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## BRIEFS

### BRITAIN: May Promises 95% of Brexit Deal Completed

**Summary:** British Prime Minister Theresa May assured Britain she completed 95% of the Brexit deal. Although likely an exaggeration, this signals her continued defiance amid heavy criticism.

**Development:** On 22 October, May spoke to British Parliament and claimed her cabinet completed 95% of the Brexit negotiations. She also stated that the last real point of contention involves the border between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. Last week, the EU refused to agree to a special meeting in November citing insufficient progress on negotiations. May implied the possibility of extending the transition period but then labelled that solution “undesirable.” May’s speech followed speculation over her ousting from her position and a rally on 21 October in which 700,000 people marched to call for a second Brexit referendum.

**Analysis:** May is almost certainly exaggerating the progress of the Brexit negotiations, given the EU’s recent statement that Britain made insufficient progress for a special meeting and that negotiators have been struggling to find a solution to the Irish border for almost the entire negotiation period. However, May apparently remains defiant in the face of widespread criticism, both by those claiming that the current deal leaves too many EU regulations in place and those calling for a second referendum. Despite the growing calls, a second vote remains unlikely given May’s steadfast rejection of one and the logistical challenges of setting up a new vote before the mandated Brexit deadline in March 2019. Britain will most likely either manage to make a final agreement, or miss the deadline entirely, triggering a “no deal” Brexit. The EU’s reaction to May’s speech and further British government publications of “no deal” contingency documents will likely help indicate whether a deal will be reached or not.

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### CRIMEA: Student in Kerch Kills 19 in Shooting and Bomb Attack

**Summary:** Investigation continues after reports on student Vladislav Roslyakov killing 19 people and injuring dozens in a school shooting attack in Crimea—which may lead to a call for tighter gun control laws and stricter censoring of media covering similar “inspiring” attacks.

**Development:** On 17 October, Roslyakov began shooting after a planted bomb exploded, before killing himself. Russian authorities quickly categorized the event as a terror attack, but the incident was tentatively reclassified as murder. Kerch is part of Crimea, which Russia annexed from Ukraine in 2014. Russia rarely experiences shootings of this magnitude, due to the nation’s strict gun laws. People commit similar crimes, however, with weapons easier to procure, such as knives, axes, and air guns.

**Analysis:** In response to the violence, Russian citizens may push for tougher laws on hunting rifles, the type of weapon Roslyakov allegedly obtained legally and used in the attack. Other security measures may follow to mitigate the risks for schools and universities, but no certain demand or legislation have emerged so far. The event also may lead to Russia's security services receiving a larger mandate to scrutinize the nation's internet and communications, based on reports that Roslyakov accessed information about US school shootings through social media. Russian President Vladimir Putin previously called for more control to prevent terrorist attacks, despite the FSB already closely monitoring communications in Russia. The massacre in Crimea may lead to tighter control, but any changes will likely wait until after the investigation.  
[Gianna Geiger, gianna.geiger.ee@gmail.com]

### **CYBERSECURITY: Millions of US Voter Records for Sale Online**

**Summary:** Researchers from Anomali Labs and Intel 471 discovered a database of voter history from various US states for sale on "raidforums.com," which could likely lead to the compromise of the authenticity of the voting system.

**Development:** On 15 October, researchers from Anomali Labs and Intel471 published information on a massive repository of US voter records for sale on a data breach forum. The database contains approximately 35 million records split across 20 states with prices ranging from \$150 to \$12,500. The researchers, after looking at a small cross-section of the records, determined the voter data was valid and included full names, phone numbers, physical addresses, voting history, party affiliations, etc. The researchers also claim the seller of these voting records updates them regularly, mainly targeting consumers such as political campaign groups, journalists, and academic researchers.

**Analysis:** The attacker's ability to continuously update the database implies that either the breach(s) to the data are on-going, or a source with legitimate access to the data is providing (or selling) the information to the attacker. The latter option seems more likely, as the attacker would likely try to conceal the existence of the breach in the first place and almost certainly avoid posting the sales request on a publicly viewable forum if he or she intends to continue using the breach(s) to gather the data. If such data remains for sale on the internet, potential consumers such as outside players and non-state actors could grasp at the opportunity to use such information to meddle with current and future US elections, thus posing a threat to the system and the legitimacy of future voting results.

[Mark Burrell]

## **ISRAEL: Appeal Ruling May Spark Debate on Tel Aviv's Commitment to Peace**

**Summary:** The Israeli Supreme Court rejected the execution of an earlier law and, in turn, Netanyahu's policy decisions, likely leading to renewed debate of Israel's commitment to solve the Palestinian conflict.

**Development:** On 18 October, the Israeli Supreme Court overturned the entry-ban on Lara Alqasem, an American of Palestinian descent seeking a master's degree at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, despite her past affiliations with the Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS) movement against Israel. In 2017, the Knesset enacted a law banning any foreigner who knowingly and publicly calls for boycotting Israel from entering the country. Gilad Erdan, a senior Israeli minister who oversees countering the Palestinian-led boycott (BDS) movement, stated during the trial, "Israel has the right to protect itself and decide who enters its borders." Some critics of the current policy see this case as another indicator of Netanyahu's trend toward utilizing the law to police opinions counter to his agenda. The Israeli Supreme Court condemned the entry-ban and Alqasem's subsequent detention as an extreme and dangerous step that could lead to the crumbling of democracy within Israel and allowed Alqasem to enter the country for her studies.

**Analysis:** The international criticism of the entry-ban will probably renew debate on Tel Aviv's commitment to a peaceful resolution of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. Internally, Netanyahu and Erdan will likely face criticism from both pro-Israeli and pro-Palestinian sides that seek a definite declaration of Israeli policy goals regarding Palestinians and their descendants. Netanyahu will probably divert attention away from the policy discrepancy and the characterized BDS win of the appeal and will continue his efforts to enfeeble the movement. The supporters of the BDS movement may utilize the result of the appeal to promote the legitimacy of their cause and may seek to increase the movement's visibility through public protest demonstrations.  
[Haley Rasmussen]

## **JORDAN: King Abdullah II Calls For Israel to Return Farming Territories**

**Summary:** Jordan announced it will not renew a 1994 treaty granting Israel two territories used for farming, likely in order to gain favor among its disgruntled citizens.

**Development:** On 21 October, King Abdullah II of Jordan announced his intention to reclaim two Israeli territories, which would end parts of a 1994 peace treaty. The two territories of al-Baqura and al-Ghumar make up 1,000 acres of land located on the southern portion of the Israeli-Jordanian border, used mainly for Israeli agriculture. The 1994 treaty mandates that Israel must recognize Jordan's sovereignty, but Israeli private owners may use the land to farm. The peace treaty automatically extends every year, with a 12-month notice period to prevent the extension. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu intends to negotiate with Jordan and

continue the extension of the lease agreement. Jordanians praised and celebrated the announcement as many do not approve of the treaty.

**Analysis:** As Jordan currently deals with corruption, high unemployment, and dissatisfaction from its citizens, the government likely decided to reclaim the territories from Israel in an attempt to regain popularity among its people. Considering the treaty's unpopularity among Jordanians, a move to reclaim Jordan's land likely serves as a vital boost in patriotism. King Abdullah likely is protecting himself in order to remain in power and avoiding civic unrest, as he momentarily tries to appease opposition groups angered by Israel failing to live up to its water-sharing agreements as well as its occupation of Palestinian territories. Israel has treaties with only two Middle Eastern countries: Jordan and Egypt. Because Israel has so few allies, and Netanyahu recognizes Jordan as a valuable ally, Israel will most likely return the land after negotiating. Due to the fact that Israel cannot afford to lose allies, and Abdullah would almost certainly lose face if he failed to regain the territories, this scenario protects both countries' interests.

[Kaylee Coffman]

### **MEXICO: Migrant Issue Could Spark Disagreement in Negotiations with US**

**Summary:** Mexican police forces attempted to halt a caravan of Central Americans crossing the Mexico-Guatemala border. While Mexico may threaten the deportation of undocumented immigrants, its foreign policy suggestions will likely conflict with expressed US desires.

**Development:** On 19 October, Mexican police forces lined the Mexico-Guatemala border near Ciudad Hidalgo to stop a migrant caravan from illegally entering Mexico. Migrants primarily from Honduras, Guatemala, and El Salvador fled their homelands under the organized rights group Pueblo Sin Fronteras (People Without Borders) to escape poverty and gang violence. Mexican authorities first allowed a trickle of women and children to cross into Mexico over a bridge that connects Mexico and Guatemala across the Suchiate river. Police used tear gas and smoke canisters to deter migrants who forcefully pushed through steel gates while many jumped into the river to illegally enter Mexico on rafts. On 21 October, buses carried legal migrant groups seeking asylum from the border city Ciudad Hidalgo to shelters in Tapachula, about 23 miles north of the border. Honduran President Juan Orlando Hernandez and Guatemalan President Jimmy Morales agreed to send civil protection forces into Guatemala to assist thousands of refugees whom the Mexican authorities have forced to turn back.

**Analysis:** Mexican officials, both in the current and incoming administrations, will likely show less leniency towards the migrant caravans than in March when similar events took place, in part due to expressed US preferences, but not follow any perceived US lead to take a significantly harder stance on immigration. The recent phenomenon of refugee caravans reflects the poor living conditions of those fleeing Central America. Mexico's President-elect Lopez Obrador has suggested investment into the region to develop economic opportunities there and reduce

pressure to emigrate. Although Mexican authorities may deport illegal immigrants, it would likely not follow any US lead in cutting aid to the region's poorest countries. Mexico will probably continue to grant asylum to those who legally applied, likely allowing more immigrants to approach the southern US border and probably showing Washington that it has leverage over immigration reforms.

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### **PAKISTAN: Prime Minister Vows to Hold Peace Talks With India**

**Summary:** Recently elected Prime Minister Imran Kahn stated during a conference in Saudi Arabia that he hopes to hold peace talks with India.

**Development:** On 23 October, Kahn, during an investment conference in Saudi Arabia, spoke about the recent economic crisis in Pakistan and how he hopes India and Pakistan could work together to solve the issue. India and Pakistan have historically tried to hold peace talks in an effort to resolve the insurgency in Kashmir as well as improve economic ties but without success.

**Analysis:** Based on the historical and continual conflict between Pakistan and India, the likelihood of peace talks between the two nations remains low. However, with new leadership in Pakistan, tensions may decline. Outlining a balance of payment problem, Kahn stated that investors in India could balance Pakistan's debt. Nevertheless, this will prove impossible if the two countries fail to come to peace. As tensions continue to arise in the Kashmir region with about 500,000 Indian troops stationed there, it will likely prove difficult for the Pakistani government to come to terms with India. Kahn as Pakistan's new leader suggests that the country seems willing to change dramatically—however, the Pakistani military still maintains a large influence in this arena and will likely play a decisive role in any future peace talks with India.

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### **SAUDI ARABIA: Admits to Missing Journalist's Murder in Consulate in Istanbul**

**Summary:** Saudi Arabia admitted that rogue Saudi operatives killed a journalist in its consulate in Istanbul, Turkey, which will likely decrease reporting coverage on the country.

**Development:** On 19 October, Saudi Arabian state media admitted that rogue Saudi operatives killed journalist Jamal Khashoggi. The Saudis previously claimed that Khashoggi had left the consulate and denied reports of his death. However, after the preliminary findings of the joint Turkey-Saudi investigative team, the Saudis now claim that Khashoggi died in a fight while in the Istanbul consulate. Saudi Arabia claims to have arrested 18 people possibly involved in the reporter's death. Additionally, Saudi Foreign Minister Adel al-Jubeir labelled those responsible

for the fight in the consulate as Saudi “agents” involved in a “rogue operation.” Adel al-Jubeir also stated that the government will punish those responsible for Khashoggi’s death.

**Analysis:** Khashoggi’s murder, a concerning development to journalists around the world tasked with reporting on Saudi Arabia, will likely decrease the scope of journalistic reporting on the country. This murder will also probably draw attention to Prince Mohammed bin Salman’s more authoritarian means to achieve his goals, such as placing possible royal challengers to the throne under house arrests, as in late 2017, and his brutal war in Yemen. This increased attention as well as the recent international criticism will likely bolster his opponents and critics within and outside the kingdom. Additionally, while possible, investigators will likely find it difficult to prove that the Saudi state perpetrated Khashoggi’s murder given that the members of the rogue operation likely tampered with the evidence. Regardless of who carried out the killing, the international community will almost certainly look to the Saudi government for decisive action to ensure that this incident will not occur in the future. If the Saudis fail to take appropriate action, the West will likely minimize the export of arms to Saudi Arabia in an effort to punish the Saudis for a weak response.

[Parker Labine]

### **[TAIWAN: Protestors Demand Government to Allow Vote for Secession](#)**

**Summary:** Pro-independence citizens rallied in protest urging the government to allow for a public referendum that would put up for vote Taiwan’s independence from China, which will likely not pass in the face of repeated “use of force” threats from China.

**Development:** On 20 October, thousands of pro-independence protestors rallied in Taipei demanding Taiwanese President Tsai Ing-wen amend the Referendum Act to allow for a public referendum that would determine the island’s independence from China. Although Taiwan separated from China during the 1949 civil war, it never formally declared its independence, and Beijing still sees the self-ruling island as part of its territory to be reunited. Since the split, China demanded its international allies to forfeit diplomatic relations with Taiwan and any recognition of it as a sovereign state. Although the current ruling Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) is traditionally independence leaning, Tsai stated her desire to maintain the “status quo” with China and prohibited DPP officials and candidates from participating in the protest. Many pro-independence groups and Taiwanese citizens strongly criticized the move, claiming the DPP is “failing to uphold its pro-independence platform.” In response to the long-standing independence movement, China warned it would “respond with force” if Taiwan declared an official split.

**Analysis:** Despite the continued protests and the pro-independence stance of many Taiwanese citizens, Tsai will almost certainly deny their demands to amend the Referendum Act, as such a move would likely result in an official declaration of independence from China. Beijing will probably put pressure on Tsai and the DPP to ensure the prevention of any type of proposition that would put the island’s independence up for vote. Additionally, Tsai will most likely continue

to comply, as she seems aware of the risks of allowing such a vote after China repeatedly stated it would send a military force in response to any declaration of independence. As a result, Tsai and her administration will likely face backlash from its citizens, which could potentially damage any chances of re-election for Tsai or other DPP candidates in the 2020 presidential elections, as many citizens are seemingly losing faith in the party for failing to uphold its pro-independence platform. If this pro-independence rhetoric among the Taiwanese population continues or intensifies within the two years leading up to the presidential elections, the people might elect a leader who would allow for such a referendum—possibly one from a more radically pro-independence party such as the Taiwan Solidarity Union.

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### **UKRAINE: Violence Erupts After Split from Russian Orthodox Church**

**Summary:** Recent violence over Ukraine's establishment of its own Orthodox Church may provoke an unfavorable response from Russia.

**Development:** On 23 October, loyalists to the Russian church accused radical Ukrainian nationalist groups of breaking into Russian churches and beating priests and parishioners. This incident follows a recent chain of violence, after Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko announced in April Ukraine's desire to formally establish its own Orthodox Church. This caused a huge rift in the Orthodox Church after Constantinople announced that the patriarchate will support the creation of an independent Ukrainian church, much to the dismay of both religious and secular Russian leaders. Kiev condemned these ongoing acts of violence, stating that it will not tolerate such hostility.

**Analysis:** This increase in violence and tensions may provoke more extreme responses from the Kremlin, which will undoubtedly seek to retain as much influence over Ukraine as possible. Such a response could perhaps come in the form of further supplying Russian rebels in the Donbas region or possibly attempting to influence the 2019 Ukrainian elections. This outbreak of violence does not come unexpected, as the split in the Orthodox Church brings peoples' national and religious identity into question and stokes the tensions that brought about war between Russia and Ukraine in 2014. A resulting fuel in Ukrainian nationalism will likely further Russian involvement in the region and consequently escalate the conflict between the two nations.

[Elizabeth MacManus]



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