

REPORT: GLOBAL RISK FORECAST 2024

Crisis24 provides a look beyond the horizon

November 2023



On November 21, 2023, security risk and crisis management consultancy Crisis24 (a GardaWorld company) presented its risk outlook for 2024. The following report, which represents the views of Crisis24 alone, summarizes the key points shared during the [presentation](#).

Geopolitical risks

Israel and Gaza

October's attack by Hamas and the Israeli response has radically changed the economic situation and general status quo in the Middle East. It is a consequential and profound event. There are real concerns that the current crisis will escalate and spread across the region. Iranian-backed proxy forces in Lebanon, Syria, Iraq and Gaza could potentially attack Israel from multiple directions. And there's already evidence of increased attacks on U.S. interests throughout the region, to which the U.S. has been responding.

Arab states bordering Israel, including Egypt and Jordan, are concerned the influx of refugees from Gaza will impact security in their own countries. There are already 2.3 million Palestinian refugees in Jordan, and as more arrive, this is putting a strain on resources and infrastructure. Egypt, which is already battling Islamic militants in the Sinai Peninsula, is concerned refugees may inspire further radicalization.

Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries steadfastly refrained from directly criticizing Israel, but they are calling for a de-escalation, as none want this conflict to spread.

Aftershocks from the conflict will reverberate in North Africa well into 2024. Israel's actions in Gaza have inflamed Arab sentiment in a number of countries. Citizens, already angry with their own governments for economic malaise, now have a new reason to express their discontent.

The situation in Israel and Gaza has had effects far outside the Middle East and North Africa. Many western countries have increased security around sensitive locations. If the conflict escalates, there are concerns about increased activity from radicalized individuals or those aligned with Hamas and similar organizations. There has already been an increase in hate crimes against both Jews and Muslims around the world.

Conflict in Ukraine

Events in the Middle East have diverted attention from other crises around the world. The conflict in Ukraine has faded from the media, but the situation there is as serious as it ever was. A strategic impasse has emerged, with Russia and Ukraine seemingly at a stalemate, militarily and diplomatically. As we enter the winter, there's unlikely to be any significant changes on the ground over the next 3-6 months. The two sides have an opportunity to rebuild, retrain, re-equip and prepare for the next fighting season.

Both sides should be able to continue the war in 2024. Ukraine's military capability remains sufficient to sustain combat (subject to continuing Western support) and it remains resolute. Russia is clearly superior in terms of its military resources, and its determination remains robust.

The front line is unlikely to shift materially during 2024, as defense doctrine is now in the ascendancy over offense. The upsides for Ukraine include the arrival of its first F-16 fighter jets (although they're unlikely to

be decisive) and maintaining the initiative to export grain via the Black Sea, bringing in much-needed export income.

International support for Ukraine is critical. Russia is by no means internationally isolated with its own supporters including overt allies (North Korea, Iran, Syria) and those overtly neutral (India, China), who continue to buy Russian energy, facilitating its economy.

In the long-term, Russia possesses the capacity to continue the war indefinitely – it has no electorate to answer to, and it has massive armaments productive capacity. Ukraine's will is robust to continue the fight. Its fewer military resources means it's more dependent on foreign sponsorship. The West is almost entirely supportive; but the U.S. is key. The longer the conflict goes on, the greater the risks that elections may shift western support. All eyes will be on the outcome of 2024's U.S. presidential election and what it means for its resolve to support Ukraine. Funding Ukraine's military has become an increasingly partisan issue. A presidential change seems likely to change U.S. policy.

U.S. presidential elections

National elections are scheduled in a number of countries in 2024, but the U.S. elections will be critical across the world.

While the U.S. is still in the midst of a primary campaign, the election is likely to be a rematch between Biden and Trump, and the outcome is once again expected to be very close. A handful of swing states (Arizona, Georgia, Michigan, Nevada, North Carolina, Pennsylvania and Wisconsin) are expected to be key in deciding the winner. Election laws (governing the way votes are counted and announced) in some of these states increases the possibility of unrest.

Fewer than 40% of Republicans question whether Biden fairly won the 2020 presidential election, despite a lack of evidence. There's a real concern that a similar degree of skepticism will provoke unrest in 2024. Should Trump lose, claims of fraud are highly likely, and this time supporters may be better organized and prepared to launch legal challenges, which may be accompanied by protests. Any protests, which could run into early 2025, are likely to be met with a rapid response from authorities, to avoid a repeat of the 2021 Capitol Hill experience.

Should Trump win the presidential election, there may also be major protests by the opposition, in a repeat of events seen in Washington DC in 2016 and early 2017.

Geopolitical polarization

Polarization is set to continue in Asia Pacific, as the region's nations move into more clearly defined opposing camps built around China and the U.S. Domestic factors in these two countries will be key in defining the composition and aspirations of these groups. The U.S. has its presidential elections ahead, while China must contend with a sluggish post-pandemic recovery.

An anti-western bloc comprising China, Russia and North Korea has emerged in East Asia. This will prompt tighter security co-operation among U.S.-aligned countries, including Japan and South Korea. Other western countries will work to strengthen their strategic presence in the region.

Economic decoupling to reduce the interdependence between the U.S. and China increases each country's freedom to act, by reducing the bilateral consequences. Expect to see more of this overt decoupling and an increase in the limits on operating within the opposing blocs. Supply chain diversification and changes to security laws will increasingly impact international business and travelers.

It's impossible to ignore Taiwan. While an actual conflict seems unlikely in the medium term, it's impossible to rule out belligerent moves by the Chinese military timed around sensitive events, such as Taiwan's presidential elections.

Smaller states also have a part to play, as polarization runs its course. As Asia Pacific coalesces around these two blocs, it becomes very difficult for smaller, neutral countries. Small island nations will see increased competition for influence from the U.S. and China. They'll have to make their choices.

Amid this posturing, governments in the region will increasingly focus on military strength. Expect to see military rule continue in Myanmar, Pakistan and Thailand. The influence of the military on domestic politics may also grow in Cambodia, Indonesia and Vietnam. This could result in controversial new laws aimed at dealing with threats to domestic security, which could be deployed to suppress internal dissent and keep existing governments in power.

Aside from Taiwan, disputed territory in the South China Sea is another potential flashpoint in 2024. Chinese expansion should continue. Other claimant countries may try to assert their own territorial claims, through actions including freedom of navigation exercises. While such moves increase the chances of an inadvertent escalation, any resulting disruption and panic should be limited, as politicians will want to contain any fallout.

Climate change

Extreme weather effects

With numerous temperature records already broken, 2023 is almost certain to be the hottest year on record, and 2024 is forecast to be even hotter. Extreme temperatures have brought into sharper focus the effects of rising underlying temperatures on our lives.

High temperatures have a profound effect on health, especially in countries where health care is weak. They also contribute to the increased incidence of wildfires, as seen in Canada in 2023. Agricultural yields will be affected by periods of drought and abnormal rainfall. When temperatures are high, demand for electricity increases, putting stress on national grids, increasing the risk of power cuts, which may have implications for travel. Extended periods of heat may also change tourism travel patterns, as some destinations simply become too hot to visit.

The causes and impacts of climate change need to be better understood, to help develop effective mitigation strategies.

Advances in technology

AI presents both benefits and challenges

Technology, and artificial intelligence (AI) in particular, has made substantial progress over the last 12-18 months. AI offers some real benefits, especially for air travel. By combining with biometrics, AI can help to reduce some of the friction travelers face, by helping to reduce check-in and security processing times.

Among other technologies, unmanned drones are getting ever closer to making the leap from delivering small packages to carrying fare-paying passengers. Regulators are already working on the legislation needed to make uncrewed flying taxis a reality within the next decade.

While technology clearly offers a lot of benefits, it brings its own challenges too. AI enables malicious actors to spread misinformation more effectively, targeting it at those most susceptible to it. AI enables news articles and social media posts to be fabricated on an unprecedented scale and speed, undermining public confidence in the genuine sources. People will only believe what they want to believe. Aside from the security impact, such misinformation could undermine public faith in institutions and even democracy.

AI can also facilitate more evasive ransomware, more convincing deep fake email attacks, and state sponsored attacks, impacting the provision of utilities and public transportation. This threat can only rise. But AI is not just the cause but also the solution to these problems. It can be used to detect fake news, defend against it and inform more quickly. It can also predict cyber security threats and develop responses to them, often before they occur.

About Crisis24

Responding to the threats presented by a dynamic world

Crisis24, formerly known as WorldAware, is a fully vetted and trusted resource within the BCD marketplace. BCD Travel and Crisis24 have built a close partnership lasting more than 10 years, resulting in decreased operational risk and cost saving benefits for our customers. Equipped with Crisis24's insights on the possible threats facing organizations and their personnel, travel managers will be better able to anticipate, prepare and respond to a dynamic world.

Stay informed about travel disruptions with the seamless implementation of Crisis24. For more information on travel risk management (TRM) solutions for your travel program please visit the [BCD marketplace](#).

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If you have any questions or comments regarding this report, please email mike.eggerton@bcdtravel.co.uk to share your thoughts.