks. In its propaganda, ISIL encourages attacks on low-security targets, and describes the use of simple means such →

## INTERNATIONAL TERRORISM





as pointed weapons and vehicles. Two-thirds of terrorist attacks in Europe have been launched by citizens of a European country. Fewer than 20 per cent of the perpetrators have foreign fighter backgrounds; yet foreign fighter experience often results in higher casualty rates. Foreign fighters staying in the core areas in Syria and Iraq may also play a future role in guiding and inspiring supporters in Europe, without participating in the attacks themselves.

## «Moreover, digital propaganda is increasingly being transferred to encrypted communication channels in order to avoid detection.»

In the year ahead, travel into and out of ISIL-held parts of Syria and Iraq will be limited. Only a small number of foreign fighters from Europe have been registered as travelling to these areas since 2016. However, some foreign fighters will attempt to leave the conflict area, and leaving will be easier for women and children. A large number of foreign fighters are expected to be killed in combat, as it will become more difficult for non-Arab foreign fighters to hide among the local population when the ISIL-controlled areas shrink.

Setbacks have caused the scope and quality of ISIL's propaganda to decline. Key individuals within the media organisation have been killed, and resources are extremely limited. Although the official propaganda has been scaled back, many supporters across several countries remain active in cyberspace. This helps preserve the ISIL brand independently of the core organisation. Moreover, digital propaganda is increasingly being transferred to encrypted communication channels to avoid detection.

## Al-Qaeda prepares for future growth.

**After decades of counter-terrorism measures, al-Qaeda emerges as a loose network of affiliates rather than a centralised organisation. The group is taking steps to create long-term growth. Local alliance building is central to these efforts, and the group will prioritise such alliance building over attacks in the West.**

Al-Qaeda is feeling the effects of counter-terrorism measures and loss of key leaders. The central leadership's position will become steadily weaker in the next year. Al-Qaeda's leader, Ayman al-Zawahiri, holds little appeal for the younger generations. Although Osama bin Laden's son, Hamza bin Laden, has recently been given a more outgoing role in the organisation, he is unlikely to gain widespread appeal.

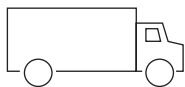
The group's main aim is to reclaim its role as the spearhead of a united militant jihadist movement and to facilitate a new caliphate. Several efforts are being made to secure future growth, including securing popular support in areas where al-Qaeda operates. In order to gain popular support for its state-building project, al-Qaeda will strengthen its affiliates and seek alliances with local groups. Al-Qaeda's Syrian affiliate will remain its largest. Since 2016, it has implemented a number of changes in order to integrate itself more closely with the revolt against the Assad regime.

In the short term, there are no indications that al-Qaeda's core organisation or affiliates will prioritise terrorist attacks in the West. However, affiliates may develop this capability relatively quickly should the organisation shift its focus.

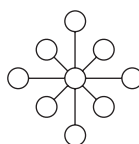
A merger of al-Qaeda and ISIL is unlikely, although some individuals may choose to leave the latter for the former as ISIL weakens further. However, a weakening of ISIL is not synonymous with a strengthening of al-Qaeda. The latter organisation will continue to prioritise local alliance building so as to facilitate the establishment of a caliphate with popular support in the longer term.

### Simpler attacks

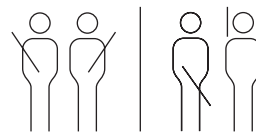
No merger in sight



ISIL attacks will primarily be conducted using simple means, such as bladed weapons or vehicles.



Al-Qaeda will build popular support by strengthening its affiliates.



In the short term, a merger between ISIL and al-Qaeda is unlikely.

## INTERNATIONAL TERRORISM

French army soldiers patrol in front of the Eiffel Tower on 20 March 2011, as part of France's national security alert system, Vigipirate.





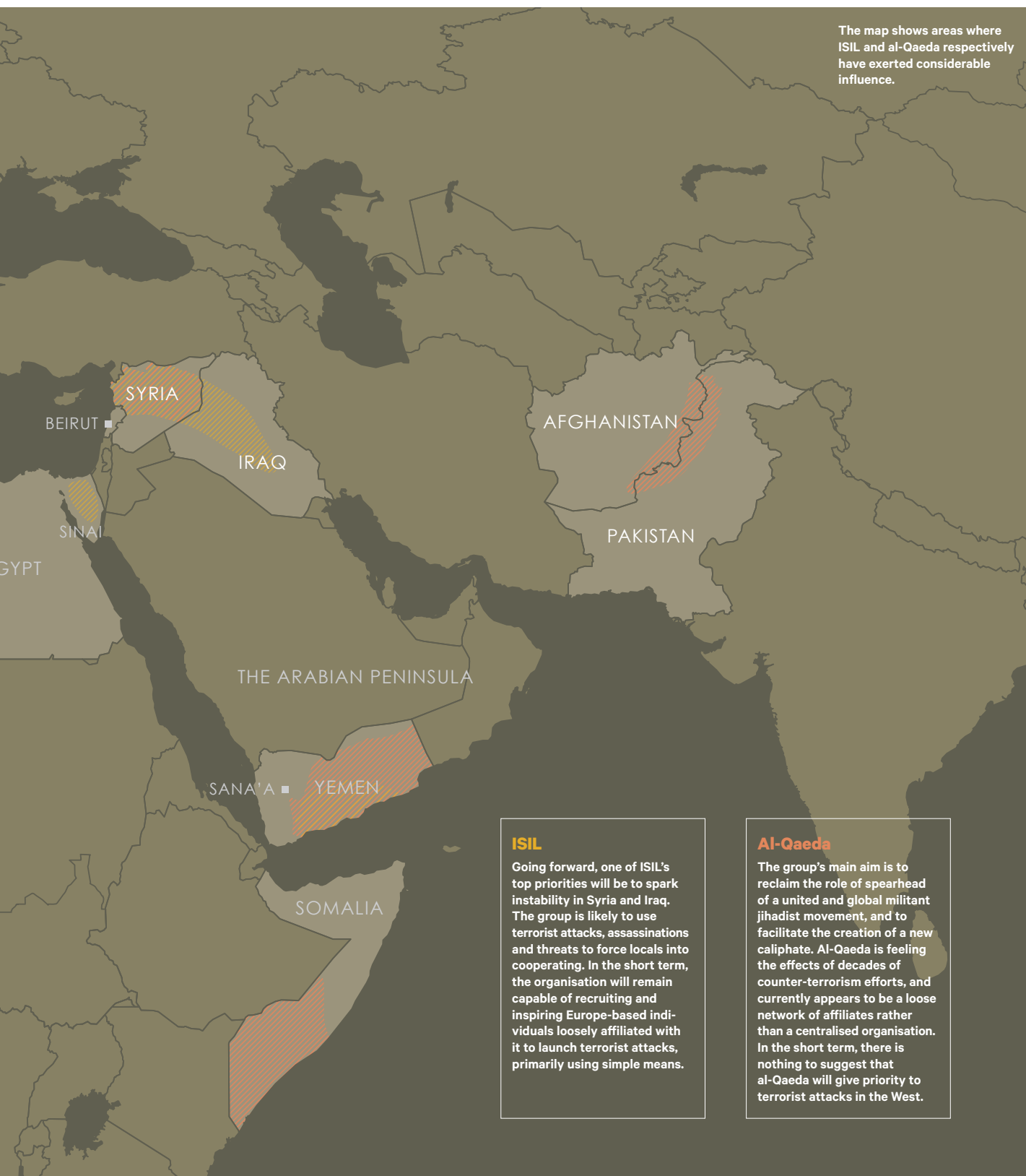
## INTERNATIONAL TERRORISM SUMMARISED

ISIL has been defeated militarily, losing its ability to recruit on a large scale. However, it will endure as an underground network. Al-Qaeda will likely give priority to building local alliances rather than launching attacks in the West.



### Terrorist recruitment

The impact of ISIL's previous recruitment and mobilisation will be felt for years to come, and large numbers of people have been exposed to violent extremist propaganda. No other modern-day conflict has mobilised comparable numbers of foreign fighters, and ISIL will therefore continue to have an impact on the European threat environment for years to come. Foreign fighter networks could form the basis of new terrorist organisations, and socioeconomic issues across several European countries could increase recruitment of new supporters.





# ASIA

**China is showing willingness to assume a leading role in the world. The pivot from west to east is likely to gather momentum in 2018, and the Chinese navy is headed for global reach. Afghanistan will continue to suffer under a stronger Taliban and a weaker government.**



Soldiers from the People's Liberation Army (PLA) participate in a flag raising ceremony during an open day at the PLA naval base in Hong Kong, China.

### SUMMARY

■ In China, President Xi Jinping's position has become significantly stronger following the 19th Communist Party Congress. Under Xi, China has increasingly started behaving like a 'normal' great power, more willing to use force to promote its own interests. At a time of weaker international leadership, China is also showing greater willingness to assume a global leadership role. As a result, the much-debated eastern pivot looks set to become more pronounced in the year ahead.

■ As a great power, China has given priority to the maritime domain; the Chinese navy is about to achieve global reach. In the year ahead, we will see a heightened Chinese presence across the world's oceans, including in waters close to Norway. Meanwhile, China is taking steps towards becoming the dominant naval power in East Asia.


■ In Afghanistan, the coming year will be a challenging one for the authorities, who will have to prioritise consolidating power in populous areas whilst giving up less strategically important areas. We can expect more attacks in Kabul. It is unlikely that peace talks will take place between the Taliban, which has become stronger, and the central government, which has become weaker and more fragmented.



**In the year ahead, we will see a heightened Chinese presence across the world's oceans, including in waters close to Norway.**

China's research icebreaker Xuelong, or Snow Dragon, in Antarctica.



A large group of men in military uniforms are seated in rows, clapping. In the foreground, Xi Jinping, wearing a dark green Mao suit and a red identification badge, is shaking hands with a man in a dark blue military uniform. Other men in similar uniforms are visible in the background, some looking towards the camera and others looking towards Xi Jinping. The setting appears to be a large hall with ornate architectural details.

Xi Jinping, secretary general of the Communist Party of China, meets with delegates and participants from the People's Liberation Army (PLA) and the armed police forces at the 19th party congress.

ASIA

[ CHINA ]

## XI JINPING STRONGER AS HE EMBARKS ON SECOND PRESIDENTIAL TERM.

President Xi Jinping has achieved a dominant position within the Chinese party state. The centralisation of power around Xi also strengthens the Communist Party, which is implementing an increasing number of political changes that are taking the country in an authoritarian direction.

**A**t the national party congress, Xi's message to the Communist Party was that 'the Chinese nation, with a completely new attitude, is standing tall and firm in the east'. The congress, which is held every five years, sends important signals from China's otherwise closed political system. The congress, which was held on 18–24 October 2017, broke with established political norms, in particular by granting major personal power to Xi Jinping, the Communist Party's leader and China's president. Although there have been signs for years that Xi is becoming increasingly powerful, the centralisation of power around his person was first officially confirmed at the party congress.

The centralisation takes the form of an interaction between Xi and the party elite. There appears to be consensus within the elite that a strong leader will yield a stronger party, and a unanimous party congress voted in favour of including Xi's name in the party constitution. To emphasise the consensus, former party leaders were seated to Xi's right and left when the congress opened. As 'princeling' – descendant of one of the Communist Party's founders – Xi is likely personally motivated to assume a new leadership role that will boost the party's power and secure its legitimacy. The Communist Party is exerting more direct power over China's economy, military organisation and every other part of the Chinese society, and Xi's strengthened position fits this development perfectly. Thus, the country is headed in a more authoritarian direction.

## «Leadership appointments announced at the party congress demonstrate that Xi cannot be ruled out as party leader post-2022.»

Over the past year, four milestones have confirmed Xi's new and dominant position in the Chinese party state. Firstly, at a plenary meeting of the party's central committee in October 2016, Xi received the title 'the party's core leader'. Secondly, Xi coined a new key phrase during his opening speech: 'A new era'; as the two previous eras of the People's Republic have been associated with Mao Zedong and Deng Xiaoping, a new era grants Xi the same status as these leaders. Thirdly, and so far most importantly, the phrase 'Xi Jinping thought on Socialism with Chinese characteristics in a new era' was included in the party constitution. Fourthly, when the newly elected Politburo held its first meeting, a few days after the party congress,

it introduced a new leadership principle: 'centralised and uniform leadership'. Going forward, Xi will use this new principle as the basis for several reforms that will further centralise power around the party's executive group. This means that the Communist Party is distancing itself from collective leadership, which has characterised party politics since the 1980s.

Leadership appointments announced at the party congress demonstrate that Xi cannot be ruled out as party leader after 2022. During previous party congresses, potential successors to the leadership have tended to emerge. At this year's congress, all of the five new members of the Politburo's Standing Committee were over 60 years old, meaning they will be too old to embark on a ten-year term in 2022. However, there could be a new leader among the Politburo's 25 members. Several of them are young, and could therefore be among the next generation of executives.

Leading up to 2022, Xi Jinping's new position will likely strengthen the party's grip on power and strengthen political stability in China. Before Xi assumed power in 2012, the party had gone through a turbulent period of indecisiveness and public scandals. During Xi's first term as party leader, the party has appeared stronger and more united. Xi is also popular among ordinary Chinese citizens. After 2022, however, Xi's strong position could pose a risk to party stability. When Xi personally is no longer capable of keeping his position, the lack of clear rules and guidelines for transferring power could result in a power struggle within the party.

### China willing to act as a great power.

**China is in the process of establishing itself as a 'normal' great power, and the country has distanced itself from the previous policy that emphasised maintaining a low international profile. The country has shown willingness to shape the international order, and seeks to form ties to other countries and regions through its ambitious Silk Road initiative.**

2018 will be the year China truly emerges as an international great power. In his speech to the party congress in October, Xi signalled that China has abandoned previous Chinese leaders' line on keeping a low international profile. The speech marks a turning point in Chinese foreign policy. Going forward, China will establish itself as a more 'normal' great power, showing willingness to assume a leadership role to shape international order.

The leadership ambitions are the result of two related issues: firstly, China's leaders believe that the country is strong enough to reorient its foreign policy. At the party →



congress, Xi proclaimed that the country had entered a new era in which China has not only grown rich, but is in the process of becoming powerful. Secondly, China assesses that the United States' international power and influence is declining and that its unwillingness to demonstrate leadership leaves a void, which China will be able to fill.

China is assuming an increasingly prominent role in global governance, particularly in the economic sphere. Beijing has long been unhappy with the influence wielded by Western countries over international financial institutions, and has set up partly competing institutions. China is also seeking to influence the rules of international trade. Although reticent in their public statements, Chinese leaders likely viewed the United States' scrapping of the so-called Trans-Pacific Partnership agreement as a symbolic victory. The country has called for the formulation of alternative free trade agreements in the Asia-Pacific region, and efforts are being made to strengthen the Chinese currency, renminbi (RMB), as a global trade and reserve currency. The currency is increasingly being used as means of payment in the international oil trade, challenging USD dominance.

## «Beijing has also actively been placing representatives in key positions in international organisations such as Interpol, which has a Chinese president.»

China's most well-known project is the global Silk Road initiative (officially re-named the 'One Belt One Road Initiative'), Xi Jinping's most important foreign policy project. The initiative was included in the party constitution at the 2017 party congress, and its purpose is to link Asian, European, Middle Eastern and African countries closer together through infrastructure investments. Although the initiative thus far has functioned as a political vision rather than a detailed economic plan, China has succeeded in marketing the project, and the initiative reinforces the country's international leadership image. In the longer term, the initiative could promote increased Chinese investment and lending, which would boost China's political influence, particularly vis-à-vis economically weak states.

China's willingness to adopt a leading international role, and intermittently to challenge the United States, has also

been evident in other areas. In 2017, China signalled a stronger environmental focus, despite the fact that the United States expressed its intention to pull out of the Paris Agreement. Beijing has also actively been placing representatives in key positions in international organisations such as Interpol, which has a Chinese president. The UN system is receiving increased financial support from China, which has proved willing to exert influence on the organisation. Moreover, China has become somewhat less reluctant to use its Security Council veto.

Whilst China is trying to present itself as a positive contributor to global rule, it is also showing greater willingness to promote its own interests regardless of whether doing so causes friction, particularly close to its own borders. This is another way in which China is becoming a more 'normal' great power. The most obvious sign can be found in the South China Sea, where China is continuing to develop contested islands and reefs for military purposes. By exerting pressure on other parties to the conflict, Beijing has largely succeeded in dampening resistance. China is using a wide range of instruments of power towards other actors in East Asia, and has succeeded in integrating a number of different means in order to maximise its influence. One example is when South Korea in July 2016 decided to deploy a U.S. missile defence system, whereupon the country was subjected to a seemingly coordinated Chinese campaign, which included computer network operations, economic sanctions and propaganda.

Xi Jinping has stated that by 2049, the 100th anniversary of the People's Republic of China, China will be a global leader with international strength and influence. This ambitious objective will fuel tensions. Going forward, China's newfound willingness to shape the international order will particularly trigger conflicts with the U.S. and increase rivalry between the two great powers.

### China's navy to achieve global reach.

**Efforts to establish a blue-water navy have turned China into a maritime great power. The Chinese navy will increasingly dominate local waters, and will continue to demonstrate its global reach. The navy acts professionally and responsibly outside local waters, whilst displaying a much more assertive attitude in East Asia.**

China is about to realise its ambition of establishing a global, blue-water navy. Only the United States and Russia have naval forces comparable to that of China. Over the course of two decades, the country has built up strength in the maritime domain so as to protect

## CHINA

its growing global interests and to establish itself as a dominant actor in East Asia. This investment is yielding significant returns, and the navy (PLAN) continues to improve both quantitatively and qualitatively.

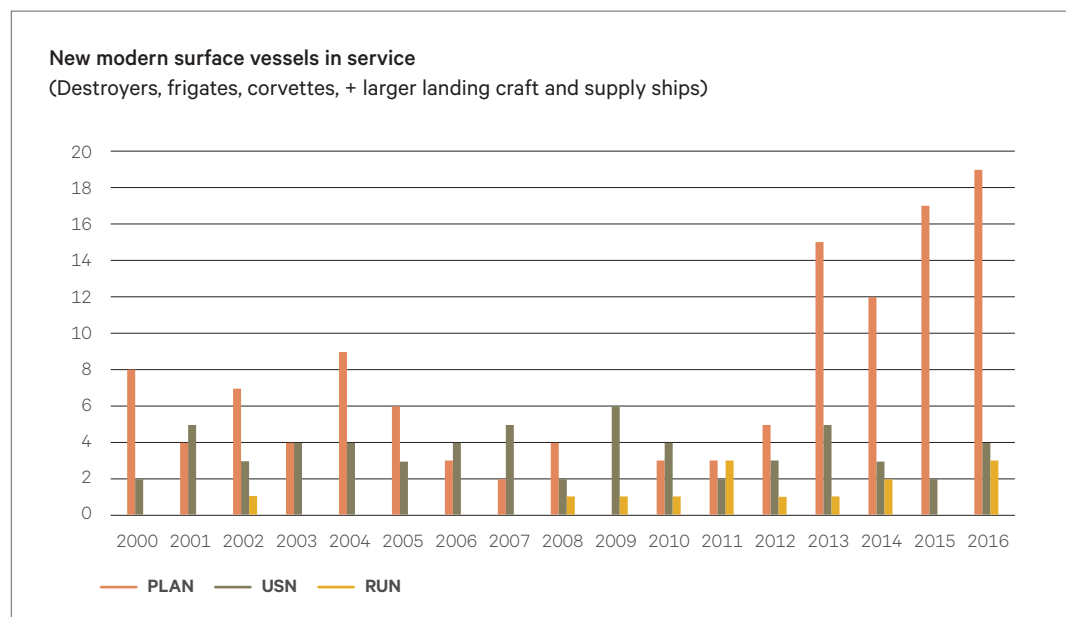
China opened its first permanent overseas military base in Djibouti on 1 August 2017. Chinese authorities refer to it as a military supply base supporting anti-piracy missions, UN operations and the protection of shipping routes. Meanwhile, China is building a number of civilian ports on the Indian Ocean. Although these will not serve as traditional naval bases, China will likely seek to establish supply agreements for the navy there. The ports and the Djibouti base will support the navy's global reach. PLAN's presence outside Chinese waters reached record levels in 2017. In August, the navy contributed task groups in the Mediterranean, off the coast of Djibouti, to anti-piracy missions in the Gulf of Aden, and in the Baltic Sea.

China wants to display its ability to operate outside local waters, and to demonstrate its naval power status. Moreover, the Chinese navy wants to gain experience from its contact with other countries' navies, and to train its crews. It is also keen to improve its reputation, including to demonstrate to the outside world that it is capable of operating professionally and safely. At the same time as the navy is increasing its global presence, China is taking steps to establish itself as the dominant maritime actor in East Asia. The number and

quality of its new vessels makes it difficult for others to keep up. In local waters, the navy expends significant resources on training, including regular missile tests. It also cooperates with forces on the mainland, and the air force, missile forces and other support elements frequently take part in joint exercises. If the current tendency continues, PLAN will be close to achieving peacetime dominance in local waters within a decade.

In local waters, China employs additional actors, including the coastguard and an organised militia comprised of fishermen and other seamen. These are often involved in tense situations in the South and East China Sea, whilst PLAN monitors the situation from the fringes. China's significantly more assertive behaviour in its own vicinity is fuelled by the idea that it is surrounded by potentially hostile actors, and that it wants to secure its own interests in connection with the conflicts in the South and East China Sea. The assertive line will remain in place, and may become tougher in the years ahead.

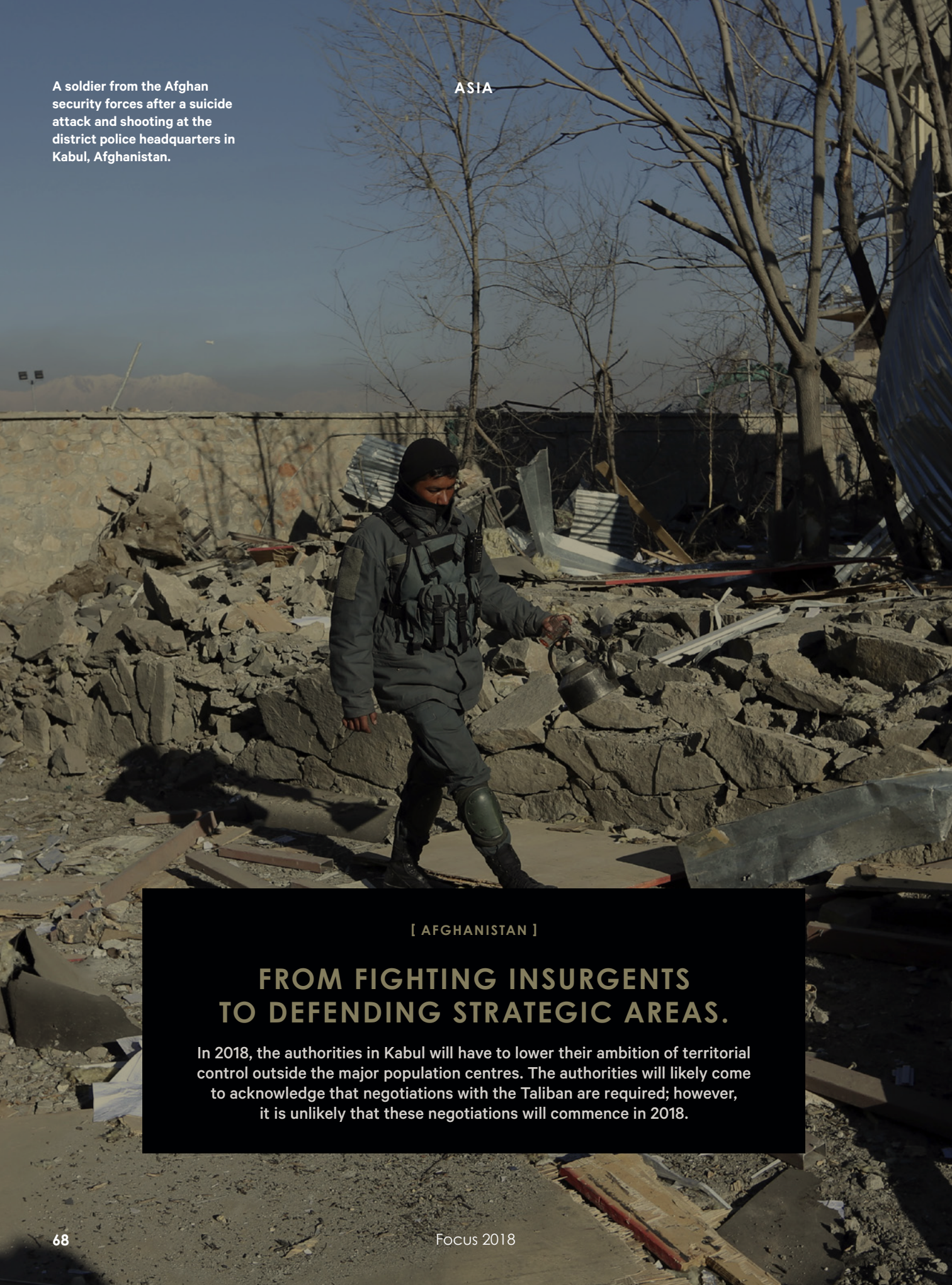
China will continue to expand its maritime force, both close to its own borders and globally. The navy is growing and has been given higher priority in military reforms than before. China will continue to increase its presence across all the world's oceans. At the People's Congress, Xi stated that by mid-century, China would have a world-class military force. In order to achieve this, PLAN will have to match the U.S. navy long before then.





A soldier from the Afghan security forces after a suicide attack and shooting at the district police headquarters in Kabul, Afghanistan.

ASIA



[ AFGHANISTAN ]

## FROM FIGHTING INSURGENTS TO DEFENDING STRATEGIC AREAS.

In 2018, the authorities in Kabul will have to lower their ambition of territorial control outside the major population centres. The authorities will likely come to acknowledge that negotiations with the Taliban are required; however, it is unlikely that these negotiations will commence in 2018.

## AFGHANISTAN

The Taliban will reinforce its military and civilian position in the year ahead. The movement will primarily increase its presence in rural areas, and establish a growing number of state-like structures. The purpose is to increase its influence over the Afghan people, secure a revenue basis and enhance its legitimacy. The Afghan authorities will therefore be forced to prioritise control of the key population centres. The Afghan security forces will undergo considerable reforms, and the special forces and air capabilities will be prioritised. The security forces will prevent the Taliban from challenging the authorities' control of the most important population centres, including Afghanistan's five regional power hubs: Kabul, Jalalabad, Herat, Kandahar and Mazar-e Sharif.

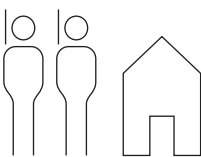
Despite these measures, the security situation in these cities will still be demanding. In Kabul, both the Taliban and ISKP, ISIL's Afghan arm, will continue to conduct terrorist attacks. In January, several attacks were carried out in the capital, including an attack on the Intercontinental Hotel that killed 22 people, and an attack using an ambulance that killed more than 100 in a part of the city that houses several government buildings and embassies. Other important Afghan cities have also been struck by terror. In January, Save the Children's office in Jalalabad in eastern Afghanistan was attacked.

Peace talks between Afghan authorities and the Taliban are unlikely in 2018. On the back of its military progress, the Taliban expects to secure a stronger negotiating position vis-à-vis the government. Moreover, the Taliban will likely demand a binding agreement for the dismantling of the international presence in Afghanistan before entering into negotiations with the government. Internal power struggles have left the Afghan government weak and divided, and unwilling to take on the political risk of public peace and reconciliation talks with the Taliban.

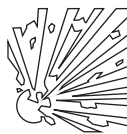
**«On the back of its military progress, the Taliban expects to secure a stronger negotiating position vis-à-vis the government.»**

### A challenging situation

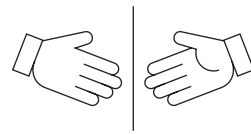
The Taliban will grow stronger in the year ahead:



The Taliban will increasingly establish state-like institutions in rural areas.



The Taliban and ISKP will continue to conduct terrorist attacks in Kabul.



We are unlikely to see any peace talks in 2018.



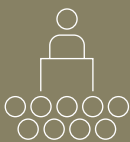
## ASIA SUMMARISED

Both President Xi Jinping's position and China's role as global leader have grown stronger. The Afghan authorities continue to face considerable challenges, and peace talks with the Taliban are unlikely.

KABUL ■  
AFGHANISTAN

### The outcome of the 2017 Chinese Communist Party Congress

2017 saw the convening of the 19th party congress, which broke with established party political norms by granting extensive personal power to President Xi Jinping. The centralisation of power takes the form of an interaction between the president and the rest of the party elite. Four milestones from the past year confirmed Xi's new and dominant position:



The first was a party meeting in 2016, when Xi was given the title of 'the party's core leader'.



The second was his introduction during the opening speech of the new key phrase 'a new era'.

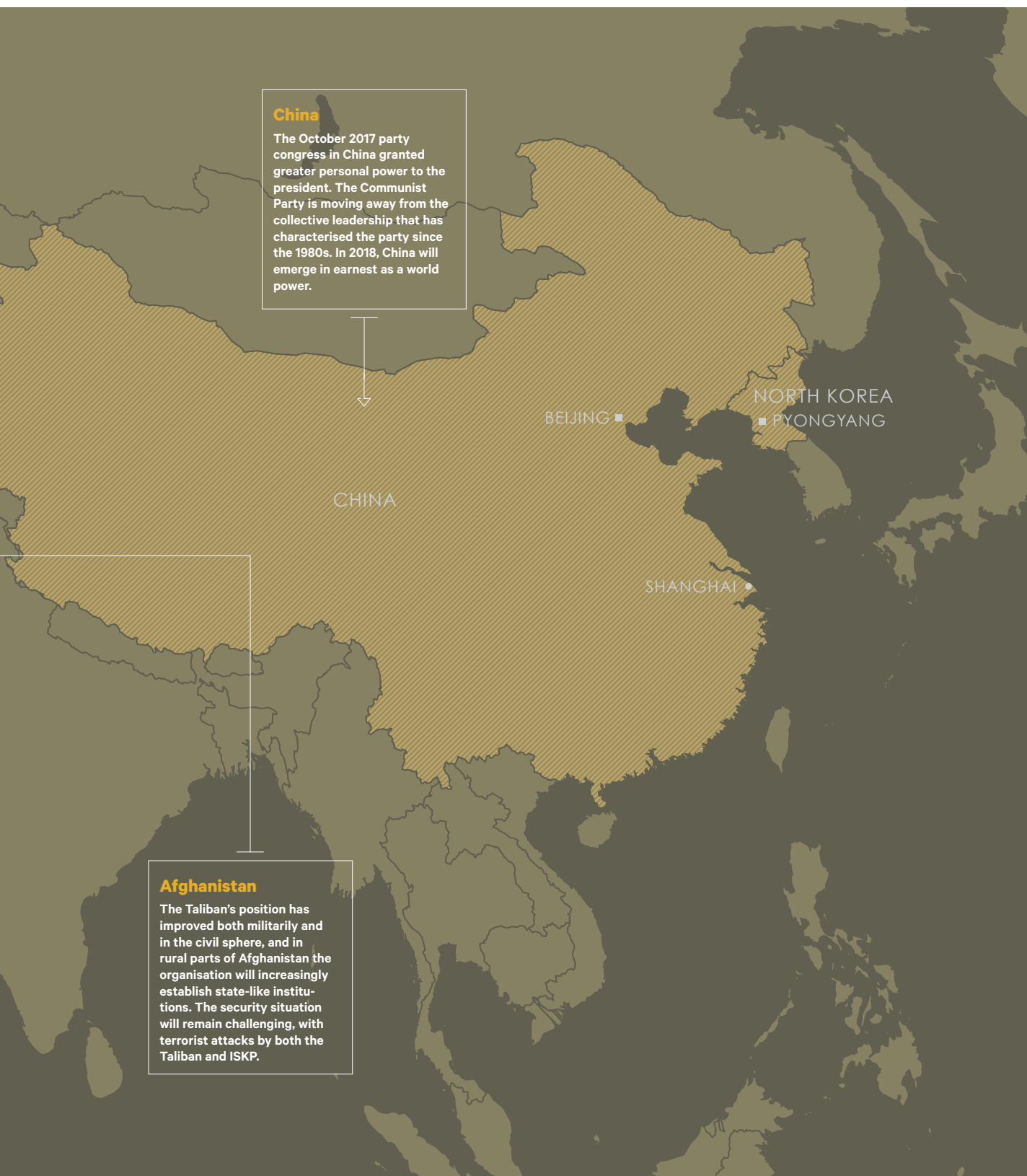


The third, and so far most important, was the inclusion of the phrase 'Xi Jinping thought on Chinese Socialism in a new era' in the party's constitution.



The fourth was the introduction of a new leadership principle at the first meeting of the Politburo after the congress: 'centralised and uniform leadership'.





**China**

The October 2017 party congress in China granted greater personal power to the president. The Communist Party is moving away from the collective leadership that has characterised the party since the 1980s. In 2018, China will emerge in earnest as a world power.

BEIJING ■

NORTH KOREA  
■ PYONGYANG

CHINA

SHANGHAI ●


**Afghanistan**

The Taliban's position has improved both militarily and in the civil sphere, and in rural parts of Afghanistan the organisation will increasingly establish state-like institutions. The security situation will remain challenging, with terrorist attacks by both the Taliban and ISKP.

# WEAPONS OF MASS DESTRUCTION

Although Iran will uphold the nuclear deal, there are reasons to question its long-term intentions. North Korea is behaving more assertively, and refers to itself as a nuclear power. The deployment of missile defences to South Korea has prompted China to invest more heavily in its own missile programme.

## WEAPONS OF MASS DESTRUCTION



The newly developed inter-continental ballistic missile Hwasong-15 is launched from an undisclosed location in North Korea.




### SUMMARY

■ Iran will uphold and seek to preserve the nuclear deal. However, its civilian programme helps the country to maintain a nuclear threshold capability. Meanwhile, efforts to develop long-range missiles continue. Missiles with longer range are capable of delivering nuclear warheads, and the programme has created uncertainty regarding Iran's stated intention with the deal. China has missile development programmes across the entire spectrum of conventional and nuclear short- to long-range systems. The deployment of a missile defence (THAAD) in South Korea in 2017 sparked strong discontent in Beijing, and boosts further missile investment.

■ Following one nuclear test and several missile tests in the past year, including several intercontinental ballistic missile tests, North Korea's behaviour is increasingly assertive and provocative. Despite more stringent sanctions, North Korea is expected to continue conducting tests. The Kim regime has announced that it is in possession of nuclear warheads for medium-range missiles, and considers itself a nuclear power.

■ Russia is expected to uphold its commitments pursuant to the New START agreement, which limits the number of deployed warheads and means of delivery. However, the country will continue to develop more advanced missile systems and challenge the INF agreement.



The Kim regime has announced that it is in possession of nuclear warheads for medium-range missiles, and considers itself a nuclear power.

Intercontinental ballistic missiles on display during a major military parade celebrating the 70th founding anniversary of the Korean People's Army at Kim Il Sung Square in Pyongyang.

## Iran to uphold nuclear deal, yet continues long-range missile programme.

The overall purpose of the nuclear agreement is to limit Iran's ability to build nuclear weapons. With the deal, Iran has gained international acceptance for operating a limited civilian nuclear programme. Key sensitive companies affiliated with the nuclear programme are allowed to continue as before, albeit on a reduced scale. Iran both upholds and seeks to preserve the nuclear deal.

The situation is complicated by the fact that Iran in the past two years has made significant progress in developing, testing and producing ballistic missiles. The missiles offer Iran an improved ability to control and threaten military and civilian vessel traffic in the Strait of Hormuz, as well as other targets in the region. A new operational short-range missile system was phased into the Iranian military structure in 2017. Several missiles of this type were launched against ISIL targets in eastern Syria in June 2017.

«In the year ahead, it will be important for the Iranian regime to signal its unwillingness to compromise on deterrence.»

The long-range missiles can now reach Israel and other targets in the region, including NATO countries, from positions deep inside Iran. The regime expends significant resources on improving these capabilities, and Iran could develop missile systems of considerable longer range in the longer term.

In the year ahead, it will be important for the Iranian regime to signal its unwillingness to compromise on

deterrence. The extensive missile programmes will continue and Iran will maintain its nuclear weapons expertise. When the restrictions of the nuclear agreement expire, Iran could in time gain the ability to develop long-range missiles with nuclear warheads. This has raised uncertainty about Iran's long-term intentions with the deal.

## China to increase missile investment.

China is pursuing an active missile development programme across the entire spectrum of conventional and nuclear short- to long-range systems. The efforts were prompted by the deployment of a missile defence (THAAD) in South Korea in early 2017, which sparked Chinese discontent.

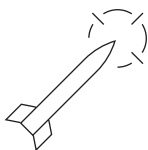
China is the world's third largest nuclear power after the United States and Russia, and operates extremely extensive missile development programmes. China is reinforcing its position as a nuclear power with new strategic capabilities. China's nuclear armament is moderate, albeit sufficient to ensure a credible nuclear deterrent. In 2016, China's strategic rocket forces were promoted from a service arm to an independent service. A moderate increase in the size of the nuclear forces will continue; however, China is expected to retain its 'no first strike' doctrine.

Beijing's motivation is mainly fuelled by the armament and modernisation of U.S. weapons programmes, including missile defence and conventional precision-guided weapons, and by the United States' presence and security guarantees to countries in eastern Asia. China is upgrading its existing missile systems and developing new systems, both nuclear and conventional.

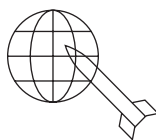
In its military modernisation programme, China is also devoting considerable resources to the development of new conventional ballistic missiles for use against land and surface targets in the region. For instance, the

### The nuclear deal holds

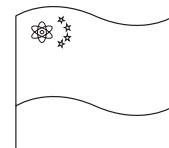
But what about the longer term?



A new short-range missile system has been phased into the Iranian armed forces.



The long-range missiles are capable of reaching both Israel and NATO member states.



China is the world's third largest nuclear armed power, and is growing stronger.



## WEAPONS OF MASS DESTRUCTION

The Iranian ballistic missiles Sejjil and Qadr-H are on display in Baharestan Square during the Iranian Defence Week in Tehran.



Russia's new mobile intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) RT-2PM Topol on display at the International Military-Technical Forum in Moscow.



country has deployed a massive missile force to be used against Taiwan in the event of a conflict. The Chinese also wish to use anti-ship ballistic missiles to prevent the U.S. navy from intervening in a conflict. The new missile capabilities help tip the power balance in China's favour.

### North Korea appears to be a real nuclear-armed power.

**Following one nuclear test and several missile tests in the past year, including several intercontinental ballistic missile tests, North Korea's behaviour is increasingly assertive and provocative. Despite more stringent sanctions, North Korea is expected to continue conducting tests. The Kim regime has announced that it is in possession of nuclear warheads for medium-range missiles, and considers itself a nuclear-armed power.**

In September 2017, North Korea conducted a successful test of what was likely an advanced thermonuclear bomb; consequently, the country likely masters fusion technology for use in nuclear weapons. With a payload of more than 200 kilotons, North Korea's future warheads could come to resemble recognised nuclear states' modern weapons. As a result, North Korea will achieve a considerably greater ability to destroy regional targets, making its deterrent more credible. The country will likely be capable of mounting thermonuclear warheads on some of its missiles in the near future. However, it will need to improve the bomb's specifications, and is therefore likely to conduct more tests going forward.

North Korea is also continuing its active investment in missiles, and is currently in a test phase with its first intercontinental ballistic missile, ICBM. Its ambition is to produce a long-range missile system capable of carrying nuclear warheads to the U.S. mainland. North Korea is

expected to conduct further tests for a period of five years, when the missiles are expected to be phased into the military structure. However, the tests and programme development in 2017 demonstrate that, in an emergency, the regime could employ a less reliable ICBM.

The North Korean regime has invested heavily in its nuclear and missile programmes, and has declared itself a nuclear-armed power. The nuclear weapons constitute the regime's prime guarantee of survival and stability, and their primary function is therefore deterrence. North Korea is also likely to use its capabilities to put U.S. security guarantees to Japan and South Korea to the test. The regime will likely attempt to put pressure on the Americans to limit their presence in the region. It is therefore unlikely that North Korea would be willing to negotiate away its nuclear weapons and other military nuclear technology.

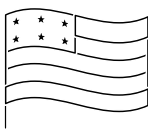
North Korea's armament presents a number of challenges. One is the increased risk of proliferation of missile and nuclear weapon technology. Further, an efficient deterrent could make North Korea more willing to take risks, especially as regards South Korea. The regime may consider that the new capabilities make it less susceptible to retaliation following provocations. With a first-strike doctrine, North Korea could threaten a limited nuclear attack on an opponent willing to use force. The North Korean nuclear weapons programme exacerbates the arms race playing out in the Asia-Pacific region.

### Russia to enhance its missile capabilities.

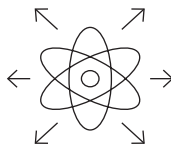
**Russia is expected to honour its commitments according to the New START agreement, which limits the number of deployed warheads and strategic means of delivery. However, the country will continue to develop more advanced missile systems and challenge the INF agreement.**

#### Provocative North Korea

Multiple missile tests:



The country's ambition is to reach the U.S. mainland.



North Korea's armament heightens the risk of technology proliferation.



In Russia, nuclear weapons remain the armed forces' top priority.

## WEAPONS OF MASS DESTRUCTION



In February 2018, the aims of the New START agreement come into force, restricting Russia and the United States' strategic nuclear weapons. The agreement determines how many deployed warheads and means of delivery Russia and the United States may possess. Although the number of deployed Russian warheads has been higher than the upper limit of 1,550 in recent years, the country is expected to honour the agreement and keep the implementation date. In addition, Russia has a significant number of non-strategic weapons, which are not subject to any arms control agreements.

Several aspects complicate future arms control talks with Russia; firstly, the Kremlin is vehemently opposed to a Western strategic missile defence. Although the missile defence is not currently perceived to pose a direct military threat, Russia believes it will affect the strategic nuclear balance of power, and that it could harm the Russian deterrent in the longer term.

Secondly, Russia claims that the missile defence system could be converted and used as an attack platform. Moscow believes this is in contravention of the INF agreement with the United States on medium-range missiles. However, it

remains unclear whether this objection reflects a genuine concern or whether it is solely used for political purposes in response to U.S. accusations of a Russian breach of the INF agreement.

Thirdly, Russia will not give up its tactical nuclear weapons as long as NATO appears conventionally superior. Russia is particularly worried about U.S. plans for establishing a so-called 'Conventional Prompt Global Strike' system (CPGS), i.e. conventional precision-guided weapons with global range.

Russia has demanded that any new disarmament agreement must take into account a Western missile defence and long-range conventional precision-guided weapons. Moreover, Russia considers the INF agreement to be outdated and irrelevant, as a number of Asian and Middle Eastern countries possess medium-range missiles that fall into the INF category.

Nuclear weapons remain the top priority of Russia's armed forces. Russia's modernisation programme for its strategic nuclear weapons has been running for years and will continue, in parallel to the country's development of new advanced conventional weapons systems.



## WEAPONS OF MASS DESTRUCTION SUMMARISED

Although Iran upholds the nuclear deal, there are reasons to doubt its long-term intentions. The Kim regime in North Korea has declared itself a nuclear power. China is the world's third largest nuclear-armed power. In Russia, a number of sophisticated missile systems are in development, and the country is challenging the INF agreement.

### Iran

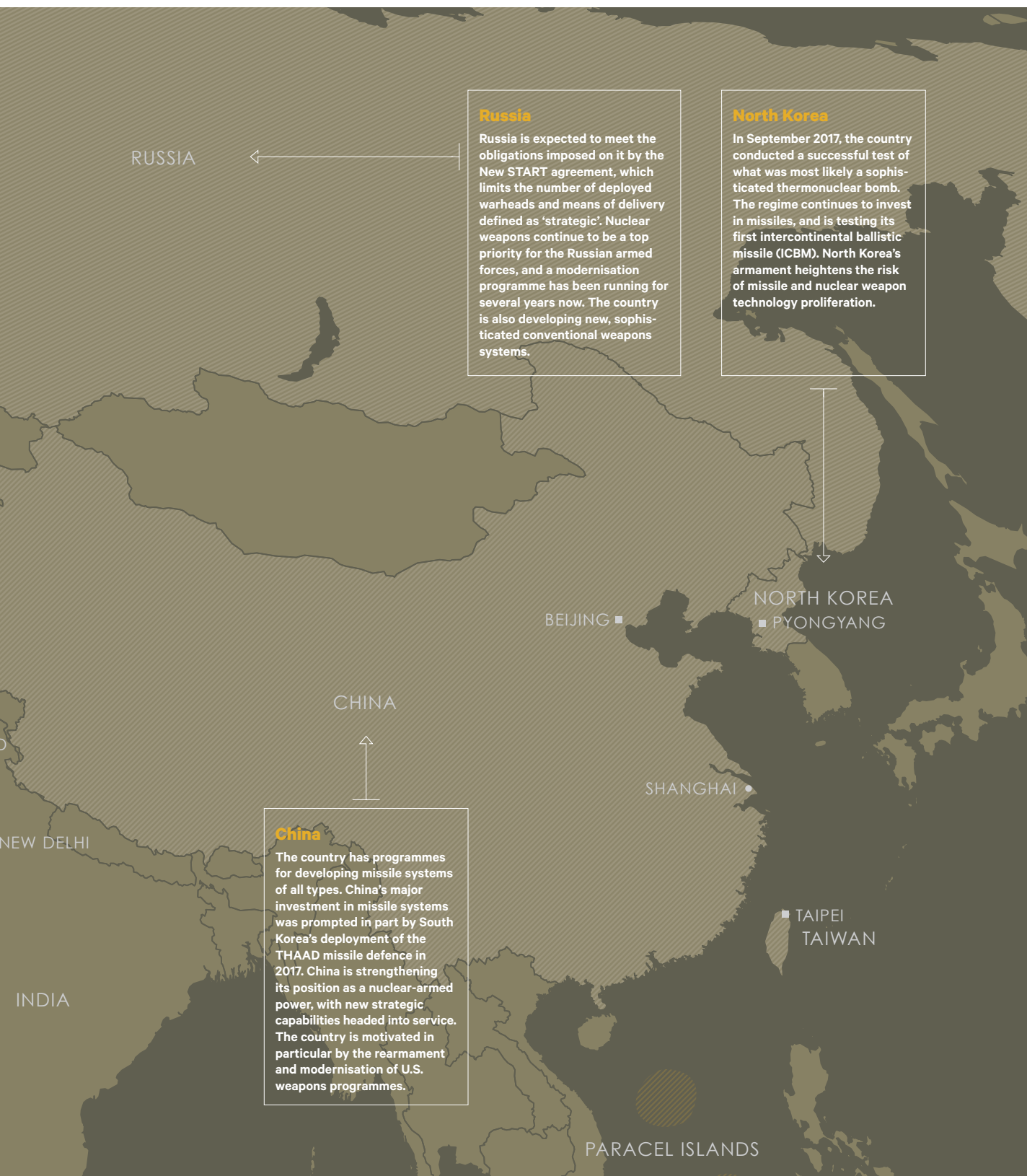
Iran wants to uphold the nuclear agreement, but continues its long-range missile programme. The Iranian missiles are now capable of reaching Israel and other regional targets, including NATO member states. Iran has international acceptance for operating a civilian nuclear programme, which in the longer term could enable it to deliver nuclear warheads for long-range missiles.

■ TEHERAN

IRAN

■ ISLAMABAD

PAKISTAN



### Russia

Russia is expected to meet the obligations imposed on it by the New START agreement, which limits the number of deployed warheads and means of delivery defined as 'strategic'. Nuclear weapons continue to be a top priority for the Russian armed forces, and a modernisation programme has been running for several years now. The country is also developing new, sophisticated conventional weapons systems.

### North Korea

In September 2017, the country conducted a successful test of what was most likely a sophisticated thermonuclear bomb. The regime continues to invest in missiles, and is testing its first intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM). North Korea's armament heightens the risk of missile and nuclear weapon technology proliferation.

### China

The country has programmes for developing missile systems of all types. China's major investment in missile systems was prompted in part by South Korea's deployment of the THAAD missile defence in 2017. China is strengthening its position as a nuclear-armed power, with new strategic capabilities headed into service. The country is motivated in particular by the rearmament and modernisation of U.S. weapons programmes.





**«My hope is that Focus 2018 will provide a  
deeper understanding of matters that affect  
Norway's security and interests.»**

LIEUTENANT GENERAL MORTEN HAGA LUNDE,  
DIRECTOR NORWEGIAN INTELLIGENCE SERVICE







THE NORWEGIAN INTELLIGENCE SERVICE