

THREATWATCH EUROPE

Blanka Kolenikova and Matthew Henman report on the latest incident hotspots and terrorist group action

UKRAINE

Public willingness to protest has been fomented by the current Government's liberal approach, political pluralism across all levels and the freedom of media; it was also aggravated by the economic difficulties and continued Government instability. This provides an environment in which protests, both economically and politically driven, are likely to be frequent and widespread across the country, but will unlikely be sufficient to mobilise a large-scale protest movement able to topple the Government as it did in February 2014.

The conditions are present for renewed anti-Government protests in central Kiev, around Independence Square (Maidan), if the Government does not implement the wide-ranging economic and political reforms expected by the population. The likelihood of a renewed protest movement in Kiev will increase if the government fails to achieve a lasting settlement in the conflict in the Eastern Donetsk and Luhansk regions and the economic impact it is having on an already weakened economy or if there are perceived to be excessive delays in the full implementation of the anti-corruption or lustration laws.

Ultra-nationalist groups are also likely to stage regular protests near Government buildings and

IN FRANCE THE MOST LIKELY TRIGGER FOR RIOTS IS PERCEIVED POLICE BRUTALITY

Russian assets in Kiev against Government policy and Russian support for separatists in Eastern Ukraine. Vandalism and violence is very likely in connection with such protests, with turnout in the low thousands at most. Fighting between pro-Russian activists and Ukrainian radical nationalists is very likely.

FRANCE

Overall, the most likely trigger for riots is perceived police brutality or discrimination against members of minority ethnic groups. President François Hollande's Government came to power in May 2012 on the back of promises to improve the lives of the socially and financially disadvantaged. However, the reality has instead consisted of public spending cuts, weak economic growth and unemployment rates of

almost 10 percent. Regeneration efforts in France's underprivileged city suburbs, or *banlieues*, have been minimal and living standards have deteriorated over recent years. Confrontations between police and disenfranchised youths or among ethnic groups are likely to result in rioting, arson attacks and acts of vandalism. Such scenarios tend to result in damage to public and private property as well as injuries and occasional casualties, such as during the 2015 riots.

Illegal migration will likely constitute another trigger for violent unrest. The so-called Jungle camp in Calais, which was home to more than 10,000 migrants, has been dismantled and the majority of migrants have been redistributed to centres across France. The construction of reception centres and the relocation of thousands of migrants are likely to trigger protests and attacks by right-wing groups and individuals, particularly in the South of the country.

GREECE

The main civil unrest risks in Greece stem from the ongoing austerity and review of the structural measures under the bailout programmes. The risk of protests and riots is likely to remain high, particularly in Athens, Thessaloniki and other major urban areas. Although these protests are unlikely to be as big as those in 2010-12, there is a risk that they could turn violent whenever they are attended by anarchist groups.

Police brutality has the potential to trigger riots, as was the case in December 2008 when two police officers shot dead teenager Alexandros Grigoropoulos in the Athens central district of Exarchia. Subsequent demonstrations soon escalated into riots and spread from Athens to Thessaloniki, causing extensive property damage to retail outlets, banks, hotels and Government assets. Although rioting on such a scale has not been seen in Greece since then, activists hold an annual commemorative march on the day of Grigoropoulos' death (6 December), which in the past has turned violent; in 2016 at least six people were arrested after riots in Athens' Exarchia district.

ROMANIA

Mass anti-Government demonstrations are likely to occur throughout 2017, attracting up to few hundred thousand people in Bucharest and thousands in cities throughout Romania. The protests pose limited risk of violent incidents, including scuffles

between police and demonstrators or between anti-Government and pro-Government protesters, and pose a low risk of vandalism to assets and injury to bystanders. The protests are highly likely to lead to reversal of political decisions and policies. In January and February 2017, anti-Government protests attracted up to 500,000 people per day throughout Romania. The demonstrations were prompted by an emergency ordinance adopted and then repealed by the Government, decriminalising some offences, including abuse of power causing financial damage of less than RON200,000 (\$48,000), and another proposal to change the criteria for prison pardons. Opponents viewed the legislation as weakening the anti-corruption framework. Former Prime Minister Victor Ponta resigned in November 2015 amid large-scale nationwide protests, prompted by endemic corruption within the political system and public administration. The effectiveness of these political demonstrations means that they are likely to become a standing feature of Romania in the coming years.

PARTIYA KARKERËN KURDISTAN (PKK), OR THE WORKERS' PARTY OF KURDISTAN

The Partiya Karkerên Kurdistan (PKK) is a Kurdish group primarily based and operating in the East and South-East of Turkey, albeit with a significant rear presence in Kurdish areas across the border in

Northern Iraq and North-East Syria. Originally founded as a Marxist-Leninist group, the PKK subsequently embraced Kurdish nationalism and sought to create an independent Kurdish state from Turkey. However, the PKK has since abandoned its separatist objectives and currently aims to achieve greater cultural and political rights for Turkey's Kurdish minority.

The most common targets of PKK operations are military personnel and facilities. This is largely attributable to the fact that the military is the primary agent of the counter-insurgency against the PKK, and the substantial deployment of military forces in the South-East of Turkey provides numerous targets of opportunity for the group's guerrilla insurgency. Military patrols and convoys are frequently targeted in small-arms and IED ambushes and military checkpoints and outposts – particularly in rural/mountainous areas or along Turkey's border with Iraq – are also regularly selected as targets of PKK operations.

The PKK accused the Turkish Government of supporting the Islamic State's attacks against Kurds in areas near the border with Turkey, and ultimately these tensions erupted in the breakdown of an established peace process and a resumption of fighting between the Government and the PKK in July 2015. By May 2016, protracted fighting had led to the deaths of nearly 450 security force personnel,

Gendarmes restrain a protester during a demonstration against police brutality in February in Paris



more than 1,000 militants and around 100 civilians, with weak prospects for a peaceful resolution as neither party has indicated the slightest interest in re-entering negotiations.

SYNOMOSIA PYRINON TIS FOTIAS (SPF), OR CONSPIRACY CELLS OF FIRE

Synomosia Pyrinon tis Fotias (SPF) is an anarchist-revolutionary urban guerrilla group operating on the Greek mainland, primarily in the capital Athens and in Thessaloniki, the country's second largest city. The SPF's conception of the political environment is one of protest, resistance and violence. It sees revolution as the only valid motive for action and the sole justification for its armed campaign. The SPF stands opposed to current Parliamentary forms of democratic representation; the perceived "military-police complex"; the media establishment; consumer society and what it calls the dysfunctional socio-political and economic structures of Greek society.

The SPF's ambition is to be the vanguard of anarchist militancy in Greece, seeking to embody the most elevated principles of protest action in what it perceives as a critical moment for the anarchist revolutionary movement. The group has so far avoided mass-casualty attacks, however it has demonstrated it is not opposed to the use of targeted killings through the use of incendiary devices and improvised explosive devices (IED). Although the group currently poses little threat to the rule of the Greek state, it remains a credible threat and in late 2016 launched a new campaign targeting state officials and judiciary members.

DONETSK PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC (DPR)

The DPR declared its formation on 7 April 2014 as a group of pro-Russia separatist militants and occupied Government buildings in the city of Donetsk, Ukraine, following the removal of pro-Russia President Viktor Yanukovich. As the DPR's supporters occupied further buildings across Donetsk Oblast in April and May, the Ukrainian Government proscribed the DPR as a terrorist group on 16 May 2014.

The DPR established itself as a potent fighting force against Ukrainian Government forces with access to heavy weapons, artillery and surface-to-air missiles (SAM). Following the downing of several military aircraft between May and July, the DPR was also alleged to have operated the SAM launcher that shot down Malaysian Airlines Flight 17 on 17 July 2014.

After a period of intense fighting with Ukrainian forces throughout 2014 and into early 2015, including the capture of Donetsk International Airport, the conflict settled into a relatively frozen state. Engagements largely take the form of sporadic clashes and firing on fixed positions. The ceasefire broke down, though, leading to intensified clashes through mid-to-late 2016 and open fighting around Avdiivka in January 2017.

NATIONAL ACTION

Following National Action's formation in the United Kingdom in the summer of 2013, the group has engaged in a series of 'White Man Marches', conducted online hate crimes and organised 'training

camps' for its members, who are assessed to number in the low hundreds. On 12 December 2016, National Action was listed as a proscribed terrorist organisation by the UK Government, which described it as "a racist neo-Nazi group".

Notably, alleged members of the group have been involved in two high-profile violent incidents since its formation. In January 2015, Zack Davies attempted to kill a Sikh man in a supermarket in Mold in North Wales and a 17-year-old member was convicted in January 2017 of manufacturing a "pipe bomb".

On its establishment, National Action sought to create an openly neo-Nazi group for young people to reject the alleged moderation and lack of commitment of other UK right-wing extremist groups like the

NATIONAL ACTION IS DESCRIBED BY THE UK GOVERNMENT AS "A RACIST NEO-NAZI GROUP"

English Defence League (EDL). Unlike these groups, National Action has actively and openly promoted white supremacist and anti-Semitic ideas. National Action operates across the UK through regional chapters. The group's London chapter claimed on its website on 1 September to be the most active region, with the Yorkshire group claimed to have had a "soar in recruitment". While National Action's rhetoric and tactics have evolved and become more aggressive over time, moving from reactive direct action, cyber abuse and marches to engaging in martial arts and combat technique training at specially run camps for group members and initiatives such as "whites-only" food banks, the group itself has refrained from directly engaging in violence ●

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Members of the Donetsk People's Republic (DPR) in the remains of Donetsk International Airport in June 2016

