



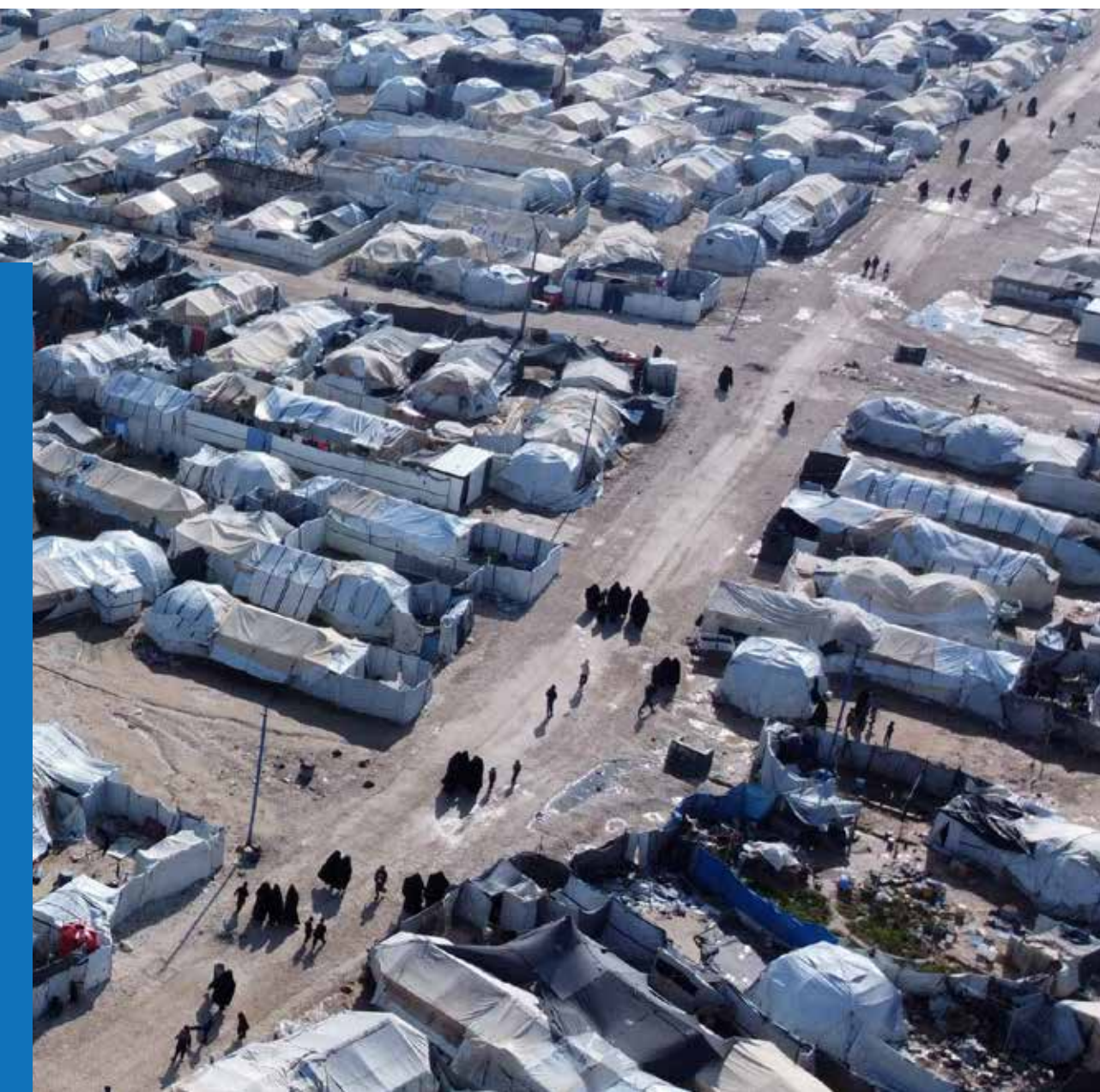
Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft  
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Swiss Confederation

Federal Intelligence Service FIS

2025

# SWITZERLAND'S SECURITY



Situation Report of the Federal Intelligence Service

# **SWITZERLAND'S SECURITY**



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## EDITORIAL

Dear readers

This situation report is not an easy read, but it is a necessary one. It forces us once again to face the geopolitical facts: since Russia launched its war of aggression against Ukraine, Switzerland's security environment has deteriorated drastically. This development is not a transitory phenomenon, but an ongoing trend which presents Switzerland with political and social challenges, as well as security challenges.

The gravity of the situation is widely recognised. Throughout Europe, as in Switzerland, domestic security measures have moved to the forefront of the political agenda again – and they have done so swiftly and dramatically. In Switzerland, security policy is a shared federal and cantonal task. Its continuous development requires the coordinated involvement of all stakeholders. Our goal is a security policy which protects our population, our critical infrastructure and our livelihoods effectively

against threats – while at the same time safeguarding our sovereignty and self-determination.

The Federal Intelligence Service (FIS) has a key role to play here. It describes and analyses the situation rationally and objectively. It has responsibility for risk prevention and its analyses and situation assessments make a substantial contribution to the early detection of security developments.

This report, “Switzerland's Security 2025”, provides a soundly-based analytical overview of our country's security environment. Reading the report makes it clear that we must act swiftly and decisively. This will require us all to join forces. With this in mind, I will advocate an open dialogue – in the Federal Council, with parliament, with the cantons and with the people – with the aim of strengthening Switzerland's security.



M. Pfister

Martin Pfister

Federal Councillor  
Head of the DDPS

Figure 1



# THE SITUATION REPORT IN BRIEF



The international order is going through a period of upheaval. There are signs of **a looming global confrontation** primarily between the United States on the one hand and China and Russia on the other. It is becoming more difficult to resolve security challenges through cooperative approaches. Switzerland's security environment, which is in a state of flux, may in the future offer less protection.

The dominant global strategic trend is still the **rivalry** between the **United States** and **China**, and this will have a profound influence on global security policy over the next few years. One aspect of this rivalry is the battle for technological supremacy.

The potential of the new US administration to disrupt the international order, and transatlantic relations in particular, has yet to be seen. However, it is uncertain to what extent and in what way the **United States** will in future act as a global hegemon and guarantor of **Europe's** security. US policy overall is still evolving and remains contradictory. There is as yet no sign of an implementable "grand strategy", but the situation is already prompting most European states to step up their defence efforts. As it will take time to implement these efforts, however, Europe would be faced with a gap in its security if transatlantic relations were to break down in the next few years.

**Russia** is convinced that it can continue to wage its war of aggression against Ukraine with the same level of intensity in 2025. President Vladimir Putin is determined to integrate Ukraine firmly within Russia's sphere of control. The baseline scenario remains the continuation of the war; a peace agreement in 2025 remains unlikely, and there is no military pressure on Russia to agree to a ceasefire or

to peace negotiations. Russia's strategic aim, beyond its intentions regarding Ukraine, is to regain its former status as an imperial great power. Russia has escalated its use of hybrid warfare against EU and NATO states, and in 2024 it ramped up its sabotage activities, in particular. In the future, it might also target hybrid warfare at these states by attacking infrastructure in Switzerland which is critically important to them. Since 2022, nuclear weapons as an instrument of power have acquired a significance not seen since the Cold War. Most nuclear powers are upgrading their nuclear arsenals. The impetus toward nuclear proliferation is increasing in various regions of the world.

Russia remains a strategic partner to China. **China** is making a vital contribution to the war against Ukraine, economically and by supplying dual-use goods. This is also part of an attempt to alter the balance of power with the Western states. Whilst there are political and economic tensions between China and Europe, the actors are keen to maintain a dialogue and continue trading. As far as the Taiwan question is concerned, it is likely that China does not want to provoke any escalation which could culminate in a war with the United States. It will, however, keep the pressure up, and Taiwan is a key interest which China will defend vehemently on the international stage.

**North Korea's** political and military alliance with Russia has allowed it to emerge from its geopolitical isolation. Militarily, its development of intercontinental ballistic missiles as delivery systems for nuclear weapons poses a threat to Europe's security. However, the European states are not the North Korean leadership's target.

**Iran** and its “Axis of Resistance” have emerged weakened from the regional escalation that followed the major terrorist attack on Israel by Hamas on 7 October 2023. The fall of Bashar al-Assad’s regime in Syria, the weakening of Hezbollah in Lebanon and the decimation of Hamas in the Gaza Strip have dealt Iran a damaging blow. If the Iranian leadership survives the current military escalation in its existing form, it will take systematic steps to regain its influence in the region.

Even after the fall of the Assad regime, there are still a number of conflict arenas in **Syria**. Developments in the north and east of the country are particularly relevant from the point of view of Switzerland’s security. In the north, there is confrontation between Turkish-backed militias on the one hand and PKK-backed militias on the other – in this region, the security of the Kurdistan camps and prisons containing “Islamic State” detainees is at stake. In the east, some “Islamic State” cells have survived. Should a strengthened “Islamic State” succeed in liberating its organisers and followers from the prisons, any remaining jihadist travellers with links to Switzerland would specifically pose a direct threat to Switzerland’s internal and external security.

Switzerland’s security situation is shaped by this strategic environment as follows:

### **Proliferation**

The war of attrition against Ukraine is generating enormously high demand in Russia, and the range of goods required is vast. Russia purchases these from friendly states or continues to procure them in Western countries, including Switzerland, by circumventing sanctions. There has been no discernible reduction in its procurement efforts. It has opted for a new

approach: production machinery is delivered not to Russia but to third states. Once installed there, this machinery produces goods which are then delivered directly to Russia. Procurement efforts by Iran and North Korea also continue unabated.

### **Illegal intelligence**

In the current situation, shaped as it is by war and conflict, it is extremely likely that the resources and remit of many intelligence services will be expanded. The espionage threat in Switzerland remains high. For decades, Switzerland has been an important theatre of operations in Europe, as it offers large numbers of rewarding targets.

### **Terrorism**

The terrorist threat remains at a heightened level. However, it is becoming more diffuse, as increasingly there is no longer a clear jihadist motive behind attacks. Jihadist propaganda, particularly that put out by “Islamic State”, will continue to have an impact. The phenomenon of online jihadist radicalisation, particularly of young people, will continue to shape the terrorist threat in Switzerland.

### **Violent extremism**

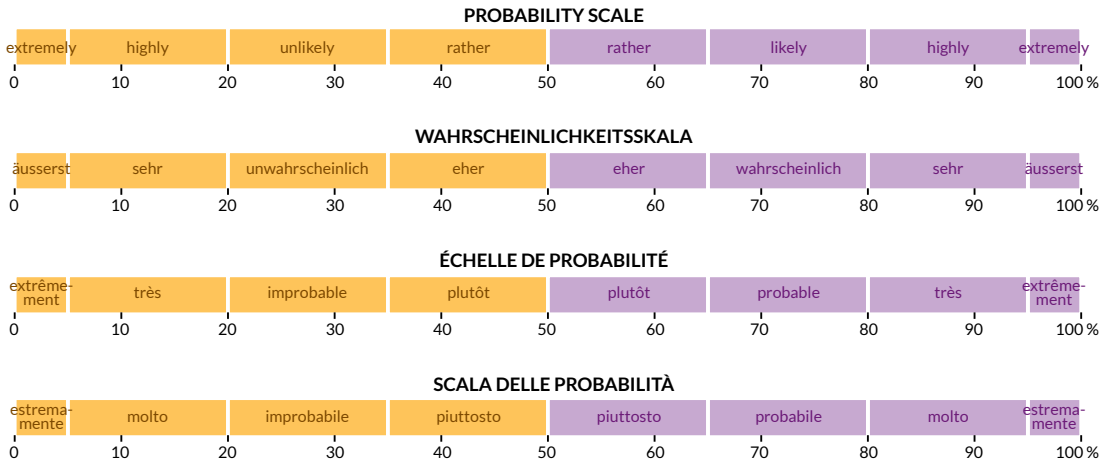
As far as the violent left-wing and right-wing extremist movements are concerned, only marginal changes have been observed. The potential for violence among violent left-wing extremists is high, and they are able to mobilise at short notice. Violent right-wing extremist groups will remain active. Individual members of both movements attend martial arts training sessions and have a particular affinity for weapons. The number of cases of minors and young adults becoming radicalised online and developing terrorist intentions will continue to increase.



Threat to critical infrastructure

Cyber attacks present a significant threat to critical infrastructure operators in Switzerland. No sabotage by state cyber actors has yet been observed in Switzerland. However, attacks might be carried out for power-political reasons, in order to inflict damage either on Switzerland itself or on its European neighbours as NATO or EU member states.

Overview of the probability scale used in this report



SITUATION RADAR TOOL

The FIS uses a situation radar tool to depict the threats affecting Switzerland. A simplified version of the situation radar, without confidential data, has also been incorporated into this report. This public version lists the threats that fall within the responsibilities of FIS. This

public version lists the threats that fall within the responsibilities of FIS and the Federal Office of Police. Topics within the responsibility of other federal agencies are not addressed in this report, but it includes references to their reporting.

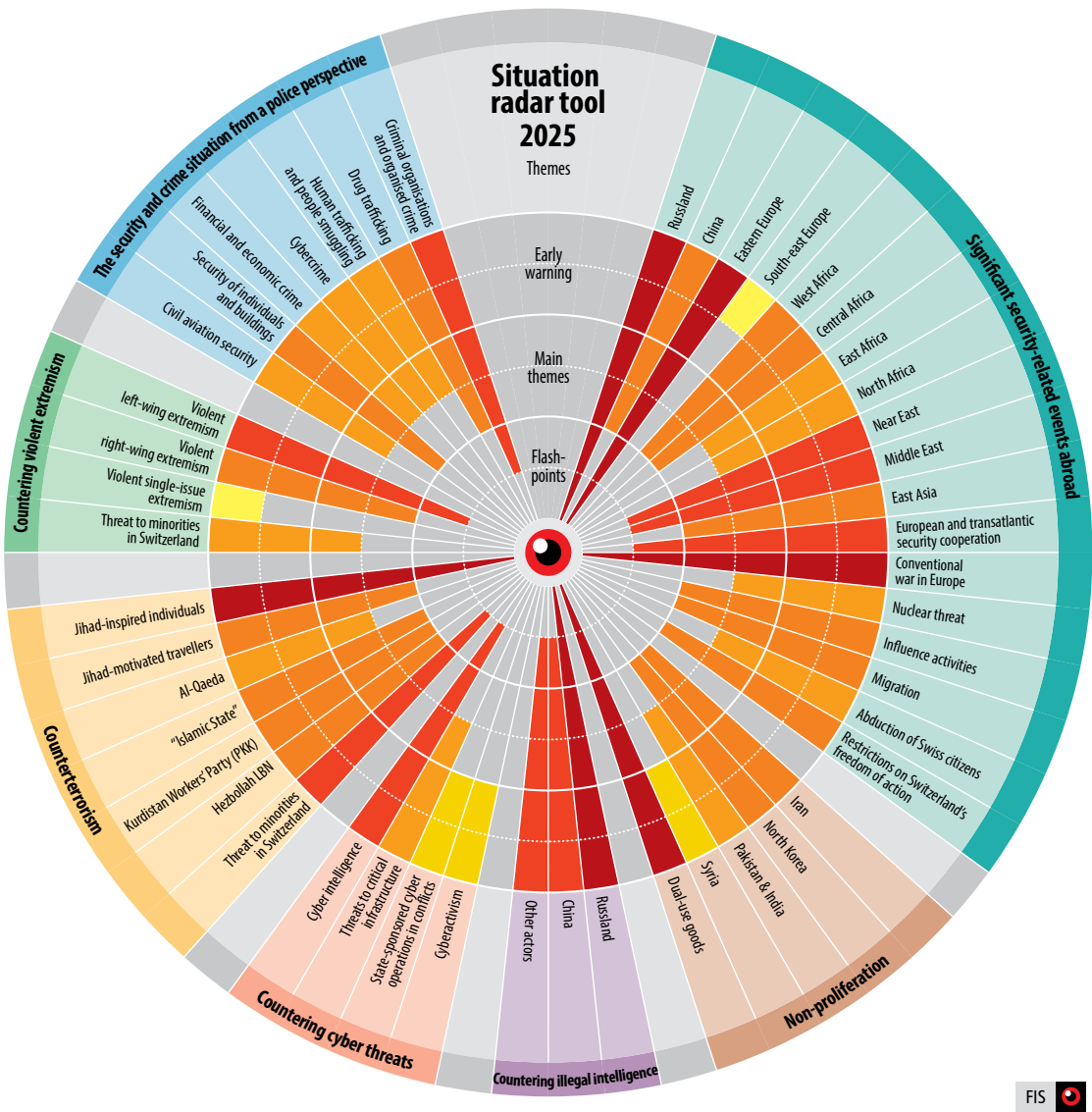




Figure 2

# STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENT



## SIGNS OF A LOOMING GLOBAL CONFRONTATION



The security situation in Switzerland's environment is deteriorating from year to year. Today's world is fragmented, volatile and fraught with risk. The pursuit of power and geopolitical conflicts are complicating cooperative efforts to resolve regional and global security challenges. The international order is going through a period of upheaval; there are signs of a looming global confrontation primarily between the United States on the one hand and China and Russia on the other.

Russia's war against Ukraine has dramatically increased the global interconnectedness of regional armed conflicts. For example, North Korea, a nuclear-armed state which is not party to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), is now supplying Russia not only with weapons systems and munitions but also with soldiers. It is not fully known what North Korea, Iran and China are receiving from Russia in return for their support of the war against Ukraine. However, the consequences are intensifying conflicts in the Asia-Pacific region and in the Middle East: in 2024, Iran, which could take the step to becoming a nuclear-armed state outside the NPT, and Israel, a nuclear-armed state not party to the NPT, exchanged direct military strikes for the first time. On 13 June 2025, Israel commenced military strikes against the Iranian nuclear programme. The Houthis, supported by countries including Iran and Russia, have succeeded in stabilising their control in Yemen, and their attacks in the Red Sea and in the Gulf of Aden are having an adverse impact on global trading routes.

Since 2022, the Eurasian autocracies of Russia, China, North Korea and Iran have been cooperating more closely economically, politically and to some extent militarily. A series

of summit meetings and bilateral agreements in 2024 consolidated their convergence. They want to reshape the international order, which they see as dominated by the West, and are calling into question the United States' position as the dominant global power. However, their cooperation is also permeated by internal tensions and differing interests and is conducted primarily on a bilateral basis. The closer cooperation between these actors nonetheless increases the likelihood of large-scale regional crises occurring simultaneously in the future. A scenario of this kind is currently threatening to overstretch the United States militarily.

Russia has escalated its use of hybrid warfare in EU and NATO states, and in particular has ramped up its espionage activities. It deliberately accepts the risk of collateral damage and civilian victims. One example of Russia's lowered inhibition threshold is the sending of incendiary devices by air freight. This posed a threat to civil aviation. Deliberately creating ambiguity and uncertainty for as long as possible, while remaining below the armed conflict threshold, is a key method of hybrid warfare. Nonetheless, Russia's shadow war in Europe brings with it considerable risks of escalation, including the risk of it spreading into another sphere of operations, such as space.

The recent military escalation between India and Pakistan in May 2025 illustrates the instability of the situation in South Asia. The opposing interests of the two powers are not in equilibrium and can escalate into military conflict at any time with no prior warning. While the two states have past experience of de-escalating such crises, a military clash between nuclear powers nonetheless always carries considerable risks.



President Trump's return to the White House increases the unpredictability of American politics – including in relation to foreign and security policy. While the United States remains the leading power globally, domestically it is confronted with instability. President Trump's selective, transactional and often unilateral policies are exacerbating global insecurity and uncertainty.

How much Donald Trump's second presidency might transform the global and transatlantic security structure remains to be seen. It is still uncertain to what extent and in what way the United States will in future want and be able to act as a global hegemon and to take responsibility for Europe's security (see box "Two spheres: the United States and the future world order"). Most European states are therefore stepping up their defence efforts, but there is no unified European position on how to deal with Russia in future.

Switzerland is surrounded by EU and NATO states whose stability and commitment to security also protect it. The security environment, which is in a state of flux, may in future offer less protection. In addition, there is a lot of critical infrastructure in Switzerland on which many EU and NATO states also depend. Escalated hybrid warfare could target these states by attacking infrastructure in Switzerland which is critically important to them.

The dominant global strategic trend is still the rivalry between the United States and China. The way in which these two great powers attempt to assert their opposing interests will have a profound influence on global security policy in the next few years. The battle for technological supremacy is heating up, in the fields of hypersonic and cyber weaponry as well as artificial intelligence and quantum computing. These technologies are key to the ability to decisively shape a new world order. As a major centre of innovation for technologies of strategic importance, Switzerland is under enormous pressure internationally.






## TWO SPHERES: THE UNITED STATES AND THE FUTURE WORLD ORDER

In “Switzerland’s Security 2024”, the FIS stated: “As a phase dominated by the United States comes to an end, there are signs of a move toward a new world order. For several years now, the dominant global strategic trend has been toward the emergence of two spheres, which might eventually lead to the formation of blocs: on the one hand, liberal democracies like the United States, the EU member states and other Western states including Japan, South Korea and Australia; on the other, China, Russia and other authoritarian states like North Korea and Iran.” At the same time, the FIS pointed out that ambitious regional powers did not wish to be dependent on either side and that the emerging global order was correspondingly “fluid and as yet ill-defined”.

The fundamental change in the United States’ foreign and security policy under President Trump and significantly increased tensions in the Atlantic Alliance do not render the image of “two spheres” obsolete, but they do make

it more complex and thus more difficult to understand. The great-power rivalry between the United States and China will remain the dominant global strategic trend over the next few years. The United States continues to see cooperation between China, Russia, North Korea and Iran as an element of the threat. These states, for their part, have a shared anti-Western outlook. Thus, the trend mentioned above toward the formation of two spheres continues. It is likely that they will continue to decouple from one another, economically and especially in terms of future technologies and their security-relevant applications, particularly military ones. This trend will be driven more strongly by shared interests and less obviously by shared values in the relevant sphere.


The cohesion of the US-led Western sphere has suffered recently. However, this does not necessarily mean the end of NATO. US defence planners continue to view alliances and allied partners as important cornerstones of



American global power. Nonetheless, they plan to reorder its priorities, some of them drastically. It is expected that the United States will transfer the primary responsibility for deterrence and defence in Europe to its European allies and that it will shift its military presence to the Asia-Pacific region in order to concentrate on China. This will place heavy demands on Europe, in terms of both resources and organisation. However, the United States still seems to be prepared to maintain its nuclear umbrella over Europe (“extended deterrence”). Moreover, NATO still has majority support in the US Congress, including among Republicans, and in the population of the United States as a whole. Nonetheless it remains to be seen whether security and defence policy interests will ultimately be the key determinants of American foreign relations. In the light of what are at least for now strongly competing interests in the administration, it can be expected that alliances and pacts will continue to be called into question repeatedly.

In Europe, there is great uncertainty about the United States’ future role in European security, as Europe is still dependent on the United States’ crucial military capabilities. Even under President Trump, however, the United States will probably not want to abandon transatlantic security relations completely. The Atlantic framework helps it to safeguard its own interests. US bases in Europe are a hub for US operations outside Europe. A radical withdrawal from Europe which was not offset by an increase in European capabilities would increase geopolitical risks, promote instability and possibly even push Europe closer to China. A strategically autonomous EU defence capability is unrealistic at least for the next five years and would probably also not be in the United States’ interests. More likely than the end of NATO, therefore, is fairer burden sharing between the United States and Europe without sacrificing US core interests.

UNITED STATES: NATIONALISTIC FOREIGN AND SECURITY POLICY

 The United States’ unipolar domination of world politics has been waning since the start of the 21st century. The world today is fraught with uncertainty, though for the time being the United States remains the leading global power. However, the liberal international order shaped by the United States is being challenged by revisionist great powers like Russia and China as well as by regional powers. President Trump also rejects the international order’s status quo and is critical of traditional alliances and institutions. He dismisses the United States’ traditional role as the security guarantor for Europe.

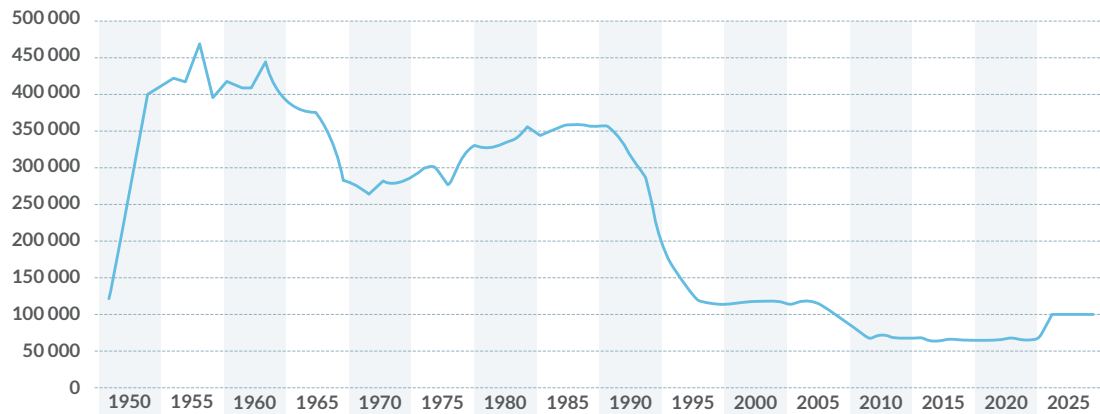
President Trump’s foreign and security policy under the slogan “America First” can best be described as nationalistic. This approach is not new, but it was largely relegated to the fringes during the Cold War and the Post-Cold-War period. Trump Republicans think that it should

replace the non-partisan liberal internationalist paradigm which has been dominant since 1945. They want the United States to stop being the world’s policeman and to rather focus its national security interests more narrowly, in particular on the strategic rivalry with China and Asia. Regarding foreign and security policy, there is enormous scepticism about collective security and multilateralism.

The highly polarised and volatile domestic political scene is making American foreign and security policy increasingly unpredictable. President Trump’s priorities in his second period of office lie in domestic areas, most notably justice, immigration and trade, which were the main themes of his election campaign. In the first few months, he has, as expected, acted more radically and disruptively than in his first term of office.

US military presence in Europe

U.S. Active Duty Military Personnel, 1950–2025



Source: U.S. Active Duty Military Personnel, 1950–2025, CSIS BRIEFS, Deterring Russia U.S. Military Posture in Europe, January 2025




The increased unpredictability of the United States under President Trump is itself having a globally destabilising effect. It is anticipated that the United States' national security interests will narrow even further. In the area of foreign and security policy, President Trump is reverting to the transactionalism of his first period of office. This will be characterised by zero-sum thinking and confrontation rather than multilateralism and cooperation. The liberal world order is thus coming under pressure also from the United States.

The United States will focus primarily on China as its strategic rival. As regards the division of transatlantic responsibilities, Europe will in future have to bear a greater share of the burden. As happened between 2017 and 2021, serious tensions between the United States and its European allies are anticipated, which might even put a question mark over the future of NATO. While it remains a matter of constitutional debate whether a US President can terminate an international treaty without the consent of the Senate or of Congress, it nonetheless appears unlikely that the United States will formally withdraw from NATO. However, President Trump calls into question, at least rhetorically, the entire transatlantic defence alliance, as his administration raises doubts about the credibility of the mutual assistance clause (Article 5) and the American nuclear umbrella.

He wants to reduce, maybe significantly, the United States' military presence in Europe. This would call into question NATO's military strategy for countering Russia, which was updated in 2022 and bases its deterrence and defence on enhanced forward defence and an increased troop presence on its eastern flank. The concepts for the US defence strategy under Trump currently being drawn up maintain the commitment to the NATO, but their aim is for the European allies to shoulder the brunt of responsibility for their own defence. Overall, however, US security policy is still evolving and remains contradictory. There is as yet no sign of a coherent "grand strategy" (see box "Two spheres: the United States and the future world order").

President Trump has repeatedly declared that he wants to end the war against Ukraine as quickly as possible. However, there are still major stumbling blocks on the path to a (fragile) ceasefire in the war against Ukraine, let alone a lasting peace agreement between Russia and Ukraine. The dialogue with Russia also carries alliance-wide and domestic political risks for the administration itself. President Trump would essentially like to reduce American support for Ukraine and to pass on responsibility for the bulk of the aid to the Europeans, but at the same time he has no interest in Russian dominance in Europe.

EUROPE: FACING A NIGHTMARE SCENARIO?

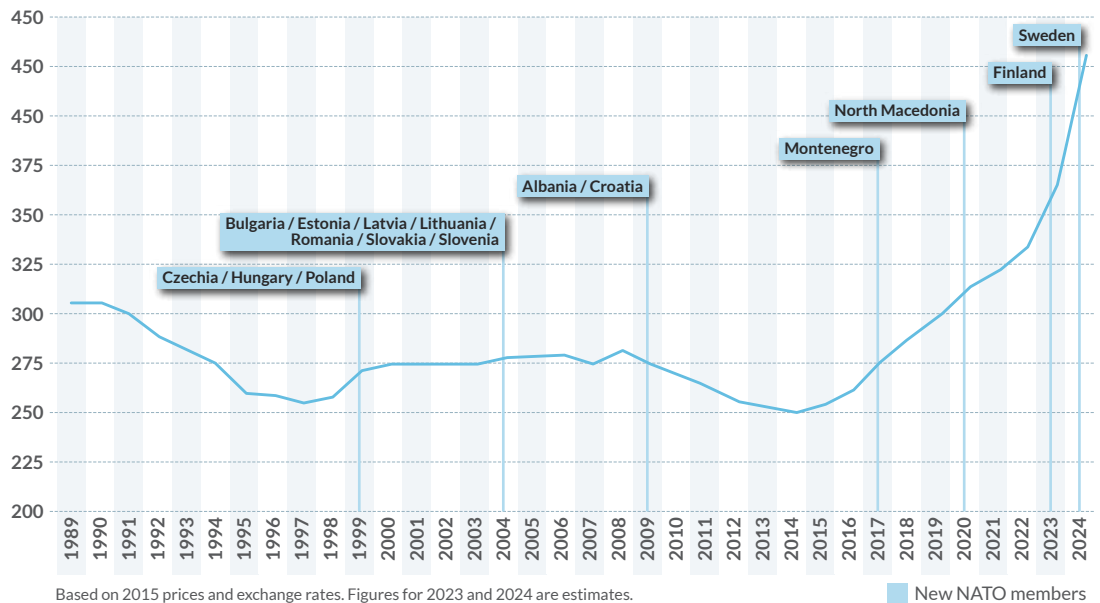
 Russia's war against Ukraine has rocked the security order in Europe. Europe is facing its greatest geopolitical challenge since the end of the Cold War. President Vladimir Putin has threatened European states with nuclear weapons and has been carrying out hybrid attacks in Europe for some time now. Russia has also attempted to influence elections in European states, including Moldova, Georgia and Romania.

The EU states have responded to the strategic watershed of 2022 by increasing their expenditure on defence and providing large-scale support to Ukraine, including military aid. Whereas in 2021 only five European NATO

states had achieved the target of spending two per cent of their GDP on defence, by 2024 the number was already put at 22. At the same time, however, the war against Ukraine has made it clear how heavily European states still depend on the United States for their security and will continue to do so for years to come. If President Trump significantly reduces American military presence in Europe and does not affirm the United States' commitment to the alliance, this would create the risk of a security dilemma in Europe until at least the end of this decade because of a lack of key military and intelligence capabilities, exposing Central and Eastern Europe to the threat of Russian aggression.

Defence expenditure of NATO (without USA)

Figures in billions of US dollars





Despite the potentially gloomy outlook for European security, the return of the United States to an America First policy also presents an opportunity, at least in theory, enabling the EU to continue to develop its security and defence policy and to act with greater autonomy in this area, beyond existing “coalitions of the willing” of individual states. Just a few weeks after Donald Trump took office, debate in Europe about the need for the EU to form a “third pole” alongside the United States and China intensified in the context of his dialogue with Russia. Discussions about an independent EU nuclear force have also gained momentum.

However, it will take more than a few years for the European states to make up for the potential loss of America’s engagement in Europe. Their efforts to strengthen their military and intelligence capabilities will not achieve this quickly enough. The EU’s ability to take military action remains uncertain, despite positive developments of the last few years. There are continuing financial and political challenges. In the meantime, European security and defence remain vulnerable. Ultimately, however, the Atlantic alliance is still beneficial to both sides, as the United States’ European allies are also useful to it in the great-power struggle with China.

Furthermore, the vision of a purely European multinational nuclear force will remain just that for years to come. In the meantime, only Britain’s nuclear weapons are integrated militarily within NATO, France’s are not. A renegotiation of the American nuclear umbrella over Europe might exclude states like Germany, Belgium and Italy from nuclear sharing, while states with higher defence expenditure, including Poland, might be involved for the first time. It is also possible that NATO’s headquarters will be relocated. Generally speaking, the focal point of European defence against Russia has already been shifting eastward for years.



## WAR AGAINST UKRAINE



For President Putin, the war against Ukraine has top priority. Russia is convinced that, in 2025 at least, it can continue to conduct the war at the current level of intensity, and President Putin is determined to integrate Ukraine firmly within Russia's sphere of control.

In 2024, Russia was the dominant actor on the battlefield in Ukraine and captured a further 3500 square kilometres or so. That is far less than one per cent of Ukraine's territory. A surprise Ukrainian advance into the Russian region of Kursk, in which around 1000 square kilometres were captured in August 2024, was largely pushed back in spring 2024. The military situation remains extremely difficult for Ukraine, and the level of attrition of its armed forces remains high.

In October 2024, Russia broadened the international dimension of its war against Ukraine by deploying North Korean soldiers. The United States and Ukraine's other Western allies responded in November 2024 by, among other things, allowing Ukraine to use Western long-range weapons, such as America's ATACMS guided short-range missile, against military targets on territory recognised as Russian under international law. These weapons make it possible to launch attacks on logistics infrastructure, command and control facilities and troop concentrations in areas which Ukrainian systems were previously unable to target effectively.

President Putin responded to the first ATACMS attacks on Russia with the non-nuclear deployment of a new guided intermediate-

### Overview of the control of territory in the war against Ukraine



range ballistic missile called Oreshnik (“hazel tree”) on a military target in the Ukrainian city of Dnipro. In November 2024, Russia adopted a new nuclear doctrine. This explicitly extends Russia’s nuclear umbrella to cover Belarus. Furthermore, Russia states that it will now treat any attack by a non-nuclear-armed state that is supported by a nuclear-armed state as a joint attack by both states. Since 2022, nuclear weapons as an instrument of power have acquired a significance not seen since the Cold War. Most nuclear powers are upgrading their nuclear arsenals. The impetus toward nuclear proliferation is increasing in various regions of the world. Along with Western states, China and India have also warned Russia against breaking the nuclear taboo for the first time since 1945.



At the present time, Russia is not militarily under pressure to agree to the ceasefire or peace negotiations with Ukraine being urged by the United States, although the United States initially indicated in the direct talks with Russia that it was ready to make many concessions. A lasting peace agreement remains unlikely in 2025. A ceasefire as an interim diplomatic solution does, however, seem possible. This would provide Russia with a tac-

tical pause in which to further expand its military capacity. Such a ceasefire would be fragile and could soon be broken again by Russia or Ukraine. The baseline scenario thus remains the continuation of the war, possibly in a less intensive form than in the last three years or as a frozen conflict.

Ukraine’s conduct of the war remains, despite the massive expansion of its arms industry, essentially dependent on Western financial and military aid. In 2025, as a response to the new American policy, the European states signalled a stronger commitment to supporting Ukraine. However, it remains debatable how quickly and how fully the EU and other supporting states could offset an end or a significant reduction of American military aid to Ukraine, especially in the areas of air defence and intelligence cooperation. The Ukrainian armed forces remain on the defensive. They are preventing rapid Russian advances though intensified use of unmanned weapons systems such as drones. However, territorial losses and desertions will increase. There is a shortage of personnel, and the existing personnel is ageing. Nonetheless, a large-scale collapse of Ukraine’s defences is unlikely in 2025.

## RUSSIA



In May 2024, Vladimir Putin began his fifth term as Russian president. His position is currently undisputed in Russia, both among the political and economic elites and in the population at large. There is no longer any appreciable domestic political opposition to him.

The war against Ukraine has top priority for President Putin. Like his role model, Empress Catherine the Great, he wants to integrate Ukraine firmly within Russia's sphere of control and to keep Belarus within its sphere of influence.

For a number of years now, Russia has been trying to shift the geopolitical balance of power and to reshape the international system through military aggression and hybrid attacks. President Putin's self-imposed historic mission also includes fundamentally restructuring Europe's security order. Russia is striving to restore its sphere of influence in Eastern Europe, as President Putin made clear in his ultimatums to both the United States and NATO in December 2021. At that time, Russia demanded the reversal of NATO's eastward enlargement back to the 1997 position.

Despite the war of attrition in Ukraine, Russia has sufficient resources at its disposal to continue pressing ahead with conventional rearmament. GDP growth of 4.3 per cent was recorded for 2024, thanks in particular to high state expenditure on the arms industry, from which its suppliers are also profiting enormously. In turn, defence expenditure in Russia rose significantly in 2024. High government spending and bonus payments for soldiers pushed inflation up to over nine per cent in 2024.



Even after a ceasefire in Ukraine or a peace agreement between Russia and Ukraine, the fundamental tensions and the differing expectations regarding the security order in Europe would remain. Russia's strategic aim here, over and above its intentions regarding Ukraine, is to regain its former status as an imperial great power, with the countries most at threat here being Moldova and the Baltic states.

Russia is planning not just to reconstitute the losses it has suffered in the war against Ukraine, but to expand its military capacity dramatically. In 2025, the economy could see a slight slowdown, and the monetary policy pursued by the Russian central bank means that GDP growth in 2025 is likely to be no higher than 2.5%. In terms of financial and human resources, Russia is in a position to continue the war against Ukraine in 2025. Among the elite, there are no influential opponents to the war. For the time being, Russia thus has both the will and the capability to continue the war against Ukraine.

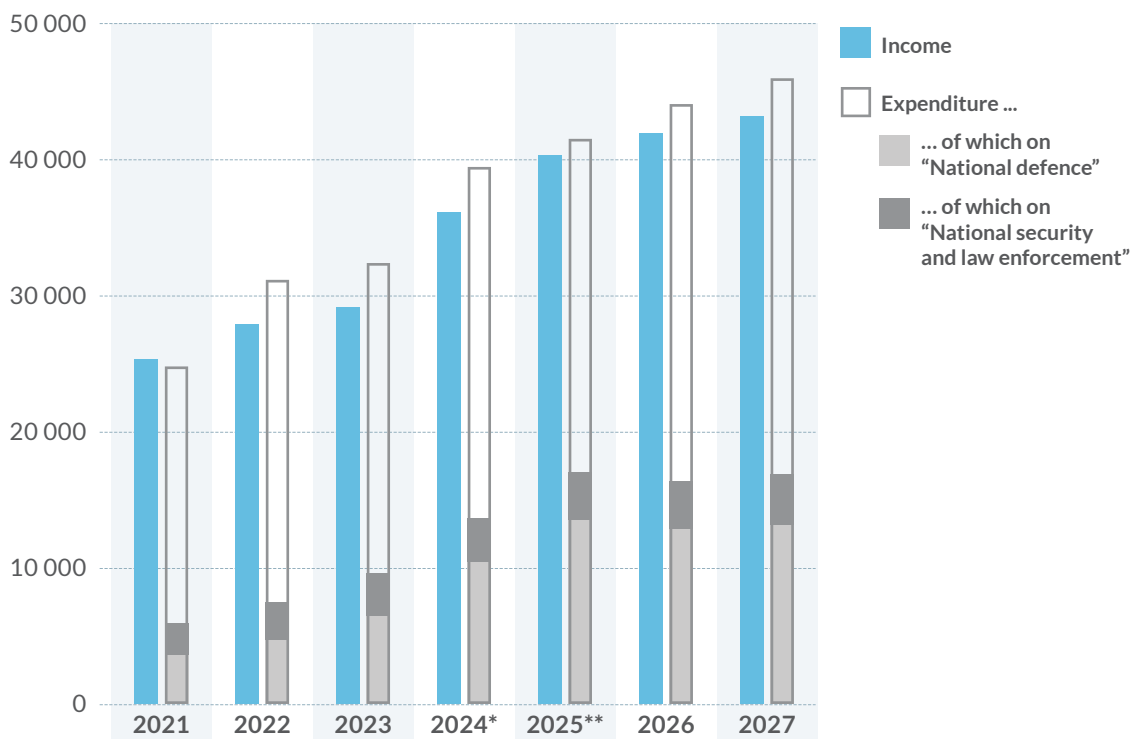
Russia is upgrading its military-industrial complex, is expanding its links with China, North Korea and Iran and is strengthening the disposition of its armed forces, primarily in the strategically important westerly direction. It therefore remains a security threat to Europe, beyond Ukraine. As long as the war against Ukraine continues at high intensity, however, the Russian armed forces do not have sufficient military capacity to pose a direct conventional challenge to NATO. A ceasefire or a peace agreement would therefore heighten the threat not just to Moldova and Georgia but also to East European NATO members.

Whether Russia sees a favourable opportunity for further military confrontation in Eastern Europe will depend in particular on the credibility of NATO's (and thus in particular the United States') deterrence. For example, President Putin might as a first step test the credibility of Article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty by escalating hybrid operations in the Baltic region. Should the Western states, and in particular the United States under President Trump, fail to respond adequately, Russia might attack a Baltic state.

After a ceasefire or a peace agreement with Ukraine, the risk of a renewed Russian attack on Ukraine would remain high, as it is extremely unlikely that Ukraine will gain NATO membership in the next few years, and Western security guarantees for Ukraine will therefore be explicitly weaker than they are for NATO members. President Putin will continue to deny Ukraine's right to sovereignty.

### Income and expenditure in the Russian budget

Figures in billions of roubles



\* Figures for "National defence" and "National security and law enforcement" according to the 2024-2026 budget plan

\*\* all figures after 2025 from the 2025-2027 budget planning

## CHINA



The strategic rivalry between China and the United States is intensifying. China is promoting its multipolar vision of the world order, and is doing so at the expense of liberal values and norms. It is exploiting the upheaval in the international order to increase its influence, especially over states in the Global South, for example via intergovernmental organisations such as BRICS. It is striving to bind these states to it economically, for example by creating dependencies on infrastructure or on technological systems or standards.

Russia remains a strategic partner to China. China is making a vital contribution to the war against Ukraine, economically and by supplying dual-use goods. This is also part of an attempt to alter the balance of power with the Western states. Out of self-interest, China wants to be seen as a constructive partner of Western states. Its room for manoeuvre is decreasing in some areas, however, because the

United States, in particular, is enhancing the protection of its own know-how and markets. This is increasing the pressure on the Chinese economy, which is already being affected by a slowdown in growth.

Whilst there are political and economic tensions between China and Europe, the actors are intent on maintaining a dialogue and trade. China's support for Russia is a cause for concern in Europe. The EU is critical of the uneven economic playing field between China and Europe, as China restricts market access for European companies and subsidises its own industry significantly. In November 2024, the EU therefore imposed additional duties on certain Chinese electric vehicles and further tightened investment controls. However, the European states are divided on the risks of having overly close links with China. While Germany does not allow any Chinese core components in its telecommunications net-

**Presidents Xi Jinping and Vladimir Putin  
at the 9 May military parade in Moscow, 9 May 2025**

Figure 3



work, Hungary's energy and communication systems are dependent on Chinese technology. China exploits such political differences to further its own interests.

The strategic rivalry between China and the United States is particularly evident in the Asia-Pacific region. Its effects are tangible here, particularly for Taiwan, the Philippines and Japan, and present these countries with security challenges. China is pressing ahead with the modernisation and expansion of its armed forces, including its nuclear weapons. The United States, on the other hand, is essentially consolidating its system of alliances and continuing to focus its armed forces on the region. At the same time, contradictory behaviour by the Trump administration is leading to a certain degree of uncertainty regarding the permanence of this approach. European interest and engagement in the Asia-Pacific are also steadily growing.

China is increasing its pressure on Taiwan. For example, the People's Liberation Army conducted several major exercises around Taiwan in 2024. The air force increased its presence around the island, and China stepped up its maritime activities around Taiwan. It is working on military options, although its aim is to absorb Taiwan without going to war, if possible.



The rivalry between the United States and China is likely to increase and to lead to new conflicts. However, compromises are still possible in some sectors. China will continue with its policies, and this will present a challenge in particular to the United States, but also to other Western states. It will invest in its economy, especially in scientific and technological development. Lasting hefty US tariffs would nonetheless severely dent China's domestic economic growth. They would res-

trict its access to an important sales market and vital access to technology. This would have a significant adverse effect on Chinese-American relations.

China will continue to cooperate strategically with Russia and will essentially support the latter in its stance on Ukraine. China is also likely to strengthen its presence and activities in the UN organisations.

In the light of expectations regarding Chinese-American relations, Europe will become more important to China as a research and business location in 2025. This increases the risk that there will be an outflow of critical know-how to China partly through espionage. Economic security will remain a key theme of European-Chinese relations, because dependencies also exist in the other direction. For example, China plays a prominent role in the production of systems for renewable energy. It controls the extraction and processing of the critical raw materials which are essential for this. It might attempt to use export restrictions as an instrument of power, as it did with the United States. At the same time, China will continue to seek to exploit differences between Western states in order to extend its political influence.

As far as the Taiwan question is concerned, it is likely that China does not want to provoke any escalation which could culminate in a war with the United States. It will, however, keep the pressure up. Taiwan is a key interest, which China will defend vehemently on the international stage. Taiwan will have to walk a tightrope between China's claims and its relationship with the Trump administration. Whether the territorial conflicts in the Asia-Pacific region escalate or not will in part depend on the United States.



## ASIA-PACIFIC CONFLICT ARENA

### MODERNISATION OF THE PEOPLE'S LIBERATION ARMY

- 👁️ In March 2025, China increased its defence budget by 7.2 per cent to approximately 246 billion US dollars.
- 🔗 It is likely that China will increase its defence expenditure further in order to continue modernising its armed forces.

### EUROPEAN PRESENCE IN THE ASIA-PACIFIC REGION

- 👁️ A number of European armed forces have expanded their presence in the Asia-Pacific region.
- 🔗 It is likely that European states' interest in the Asia-Pacific region will continue to increase.

### CHINESE NUCLEAR WEAPONS

- 👁️ It is extremely likely that China has increased the number of its nuclear warheads; it tested an Intercontinental Ballistic Missile (ICBM) over international waters in 2024.
- 🔗 It is likely that China will continue to expand its nuclear deterrence potential in order to maximise its scope for action.

### CONFLICT IN THE SOUTH CHINA SEA

- 👁️ China has increased the pressure on the Philippines with its activities in the grey zone.
- 🔗 It is likely that China will keep this pressure up and will try to force the Philippines gradually to withdraw.



### TAIWAN'S POSITIONING

- 👁 Domestic tensions have led to Taiwan's military budget being cut.

🔗 It is likely that the Taiwanese government will increase the military budget again and make new investments in the USA in order to keep the Trump administration happy.

### TAIWAN CONFLICT

- 👁 China has stepped up its military exercises around Taiwan and increased its naval and air force presence.

🔗 It is highly likely that China will maintain a high level of pressure; its intention is to normalise its own activities and to degrade Taiwan's armed forces.

### CHINA'S MARITIME POWER PROJECTION

- 👁 In spring 2025, Chinese warships sailed along the Australian coast for the first time and conducted live-fire drills in the Tasman Sea.

🔗 It is likely that China will make greater use of its growing navy in order to project power over greater distances.

### US PRESENCE IN THE ASIA-PACIFIC REGION

- 👁 The Trump administration signals its desire to deter China from further aggression in the Asia-Pacific.

🔗 It is highly likely that the USA will expand its military presence in the region further.

### SECURITY ARRANGEMENTS UNDER THE LEADERSHIP OF THE USA

- 👁 Minilateral arrangements for containing China (for example Aukus, Quad, Squad) were strengthened under President Biden. So far, the Trump administration has signaled continuity.

🔗 It is highly likely that these arrangements will be refined further.

## NORTH KOREA



A significant development in 2024 was the conclusion of a political and military alliance between Russia and North Korea, which allowed North Korea to emerge from its geopolitical isolation. China views the alliance with unease, as in relative terms this diminishes its own influence on the North Korean leadership. Since October 2024, North Korea has provided several thousand soldiers for Russia's military campaign against Ukraine. At the same time, there is the risk that in return Russia will share its military technology, to the advantage of North Korea's nuclear, delivery-system and satellite programmes. It should also be borne in mind that the new alliance obligation could, in the event of a military conflict with North Korea, lead to Russia becoming involved.



The Russian-North Korean alliance is highly likely to remain in place in 2025, even if the war against Ukraine ends. Should this happen, North Korea might recall its soldiers from Russia but, in exchange, significantly increase the number of its guest workers there. These could be employed in the reconstruction of devastated areas in Russian-controlled territory in Ukraine.

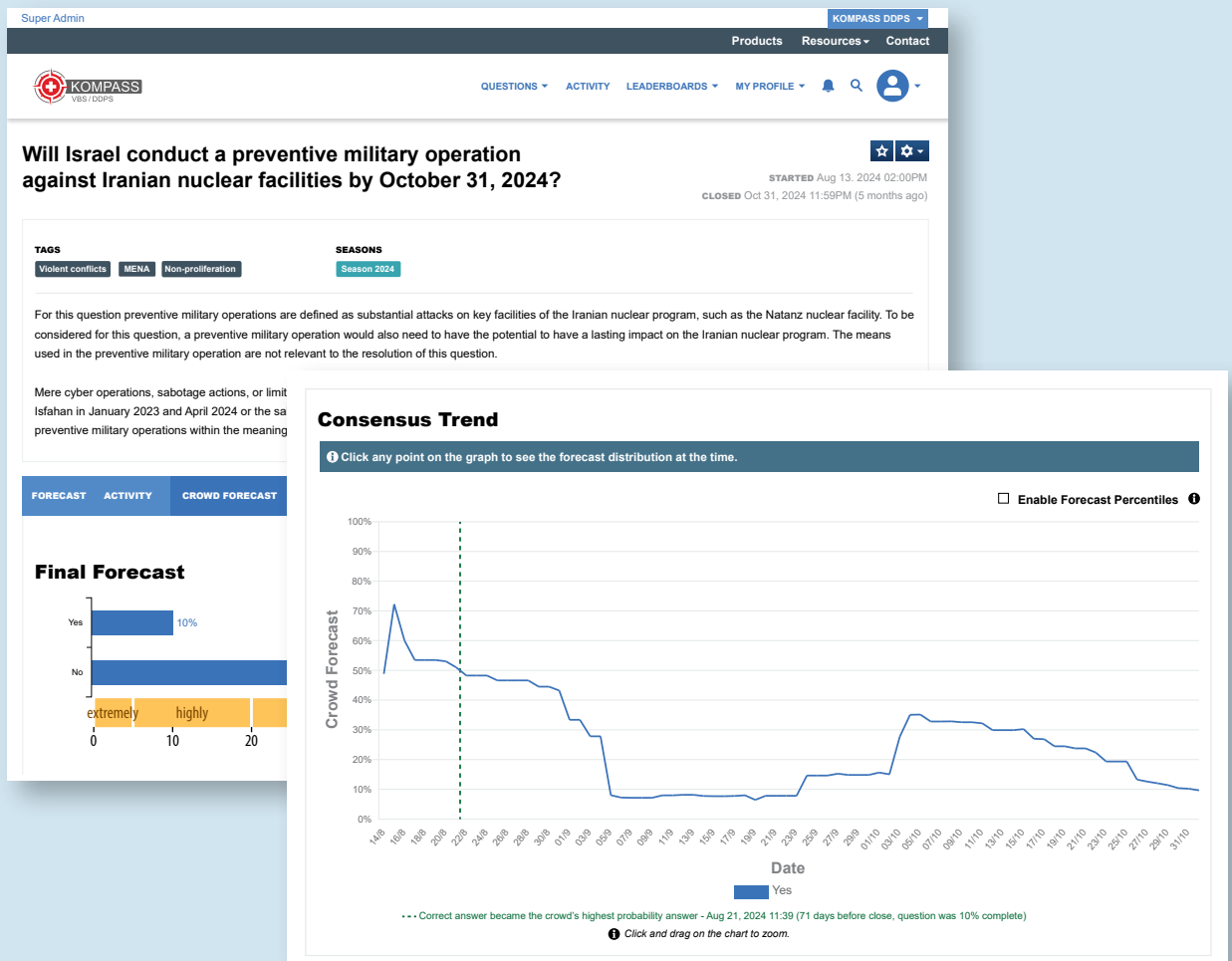
In military terms, North Korea's development of intercontinental ballistic missiles, and thus of delivery systems for nuclear weapons, poses a threat to the security of Europe. However, the European states are not the North Korean leadership's target.

Due to the rapprochement with Russia, Chinese influence on North Korea has diminished in relative terms. This has given the North Korean leadership more room for manoeuvre, and it might feel emboldened to carry out a seventh nuclear test. China is opposed to such a test.

For the time being, the resumption of talks between the United States and North Korea about the nuclear and delivery-system programmes remains purely hypothetical. It is extremely unlikely that North Korea will be ready to make significant concessions in relation to these programmes. China would have mixed feelings about such talks. An American-North Korean dialogue could ease tensions on the Korean peninsula, but would also constitute interference by the United States in China's immediate environment. After all, North Korea has historically been the People's Republic's sole ally.

It is vital for security policy to anticipate relevant developments. There are tried and tested tools for the early detection of security issues, and since 2024 these have included the “DDPS Compass”, a platform operated by the FIS but which can be accessed by all Swiss federal administration employees. The crowd-

sourcing platform makes use of the cognitive diversity, variety of perspectives and expertise of the federal administration. A number of empirical studies have confirmed the effectiveness of this kind of approach, which uses the wisdom of the many to improve early detection in the federal administration.



## CONTINUATION OF WAR AND CONFLICTS IN THE MIDDLE EAST




The war between Israel and Hamas and the regional conflict between Iran and Israel continue to dominate the situation in the Middle East. In addition to using its own instruments of state power, Iran also relies on support from, in particular, the “Axis of Resistance”, which includes Hamas in the Gaza Strip, Lebanese Hezbollah, Iraqi militia and the Houthi in Yemen. The Axis of Resistance has emerged severely depleted from the regional escalation that followed the major terrorist attack on Israel by Hamas on 7 October 2023.

The underlying problems remain unresolved, both in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and in the regional conflict between Israel and Iran. Escalation can happen quickly, as shown by the resumption of combat operations in the Gaza Strip in March 2025 and the Israeli strike against the Iranian nuclear programme in June 2025. The diplomatic efforts of the Trump administration in the war in Gaza and in the nuclear dispute with Iran have so far proven unsuccessful.

The Israeli military strikes have severely depleted Hamas and destroyed most of the infrastructure in the Gaza Strip. However, Israel has only partially achieved its official war aims – the destruction of Hamas as a military and political organisation, the freeing of the hostages and the elimination of the military threat emanating from Gaza. For the time being, Hamas remains the pre-eminent Palestinian political and military force in Gaza. In the event of Hamas saying that it was prepared formally to cede governmental control to another actor, it is highly likely that it would try to exert power from behind the scenes. During the war, the security situation in the West Bank and the living conditions of the Palestinian population there have deteriorated further.

Israel’s military action and the fall of the Assad regime in Syria greatly weakened Hezbollah and led to shifts in the political landscape in Lebanon. It is therefore likely that Hezbollah is currently not interested in a renewed escalation of the conflict with Israel.

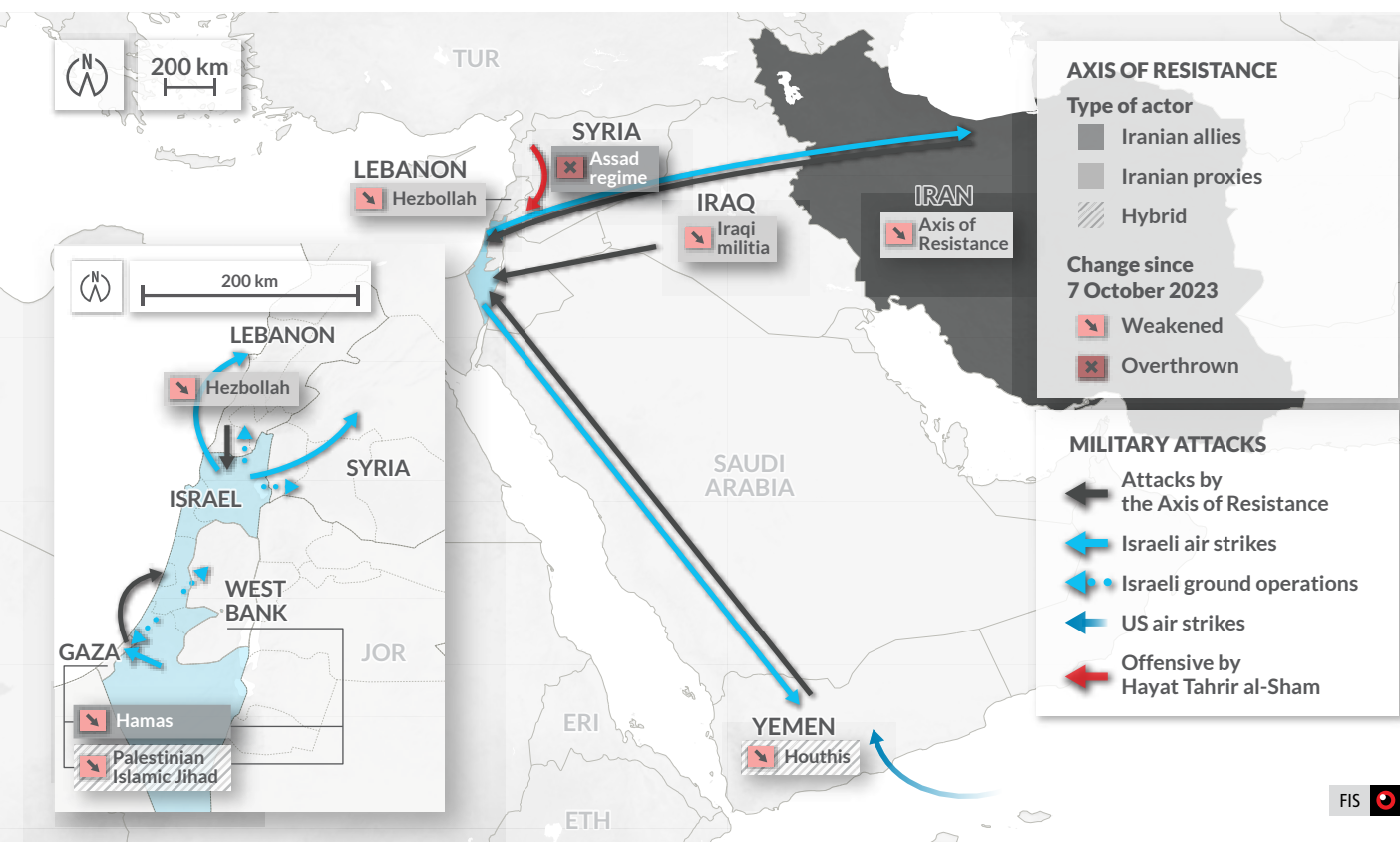
In 2024, Iran, which could take the step to becoming a nuclear-armed state outside the NPT, and Israel, a nuclear-armed state not party to the NPT, exchanged direct military strikes for the first time. However, the majority of Iran’s guided ballistic missiles, cruise missiles and drones were intercepted. Israel’s retaliatory strikes destroyed major elements of Iran’s air defence system. Furthermore, Iran was heavily reliant on the Axis of Resistance for its deterrence of Israel. The undermining of the Axis of Resistance has dealt Iran a damaging blow. Some voices in the leadership are therefore in favour of pressing ahead with the nuclear programme as a form of deterrence. The stance adopted by the elderly Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei remains key. Although the Iranian leadership has thus far shown itself to be resilient and has an effective apparatus of repression at its disposal, it has been weakened by the regional political setbacks and the ongoing economic problems. In this context and following two months of negotiations between the United States and Iran in relation to the nuclear dispute, in June 2025 Israel took the decision to launch a large-scale attack on Iran and its nuclear programme in June 2025. The resulting escalation was still ongoing at the time of time of going to press. The Israeli attack represents a humiliation for the Iranian side and places the leadership under severe pressure. It is highly likely that in order to destroy all Iran’s nuclear facilities completely and permanently, Israel will be reliant on military support from the United States.

 The focus is shifting to the question of the post-war order in Gaza. It is still unclear who will administer the coastal strip in future and who will be responsible for reconstruction. Hamas will try to play a role in the process, but this would not be consistent with Israel's war aims. The idea of resettling the population of Gaza, put forward by President Trump in January 2025, has been met with international condemnation. The annexation of the West Bank, which some in the Israeli government are striving for, would potentially escalate the situation considerably and would torpedo Israel's strategically significant establishment of diplomatic relations with Saudi Arabia.

The Israeli attack on Iran in June 2025 will lead to a new situation in the nuclear dispute, and it is highly likely that it will permanently change

the balance of power in the Middle East. Iran and the Axis of Resistance might retaliate not only against Israeli and US targets and interests and those of their allies in the region, but also asymmetrically outside the region. This might also include the perpetration of terrorist attacks in Europe. For the Iranian leadership, the question of who will succeed as supreme leader will become increasingly important. Furthermore, it will have to deal with the loss of important leadership personnel and, depending on how the situation unfolds, might find its very survival under threat. In this case, it might feel compelled to take the decision to develop a nuclear weapon. The extent to which it could implement this in practice is unclear. If it survives the confrontation in its existing form, it will have to take farsighted and well-coordinated steps to re-establish its influence as a regional power.

### Undermining of the Iranian-led Axis of Resistance since 7 October 2023





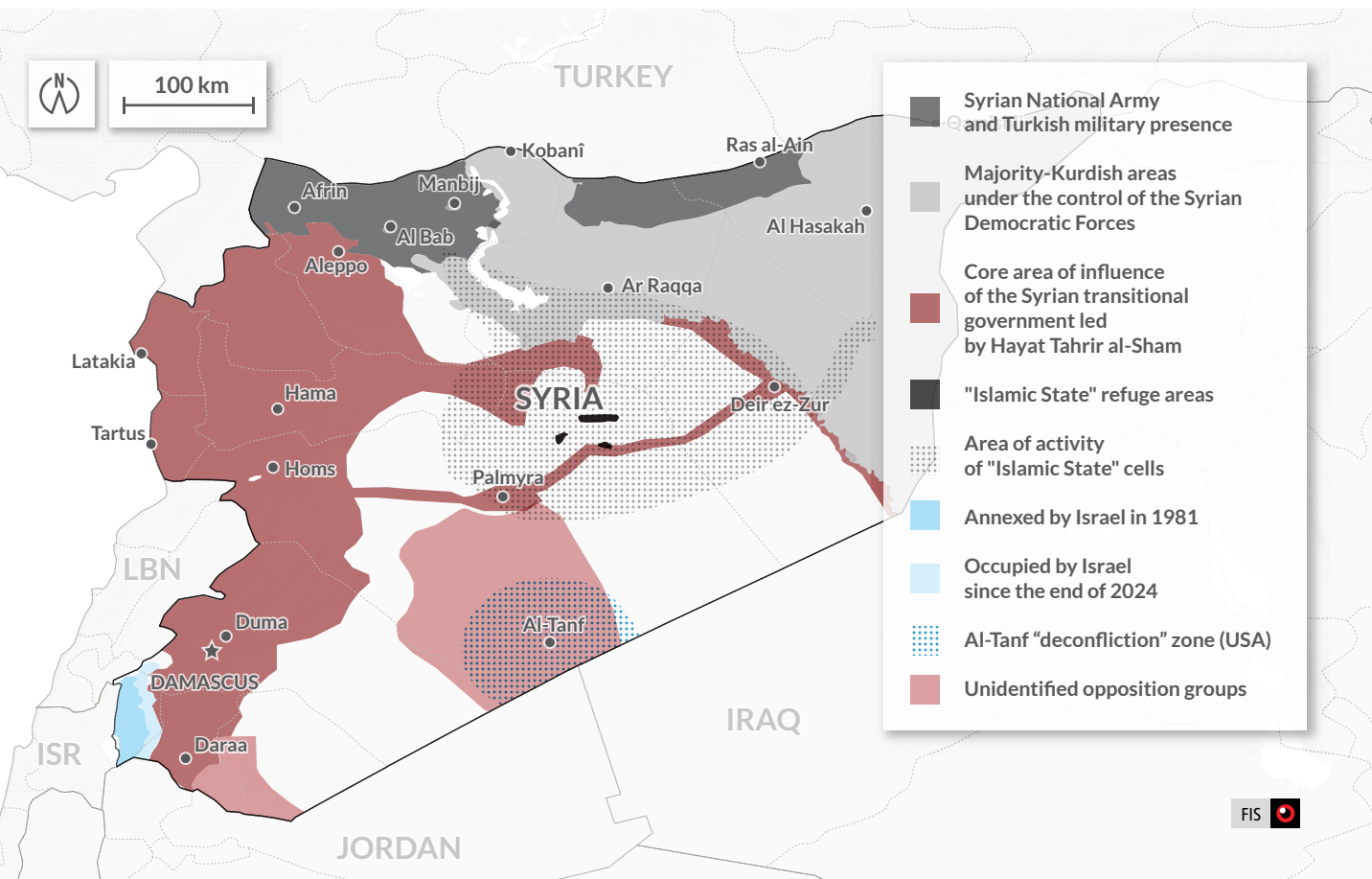
## SYRIA: WHERE THE REGION'S STRATEGIC FAULT LINES MEET



The surprising rapidity and wholesale nature of the collapse of Bashar al-Assad's regime in December 2024 has left a military and political vacuum in Syria. Various actors are now seeking to fill this vacuum. However, Syria now effectively comprises multiple conflict arenas:

- In the Levantine west of the country and in the capital, Damascus, the Islamist group Hayat Tahrir al Sham (HTS) and its allies are trying to position themselves domestically and internationally as the legitimate successors to the toppled regime. HTS says that it is endeavouring to take the interests of minorities in Syria into account, but it has so far failed to furnish concrete evidence that it is striving to build an inclusive state.
- In the north, Turkish-backed militias and PKK-backed Kurdish actors are pitted against one another. As in Iraq, the Kurdish actors are aiming to achieve maximum autonomy, but Turkey and its allies are seeking to prevent this. They want to physically separate the Kurdish areas of the two states from one another.
- In the east of the country, the Syrian Desert, containing the long, porous border with Iraq, has traditionally been an area with a weakly developed sense of statehood. Here in particular, "Islamic State" cells have survived the military defeat of their caliphate. "Islamic State"'s networks have developed a symbiotic relationship with local tribal structures.

### Conflict arenas in Syria



- In the south, a variety of former opposition groups are operating along the borders with Jordan and Israel. The ethnic composition and regional dynamic here differ from those found in the rest of the country. HTS has scarcely any influence here.

The United States, Israel and Turkey all currently maintain a strong military-intelligence presence on Syrian territory, while Russia's presence has been weakened and it is likely that Iran maintains a covert military-intelligence presence. These five actors are all pursuing different, sometimes opposing, interests. The new status quo between these powers is not stable.

The humanitarian and economic situation in Syria is still critical. Food supplies were inadequate even before the civil war, but since then have again deteriorated significantly. Syria is currently highly dependent on international aid.



The creation of a new form of statehood by HTS, the faction that is currently the most powerful, is a lengthy, risky and complex undertaking. The pathway from transitional government to legitimate government leads from the creation of a constitution via elections to the formation of a government. However, the elimination of the common enemy, Assad, means that the key element that united the various factions is missing.

The strong influence of Turkey in the country is having a twofold effect: Turkey is advising HTS politically and militarily and providing direct support for reconstruction. At the same time, it is exerting influence on HTS in line with its Kurdish policy. Its ultimate goal is probably maximum containment of the Syrian Kurds within a centralist Syrian federation. Israel perceives the growing Turkish influence in Syria as a threat and wants to take action to counter it. The Syrian policy of the Trump administration will be a key factor in determining whether the Kurdish question gives rise to a serious military escalation. A further reduction of US troops in north-eastern Syria could therefore have an adverse impact on the security of Kurdish-run camps and prisons containing "Islamic State" detainees.

Some elements of the former regime who are still armed and organised, including in particular a large number of Alawites, are seeking revenge. In early March 2025, for example, suspected Alawite Assad loyalists engaged in heavy skirmishes on the Syrian coast with forces fighting for the transitional government. The potential for violence remains high and HTS's hold on power is fragile. "Islamic State" will also attempt to operate along the various ethnic and religious fault lines.

## AFRICA



The security situation in parts of Africa remains tense. Since 2020, political unrest and jihadism have increased and democracy has been eroded. In 2023, half of the population of Africa lived under autocratic rule. Political instability and a sense of hopelessness are also fostering terrorism. The epicentre of global jihadism has shifted from the Middle East to the Sahel region; over half of all persons killed by terrorists in 2023 lived in the Sahel.

In the context of the geopolitical rivalry between the United States, China and Russia, in particular, Africa is growing in importance. New military dictatorships in Africa are reducing dependency on Western states and are cooperating increasingly with Russia and China. Russia is expanding its influence in the Sahel region, while China is increasing its economic and diplomatic involvement and is rather likely to be seeking to establish further military bases. The withdrawal of Western troops underscores the changing strategic alignment of African states.

The Alliance of Sahel States, founded in 2024 by Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger after their departure from the Economic Community of West African States (Ecowas), is a defence pact supported by Russia. It is a clear demonstration of the anti-Western sentiment and growing importance of external actors in the region. By contrast, the G5 Sahel, founded in 2014 by Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania and Niger and supported by the EU, was dissolved in December 2023.

International relations in Africa are being shaped increasingly by geoeconomic interests, rather than by geopolitical interests as was previously the case. China and other states, for example the United Arab Emirates, are challenging the traditional economic dominance of Western states. They prioritise infrastructure development and attach less importance to political conditions. They are thus profiting from the reduction in Western aid. China is Africa's biggest trading partner. Ethiopia, Kenya and Nigeria, in particular, are benefiting from Chinese investments in airports, motorways and industrial zones. However, the sustainability of Chinese support remains questionable, as exemplified by Zambia's debt crisis.



The new geopolitical and geo-economic rules of play in Africa have led to the withdrawal of Western troops and the closure of Western military bases. This has been a setback for the West in its fight against terrorism in the Sahel. Critical regional flashpoints include the war in Sudan, to which Russia's and Iran's increasing support for the Port Sudan government is lending a geostrategic dimension, the growing instability in the Horn of Africa, the chronic crises in the Great Lakes region and the grave deterioration in the security situation in Burkina Faso.

The credibility of Western states as champions of democracy and human rights has been further weakened. In Africa, the West is seen as having double standards in its application of international law in the wars in Ukraine and Gaza. China, on the other hand, is positioning itself as a defender of principles such as sovereignty and non-interference. The United States and other Western states are therefore recalibrating their approach in the region: they are looking to form pragmatic partnerships with regional powers such as India, the Gulf states and Turkey. Their aim here is to maintain access to strategically important raw materials, while at the same time keeping them out of the hands of China and Russia.

### Probability scale

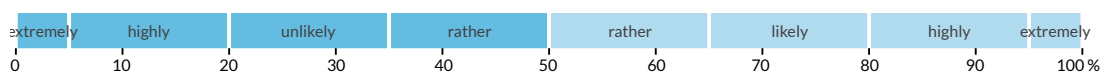




Figure 4

# JIHADIST AND ETHNO-NATIONALIST TERRORISM





## TERRORIST THREAT IN EUROPE



In Switzerland, the terrorist threat is at a heightened level. It comes primarily from the jihadist movement, in particular from individuals who are “Islamic State” sympathisers or have been inspired by jihadist propaganda.

The number of jihadist-motivated attacks in Europe is on the rise. For example, on 15 February 2025 at the main railway station in Villach (Austria), a 23-year-old Syrian attacked six people with a knife, killing a 14-year-old boy. The police found “Islamic State” propaganda material at the perpetrator’s home after they arrested him. There has been an increase in the frequency of attacks and incidents which, on account of the profile or modus operandi of the perpetrator, initially aroused suspicion of terrorism, but where this could not subsequently be conclusively proven.

Security authorities in Europe have made numerous arrests and carried out other interventions due to suspected terrorism. It is likely that this has prevented a number of jihad-motivated attacks. There have also been multiple police interventions in Switzerland as part of counterterrorism operations. The targets of such intervention were invariably young people.

It is likely that the core organisation of “Islamic State” and core al-Qaeda are currently not in a position to prepare or perpetrate attacks in Europe independently. Rather, they are reliant on the initiative of jihad-inspired individuals, who act without having direct contact with or receiving direct instructions from a terrorist organisation.

The dissemination of jihadist propaganda in cyberspace is key here. It creates fertile ground for the continued growth of the jihadist movement. In Switzerland, it has encouraged the emergence of networks of sympathisers and serves as a major source of inspiration for violence. Individual actors who are prepared to use violence, some of them from the networks mentioned, some of them individuals acting outside these networks, come to our attention primarily through their involvement in propaganda, but also through their financial and logistical support activities and the planning of acts of violence.

The ongoing war in Gaza continues to fuel antisemitic responses in Europe, which regularly culminate in planned attacks or acts of violence. These target synagogues or Israeli missions. Jihadist motives play a secondary role here. However, young suspects in particular are increasingly mixing jihadist thinking with other ideologies, such as right-wing extremism, for example.



The terrorist threat remains at a heightened level. It is becoming more diffuse, as increasingly there is no longer a clear jihadist motive behind attacks. The phenomenon of online jihadist radicalisation will continue to shape the terrorist threat in Switzerland.

In Switzerland, the greatest terrorist threat continues to come from jihad-inspired lone perpetrators or small groups who carry out spontaneous acts of violence using everyday items. Such acts of violence are most likely to be aimed at targets that are hard to protect. Jewish and Israeli interests are particularly at risk. Major events and occasions drawing large crowds are also attractive opportunities for jihadists to put attack plans into action. On 9 January 2025, “Islamic State”’s main propaganda organ called for attacks on crowds of people at events in Western countries. Although Switzerland was not explicitly mentioned, the call could potentially inspire jihadist radicalised individuals to carry out attacks on crowds of people at major events of any kind.

Islamophobic events or events perceived to be Islamophobic could act as triggers for jihadist acts of violence. The recent acts of violence by migrants in Europe and the resulting political and social tensions could generate a dynamic that gives impetus to violent extremist actors of various persuasions.

Jihadists released from European jails and individuals who have been radicalised while in custody constitute an ongoing risk factor. Some released prisoners will remain faithful to jihadist ideology and return to the areas they were formerly based in, where they may resume or support terrorist activities. This has also been observed in Switzerland.

 Schengen area

## VIOLENT ACTS BELIEVED TO BE TERROR-RELATED

 Jihad-motivated

 No clear jihadist motivation

 Initial suspicion of jihadist motivation not confirmed or disproved

\* Act of violence where perpetrator claims allegiance to "Islamic State" or for which "Islamic State" admits responsibility

 Crossbow attack

 Axe attack

 Arson attack

 Hostage taking

 Machete attack


 Knife attack


 Ramming attack


 Use of firearms

 GALWAY  
15.08.2024

 SOUTHPORT  
29.07.2024


 LINZ AM RHEIN  
06.09.2024

 SOLINGEN  
23.08.2024

 ROTTERDAM  
19.09.2024

 MANNHEIM  
03.03.2025


 MANNHEIM  
31.05.2024


 BERLIN  
21.02.2025

 MAGDEBURG  
20.12.2024

 ASCHAFFENBURG  
22.01.2025

 LE MANS  
19.07.2024

 MULHOUSE  
22.02.2025

 ZURICH  
02.03.2024

 MUNICH  
13.02.2025

 MUNICH  
05.09.2024

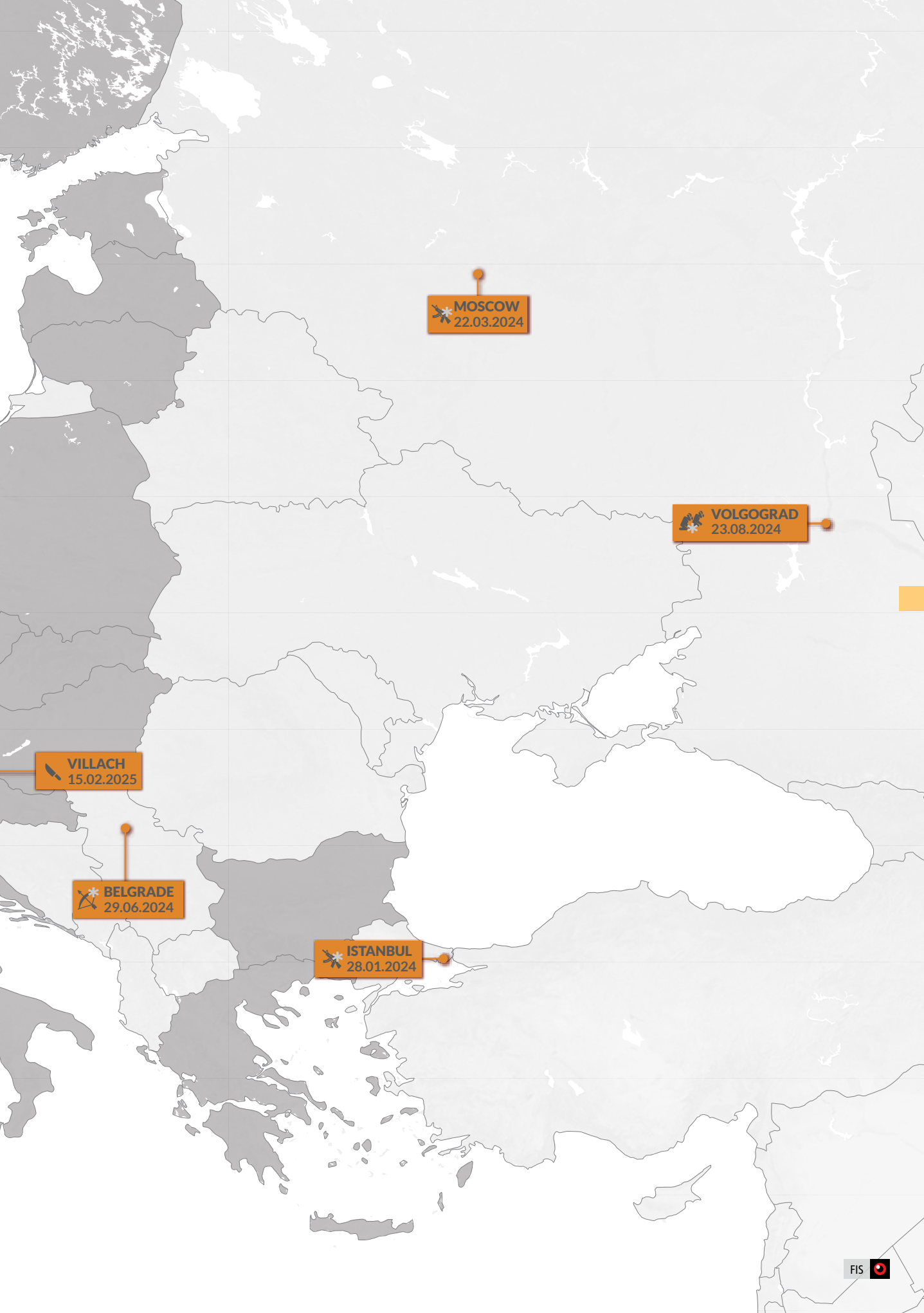
## JIHADIST-TERRORISM-RELATED INCIDENTS IN EUROPE SINCE 2024


 LA GRANDE-MOTTE  
24.08.2024

 BARCELONA  
27.03.2024

 RIMINI  
31.12.2024


 BOSANSKA KRUPA  
24.10.2024



 **MOSCOW**  
22.03.2024

 **VOLGOGRAD**  
23.08.2024

 **VILLACH**  
15.02.2025

 **BELGRADE**  
29.06.2024

 **ISTANBUL**  
28.01.2024

## GLOBAL TERRORIST THREAT



Since the collapse of the Assad regime in early December 2024, Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) has been the de facto new government administration in Syria. It emerged in 2017 from core al-Qaeda's former affiliate in Syria, from which it has outwardly distanced itself. It is still on the UN's and the EU's terrorism lists and is also considered a terrorist organisation in Switzerland, due to the connection to al-Qaeda mentioned above. In the last few years it has not posed a direct threat to Europe. However, it still features former jihadist travellers from Europe among its ranks. In the east of Syria, in particular, "Islamic State" cells have survived the military defeat of their caliphate (see above, "Syria: where the region's strategic fault lines meet").

The main areas of operation of the majority of the affiliates and affiliated regional groups of "Islamic State" and al-Qaeda, including the most influential groups, are still in Central Asia and in Africa. A number of nationals of Western states have been abducted in the Sahel region in 2025, including a Swiss national abducted in Niger on 13 April.



Although the leadership of HTS has distanced itself from al-Qaeda, it remains to be seen in particular how its factions will align themselves ideologically in future and whether any of these factions will adopt jihadist positions. If jihadist travellers with links to HTS were to return to Europe and to Switzerland, the potential threat they would pose would not be the same as that posed by returning supporters of "Islamic State". It is rather likely that if conflict continues and HTS consolidates its power in Syria, jihad sympathisers will be willing to travel to Syria to support this group.

In Syria, "Islamic State" is showing itself to be resilient and capable of responding adeptly to local developments. It is likely that it will exploit any room for manoeuvre that may present itself and profit from continued deterioration of the regional security situation in order to rebuild and, last but not least, to free its organisers and fighters from the prisons.

If the pressure on "Islamic State" in Syria from its pursuers eases significantly, the former is likely to be in a position to react quickly and to increase its activity. Should a strengthened "Islamic State" succeed in liberating its organisers and followers from the prisons, any remaining jihadist travellers with links to Switzerland would specifically pose a direct threat to Switzerland's internal and external security. They have the profile and the experience, if their return to Switzerland goes unchecked, to radicalise those around them and to plan attacks in Switzerland or using Switzerland as a base.

"Islamic State"'s links to and from Europe, physical ones via established trafficker and supporter networks or virtual ones via contacts who can be rapidly reached on the Internet, present an additional risk factor.

The affiliates and associated regional groups of “Islamic State” and al-Qaeda in Africa, Central Asia and the Middle East are still able and willing, despite their primarily regional focus, to carry out attacks on Western targets or to abduct nationals of Western states when an opportunity presents itself on the ground. While Switzerland is not a priority target, Swiss nationals, organisations and companies may nonetheless fall victim to terrorist violence.

Migration to Europe will persist. Individuals with links to terrorism may continue to exploit the migration movements in order to enter Europe and possibly also Switzerland. However, it is rather likely that the terrorist actors and suspects will include a greater number of migrants who became radicalised as jihadists only after arriving in Europe and failing to integrate into Western society.



## COUNTERTERRORISM

Twice a year, the FIS publishes figures relating to counterterrorism – individuals assessed as posing a risk, jihad-motivated travellers, jihad monitoring – on its website.

**Available on the internet in German, French, Italian**

[www.vbs.admin.ch/de/terrorismus](http://www.vbs.admin.ch/de/terrorismus)

[www.vbs.admin.ch/fr/terrorisme](http://www.vbs.admin.ch/fr/terrorisme)

[www.vbs.admin.ch/it/terrorismo](http://www.vbs.admin.ch/it/terrorismo)



## ONLINE RADICALISATION OF YOUNG PEOPLE AND COMBATING ONLINE PROPAGANDA




The radicalisation of minors is an issue that preoccupies the European intelligence services. In the context of jihadist terrorism, this occurs online in many cases and often over a shorter timescale than is the case with adults. Young people are often ideologically flexible, and a fascination with violence generally plays a greater role than ideology. Radicalisation processes frequently start with the use of social media, as it is often on open platforms that young people first come into contact with jihadist content. It is not until later that they join more radical online groups, which at the same time are also private.

2024 saw good progress being made in the fight against jihadist activities on the Internet in terms of criminal prosecution and legislation. Access to jihadist propaganda was made more difficult, and platform operators amended their guidelines and stepped up their

efforts against jihadist content. Nonetheless, “Islamic State”’s online propagandists are proving to be highly adaptable, circumventing or avoiding the control mechanisms or switching to alternative media. The high level of resilience of jihadist propaganda groups is based on a number of factors:

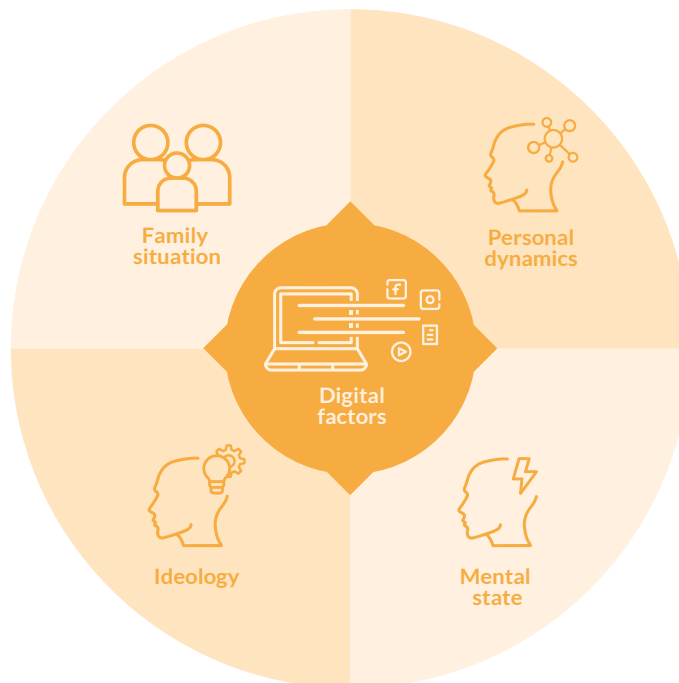
- They are constantly improving applications and developing new platforms that offer maximum anonymity.
- The younger generations of internet users are taking ever more sophisticated security measures.
- Large volumes of old propaganda content have built up on the internet, and this is all available for consumption or further processing.

 Jihadist propaganda will continue to exert an influence. In particular, the propaganda activists of “Islamic State” will, despite all actions taken to curb their activities, constantly find new ways of exploiting the opportunities offered by cyberspace.

Constant exposure to jihadist content curated by appropriate algorithms can radicalise young people and motivate them to use violence, particularly those who are psychologically unstable, socially isolated or going through a personal crisis. Assessing whether a young person poses

a threat is also difficult for the authorities, as motives are not always clearly decipherable. Young people’s search for identity makes it difficult to gauge how seriously their statements should be taken. Radicalisation processes occur very rapidly in young people, so awareness-raising and collaboration with institutions, particularly in education and social services and with the local police, remain key to an early response capability. The phenomenon of radicalised young people will continue to present a significant risk in Switzerland.

### Factors influencing the online radicalisation of young people



## ETHNO-NATIONALIST TERRORISM

## PKK



The Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) sees itself as the main representative of the Kurds and of the autonomous region in north-east Syria. It is conducting a largely non-violent campaign in Europe for the recognition of Kurdish identity in the Kurdish regions of Turkey, Syria, Iraq and Iran. In Switzerland, the PKK covertly raises funds, engages in propaganda and runs camps purely for ideological training and recruitment. Violent clashes between PKK supporters and Turkish nationalists and/or supporters of the Turkish president also occur in Switzerland.



Despite isolated violent protests and potential tensions, it is likely that the PKK will essentially abide by its renunciation of violence in Europe. It will continue to pursue its goal of being removed from the EU list of terrorist organisations. The PKK will continue its activities in Switzerland, some of them covert.

The Turkish and Turkish-backed advances made against the Kurdish-led autonomous administration in north-east Syria in the wake of the new situation in Syria may lead to increased PKK activism in Switzerland. On 12 May 2025, the PKK announced that it was disbanding; this decision has tested the organisation to breaking point and given rise to internal power struggles, including in Europe. For the time being, no changes are to be expected in Switzerland. Turkish missions and institutions remain potential targets for attack by the PKK.

## HEZBOLLAH



In the Shiite Lebanese diaspora community in Switzerland, Hezbollah maintains a network of individuals who support the organisation in community and political matters. Some of these individuals could also be incited to engage in terrorist actions in support of Hezbollah. In December 2024, both chambers of the Swiss Parliament passed a motion to ban Hezbollah in Switzerland and tasked the Federal Council with implementing the ban.



The threat from Lebanese Hezbollah in Europe will continue to depend on the level of intensity of the conflict between Israel and Hezbollah on the one hand and between Iran and the states it regards as hostile on the other. However, the setbacks which Hezbollah suffered in 2024 have reduced the likelihood of actions by Hezbollah against Israeli or Jewish individuals or interests outside the Middle East. Hezbollah will need to concentrate on reorganising itself. Nonetheless, its focus may change again at short notice.

## HAMAS



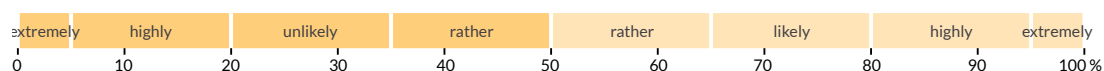
On 20 December 2024, the Swiss Parliament passed a federal law banning Hamas and associated organisations. It gives the federal authorities the instruments they need to counter the activities of Hamas or support for the organisation – in particular through financing – in Switzerland.

Until recently, Hamas had not contemplated engaging in terrorist activities outside Israel and the occupied Palestinian territories. Such actions did not form part of their doctrine. Hamas' international network focussed mainly on political and financial issues.



In the last few months, Hamas has been suspected of planning attacks in Europe. If confirmed, this would signify a new threat to Jewish and Israeli interests in Europe and thus also in Switzerland. Generally speaking, the threat posed by Hamas will depend on developments in the Middle East conflict.

### Probability scale



👁️ What does the FIS see?

🔍 What does the FIS expect?



Figure 5


# VIOLENT EXTREMISM



Figure 6



THREAT STABLE AT A HEIGHTENED LEVEL

 As far as the violent left-wing and right-wing extremist movements are concerned, only marginal changes have been observed. This applies both to the issues that preoccupy them and to the forms of action typical of each movement. The threat from both violent extremist movements remains stable at a heightened level. Activists from both

extremes base their actions on current world events, albeit with differing degrees of intensity. The most active groups are highly likely to adhere to their existing strategies and forms of action. Individual members of both movements attend martial arts training sessions. Right-wing extremists, in particular, also have a particular affinity for weapons.

Violent-extremism-motivated incidents reported to the FIS since 2016  
(excluding graffiti)





There are no signs of any substantial changes in the violent left-wing extremist movement. It will continue to prioritise anti-fascism in the broad sense of the term and fighting for the Kurdish cause. Other changes in the international situation, such as developments in the Middle East conflict, will be taken up only as secondary concerns. However, in connection with the conflict in the Middle East, members of left-wing extremist groups will continue to share appeals to join demonstrations and to call for demonstrations themselves. The potential for violence in the violent left-wing extremist movement is high. Its members are able to mobilise at short notice. As in the past, violence will continue to be targeted principally against property, with improvised explosive devices being used occasionally. Some actors from Europe have travelled to Kurdish regions and acquired the skills needed to carry out this kind of attack in their home countries. Violence against individuals is directed primarily against security forces. Recruiting new activists will probably become more difficult, as there seems to be an increasing lack of willingness to make a firm long-term commitment. The violent left-wing extremist movement does not have the capacity to weaken democracy and the rule of law or to prevent its political opponents participating in democratic processes.

Violent right-wing extremist groups will remain active. Most of their meetings will be held not in public but in secret. Some groups will continue to try to gain a certain degree of publicity by publicly taking up current political issues by organising non-violent demonstrations or circulating propaganda videos on the internet. Right-wing extremists will commit acts of violence when they encounter or are attacked by violent left-wing extremists.

The number of cases of minors and young adults becoming radicalised online and developing terrorist intentions will continue to increase. Of particular importance in this context are private discussion groups relating to accelerationism, where drastic depictions of violence and plans to use violence are shared. Such cases are extremely hard to detect, due to the international nature of the platforms and the fact that they can be used anonymously.

### Probability scale

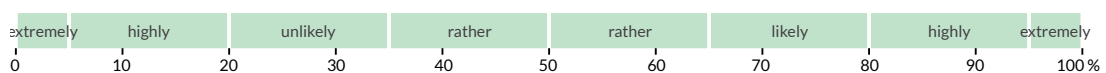


Figure 7



# PROLIFERATION



## RUSSIA



Despite the ongoing Western sanctions, which are constantly being extended, the Russian arms industry is still functioning well enough to continue the war against Ukraine and to feed more far-reaching Western threat scenarios. Enormous quantities of machine tools, raw materials, maintenance equipment and spare parts, as well as an efficient logistics system, are needed for the war of attrition. The range of required goods is vast. These goods are purchased from friendly states or continue to be procured in Western countries by circumventing the sanctions. Russia still has the financial and human resources to do this.

There has been no discernible decline in procurement efforts, and there is also no sign of any long-term alternative producers or developers for these goods. Although there has been a significant rise in the export to Russia of Chinese-made machine tools, there is still a high level of interest in and demand for goods from Western countries, including Switzerland. Private companies from third states still represent the highest risk that goods are being procured and forwarded to Russia, undetected. Suspicion here falls primarily on states which have not implemented sanctions against Russia.

As exports of machine tools and other dual-use goods to Russia have essentially been prohibited since March 2022, a new approach has been developed: production machine tools are not delivered to Russia but to third states. Once installed there, the machines produce goods which are then delivered directly to Russia.

It is practically impossible for the Swiss authorities to trace goods which have been produced on Swiss machine tools. This is a challenge similar to that of monitoring sanctioned but unlisted goods. The goods involved are mainly mass-produced industrial goods. Large numbers of such goods are also being procured for Russia's arms industry via third states and built into weapons systems which are then deployed in Ukraine. Microchips are one example.

The FIS assists the State Secretariat for Economic Affairs with the monitoring of dual-use goods. It investigates the supply chains of non-listed goods in order to prevent them being forwarded to Russia on a large scale. It raises awareness among companies in Switzerland and Liechtenstein which manufacture products needed by Russia and which are therefore at risk of procurement attempts.



No change of strategy or reduction in Russian attempts to procure Western (including Swiss) goods is anticipated. All existing channels for maintaining the Russian arms industry will continue to be used and, wherever possible, extended. The international community has yet to come up with methods and solutions for countering the new phenomenon of production support abroad. China poses a particularly difficult challenge, as Switzerland has a free trade agreement with China and export volumes are correspondingly high.

The Western industrialised states are well aware of the procurement methods used by all the sanctioned states, especially Russia. Intensive international exchange about this issue is ongoing. The goal of putting the brakes on Russia's arms industry is being rigorously pursued. However, the West is still a long way from achieving its goal of weakening Russia's arms industry, through the imposition of sanctions, to the extent of Russia having to end its war against Ukraine.

### Sanctions against Russia and Russian entities





## IRAN



In the last few months before the Israeli attack in June 2025, Iran had been pushing ahead with the expansion of its uranium enrichment plants and had increased its stocks of highly enriched uranium. However, this had not substantially reduced the time needed to acquire nuclear weapons. It is likely that Iran would still have needed at least a few months to construct a functional weapon. In a resolution adopted on 12 June 2025, the Board of Governors of the International Atomic Energy Agency accused Iran of failing to meet its obligations under the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty.

The Israeli attack in June 2025 demonstrated, as Israel's retaliatory strikes in response to Iran's direct military attacks in April and October 2024 had done, that Iranian air defences are not very effective against Israeli weapons. The Israeli strikes in June 2025 principally targeted Iranian nuclear facilities, plants linked to the Iranian guided missile programme and industrial plants of military relevance.

Prior to the Israeli attacks, Iran had further reduced its dependence on Western states for various key technologies. However, Iranian procurement attempts in Switzerland continued. Multilateral export controls alone were no longer enough to put a stop to Iran's guided missile programme or the construction of an Iranian nuclear weapon. Iran benefitted from its economic partnership with Russia not only financially but also in other ways.



Israel's air strikes in mid-June 2025 render the future of the Iranian nuclear programme uncertain. Although several of Iran's nuclear facilities were hit, the damage to Iran's enrichment capacity as identified at the time of going to press has been limited. If the Iranian leadership withstands the military pressure from Israel and possibly also from the United States, it might feel compelled to withdraw from the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and to strive to develop a nuclear weapon. It is extremely likely that Iran has already carried out relevant investigations as part of research activities conducted around the turn of the millennium and consequently would now need only a few months to prepare a minimal nuclear deterrent. It remains unclear how severely the loss of know-how resulting from the targeted elimination of Iranian nuclear scientists will affect the Iranian nuclear programme. It is likely that the impact of the strikes will lead to a shift in Iran's proliferation activities.

The war between Israel and Iran overlaps the nuclear dispute with Iran at the international level. In the negotiations with the United States about a new nuclear agreement, Iran saw its enrichment of uranium as non-negotiable. Israel demanded the complete dismantling of Iran's enrichment capacity, while the negotiating position of the United States in this regard was contradictory. In October 2025, UN Resolution 2231 will expire, and with it the "snapback" mechanism, under which Germany, France and the UK (E3) would still have, at least in theory, a means of exerting pressure, although this is of secondary importance following the military escalation. It is therefore highly likely that the European states will play a minor role in any forthcoming negotiations.

## NORTH KOREA



North Korea is continuing to press ahead with its nuclear weapon and guided missile programmes. It is also attempting to procure Western goods, including goods from Switzerland. In 2024, it launched more than 60 missiles in at least 18 missile tests. The tests focussed on nuclear-capable, solid-fuelled, short-range systems. Solid-fuelled ballistic missiles are more attractive militarily than liquid-fuelled missiles, in particular due to their superior survival and response capability. North Korea has stepped up its collaboration with Russia and is now also supplying its neighbour with short-range ballistic missiles.

North Korea is striving to achieve the goals it has set itself regarding the development of more advanced re-entry vehicle technologies. These could pose challenges for an opponent's air defences and thus have a destabilising effect. North Korea has also operationalised large numbers of short-range delivery systems and stationed them on the border with South Korea. In the event of an escalation on the Korean peninsula, North Korea could thus significantly impact targets in the Greater Seoul area.

North Korea is expanding its uranium enrichment and plutonium production capacity. It is continuing its work on developing a nuclear-powered ballistic missile submarine.



The progress of North Korea's strategic armament programmes and its stepped-up collaboration with nuclear superpower Russia will strengthen the country's resolve not to need a treaty with the Western states. North Korea will continue to make every effort to increase the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons, as well as continuing with the operationalisation of solid-fuelled delivery systems in all range categories. It will continue its satellite programme in order to obtain its own satellite-based reconnaissance capability.

South Korea will respond to North Korea's continuing arms build-up by investing heavily in guided ballistic missiles and in defence systems to counter them. A hardening of the rhetoric on both sides, domestic political tensions in South Korea and the growing operationalisation of North Korean delivery systems specifically designed for an inter-Korean conflict will further increase the risk of an unintentional but serious escalation on the Korean peninsula.

### Probability scale

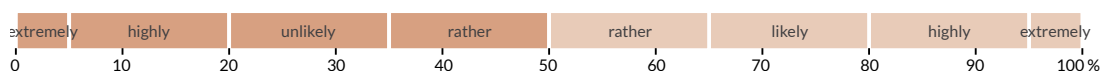
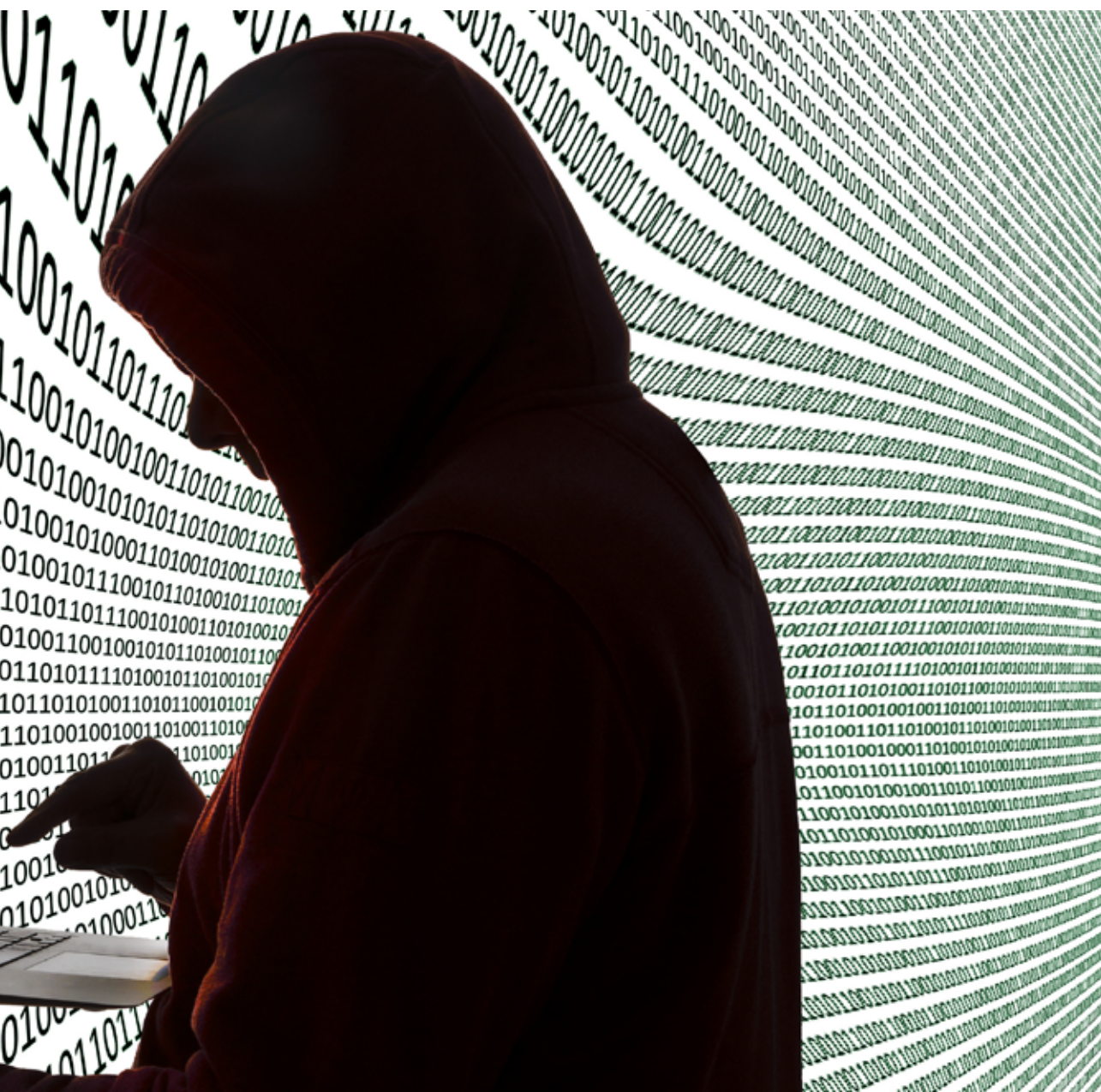


Figure 8





# ILLEGAL INTELLIGENCE



## ESPIONAGE: TRENDS CONTINUE



State-sponsored sabotage, procurement of sanctioned goods, attacks on military positions, air strikes on critical infrastructure and attempted assassinations of opposition figures, media representatives or high-ranking enemy army officers all have one thing in common: they depend on intelligence work, first and foremost espionage. Information is gathered and analysed years in advance, often in peacetime. Russia's war against Ukraine and the war in the Middle East provide constant examples of successful intelligence work.

Intelligence services also assist their governments with the collection and analysis of strategic information. This includes information not only on the intentions and capabilities of competitors and enemies, but also on those of partners and allies. In times of conflict, such information and assessments become more important, in part because the exchange of diplomatic and political information is restricted. The information is gathered through

human sources as well as through various means of technical collection such as bugging devices, trackers or satellites. Intelligence services infiltrate electronic networks and intercept cable- and radio-based communications.

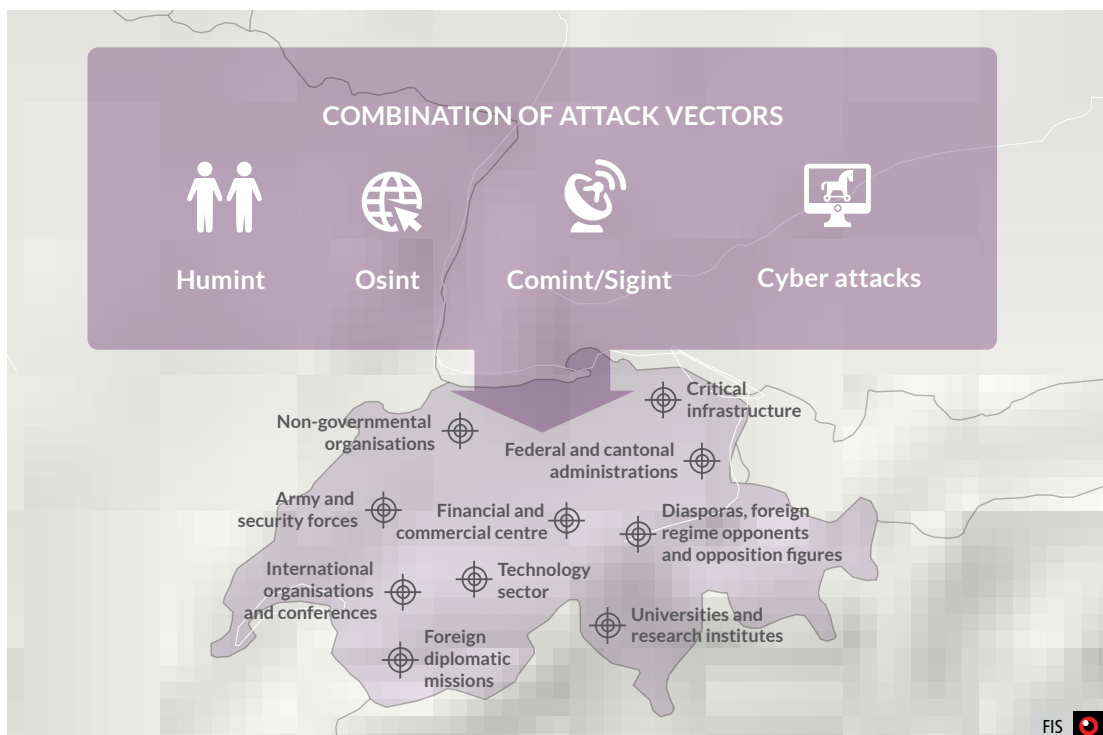
The intelligence services of the great powers still lead the way in the world of espionage. They have enormous human, financial and technical resources at their disposal. In Europe, the greatest threat is seen as coming from Russia's and China's services. Like many other services – especially those of states with authoritarian governments – the Russian and Chinese intelligence services not only gather intelligence, but are also the driving force behind other activities. These include transnational repression, the procurement of goods, propaganda, influence activities and also, particularly in the case of Russia, sabotage and targeted killings at home and abroad. At the same time, the services ensure the stability of the political systems in their home countries.



In the current situation, shaped as it is by war and conflict, it is extremely likely that the resources and remit of many intelligence services will be expanded. At the same time, the last few years have seen states tightening their legislation relating to the actions of foreign actors, for example in the area of influence activities. This trend will probably continue.

Under these circumstances, the importance of espionage will increase further. In the light of the threats emanating from Russia and China, it will be a challenge for many European states to ensure that they do not overlook the espionage and intelligence activities of other states, as numerous services will remain active in Europe, especially those of African and Asian states.

### Espionage attack vectors and targets in Switzerland





## ILLEGAL INTELLIGENCE IN SWITZERLAND



The espionage threat in Switzerland remains high. For decades, Switzerland has been an important theatre of operations in Europe, as it offers large numbers of rewarding targets. Numerous states have posted intelligence officers to Switzerland under cover. While some of these have residence permits, others travel to the country just for short periods, for example in order to meet their sources. They pass themselves off as diplomatic personnel, business people, media representatives or tourists, for example.

The greatest espionage threat to Switzerland still comes from Russia and China. Their services continue to maintain a strong presence in this country and have undercover personnel at diplomatic missions.

While the services of a number of other states mainly monitor members of their own diaspora communities, China and Russia have sufficient intelligence resources to engage in

surveillance of other targets as well. Such targets include federal authorities, police forces, companies, international organisations, foreign diplomatic missions, media representatives, colleges, universities and other research institutions. In order to carry out surveillance of this kind, the intelligence services employ human networks which they have built up over many years, as well as technical resources.

Swiss nationals and organisations are also victims of espionage abroad. At particular risk here are all those who have privileged access to sensitive areas, members of the security authorities, figures prominent in politics, business and science or people who work with or have close contact with such persons, as well as international organisations and NGOs. Furthermore, in states with a rigorous counterintelligence regime, certain nationals of other states are suspected of engaging in espionage as a matter of course.

### SHORT FILM ON THE SUBJECT OF 'INDUSTRIAL ESPIONAGE IN SWITZERLAND'

Available on the internet (in German with French and Italian subtitles)

[www.vbs.admin.ch/de/wirtschaftsspionage](http://www.vbs.admin.ch/de/wirtschaftsspionage)

[www.vbs.admin.ch/fr/espionnage-economique](http://www.vbs.admin.ch/fr/espionnage-economique)

[www.vbs.admin.ch/it/spionaggio-economico](http://www.vbs.admin.ch/it/spionaggio-economico)





Under these circumstances, Switzerland will remain a favoured location for espionage operations and other intelligence activities, and China and Russia will continue to be the main threat actors. Both states have long-term information needs, and Switzerland is one of the countries where they can meet these needs. Switzerland's relations with and stance toward these two states, the EU, the United States and NATO are of strategic interest, as are Switzerland's military capabilities. In addition, the Russian and Chinese intelligence services will continue to conduct intelligence operations in Switzerland against Western states. These will include activities and preparatory activities relating to hybrid warfare. Switzerland faces an increasing risk of being used illicitly for the preparation or perpetration of abductions, sabotage and assassinations abroad, for example in connection with intensified hybrid warfare against Western states.

There is also not expected to be any decrease in the volume of espionage by various intelligence services targeting their own diaspora communities. This will focus on exiled media representatives and individuals who oppose the political leadership in their home countries and are thus also influential. Geneva, as an international meeting point, will remain a hot-spot for illegal intelligence.

### Probability scale

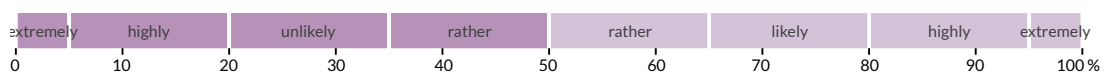


Figure 9



# THREAT TO CRITICAL INFRASTRUCTURE

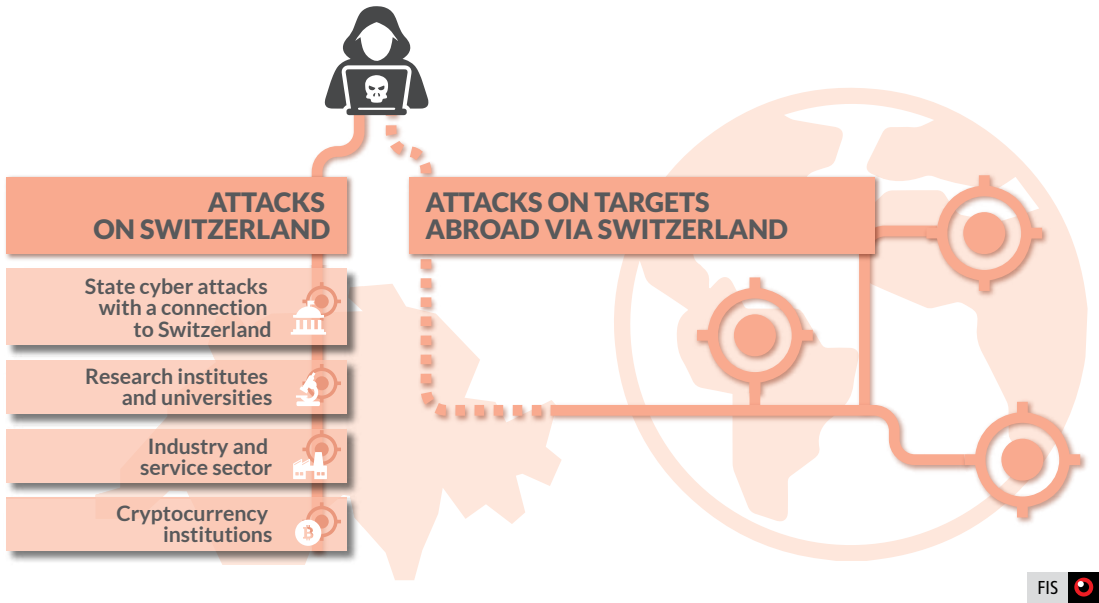


GENERAL THREAT SITUATION

For critical infrastructure operators in Switzerland, cyber attacks pose a significant threat. The war against Ukraine is still a key determining factor here: Russian state cyber actors frequently pursue Russia’s strategic interests in this war. Digitalisation is continuing apace and technology is advancing – and this has consequences: The number of internet-capable devices and thus also the number of potential attack vectors is increasing, espionage activities are being automated and artificial intelligence is assisting with or taking over programming. The attack surface is increasing and the attackers are honing their skills.

One of the main threats to critical infrastructure operators comes from state-sponsored cyberespionage and from ransomware attacks by financially motivated criminal cyber actors. Targeted cybersabotage attacks by state groups on critical infrastructure in Switzerland would, however, have far greater potential to cause direct damage. Such attacks are currently extremely unlikely, but the likelihood would rapidly increase in the event of direct conflict with another state. Furthermore, Switzerland is home to a diverse range of infrastructure, whose failure or malfunction might have a significant impact on neighbouring countries and other EU and NATO states and could affect

State cyber attacks with a connection to Switzerland



or jeopardise their security of supply. In the context of hybrid warfare, such infrastructure might be attacked – kinetically or using cyber tools – in order specifically to target other states, alliances or institutions. It is also possible at any time that cybersabotage attacks by foreign cyber actors on targets abroad will result in collateral damage for Switzerland. This is particularly true of Russian cybersabotage attacks on Ukrainian targets. Overload attacks by non-state hacker groups – including attacks on critical infrastructure operators' websites and IT systems – attract a lot of attention. However, it is rare for such attacks to result in the functional failure of IT systems.

Physical attacks also pose a threat to critical infrastructure. Besides state actors, individuals and groups motivated by terrorism or violent extremism could also carry out attacks on critical infrastructure, for example in order to draw attention to their cause or even to cause serious damage to Switzerland or to neighbouring states with infrastructural links to Switzerland. There are no indications that any attacks of this kind are being planned.



## THREAT FROM STATE CYBER ACTORS



Russian and Chinese state actors engage in intensive cyberespionage against Swiss targets. North Korean and Iranian state actors also target Switzerland, albeit less frequently: Iran primarily spies on targets which have links to the Middle East or the United States, while North Korea's main aim is to steal money in the form of cryptocurrencies.

Security and foreign policy authorities are particularly at risk of cyberespionage. The aims of cyberespionage are no different from the aims of espionage in general. In the cybersphere, however, the individual steps of espionage operations can frequently be observed. For example, we see here attempts to gain access to personal data which is not publicly available, in order to obtain address details for phishing emails used to gain further access, for example for cyberespionage purposes.

Companies and academic research in the armaments and new technologies sectors are also a major focus. This is especially true where the export of the relevant technologies and goods to the attacker's home country is subject to sanctions.

Among private critical infrastructure operators, those in the energy sector are particularly affected by cyberespionage. There are also growing numbers of credible reports of attacks on telecommunications companies by Chinese state actors, for example in the United States or in South-East Asia. Sometimes the companies themselves are the target of the attack, and sometimes they are being used as a vector for accessing and attacking their customers' IT systems. Attacks on and through the supply chain, especially on IT suppliers, have generally increased in recent years.

There has recently been a noticeable rise in the incidence of state cyber actors attacking their targets via network devices, including routers and firewall devices. These devices and systems are there in part to protect networks, but they are particularly vulnerable when they are antiquated or the software has not been updated. Such attacks are aimed not only at public authorities and companies, but also at private individuals. In attacks on network devices, there is an increasing tendency to exploit zero-day vulnerabilities. This is the term used to refer to situations where at the time of the attack the vulnerability is known only to the attackers. This makes detection and protection impossible or at least very difficult. It is important to check critical systems for any indications that they may already be compromised. The exploitation of zero-day vulnerabilities by a state cyber actor is a demonstration of its highly-developed technological capabilities.

Foreign state cyber actors also make use of infrastructure, such as servers, in Switzerland in order to carry out cyberespionage or offensive cyber operations against targets of security relevance in third states. This poses a reputational risk for Switzerland, which could also have political costs. Some of these servers are part of anonymisation networks which the attackers use to conceal the place of origin of their operations. This makes the attribution of responsibility difficult.



It is likely that state cyber actors, most notably the Chinese, who are able to draw on a strong security-relevant technological and industrial base, will continue to develop their capabilities at a fast rate. They are already using sophisticated attack techniques. The state cyber actors will draw on the support of research institutes and private cybersecurity firms and make use of new technologies. For example, attackers are already using artificial intelligence, which allows them to adapt malware to target systems and their vulnerabilities more rapidly. The result is that the cost of protecting critical infrastructure is spiralling.

Increasingly often, the United States and other Western states publicly attribute cyber attacks to a particular state. Over the next few years, an increase in the number of such public attributions is rather likely, and this will encourage the states accused to follow suit. At the same time, the pressure on states such as Switzerland to take a public stance on the perpetrators of cyber attacks is also rather likely to increase, especially where systems in Switzerland have been used illicitly for carrying out attacks abroad.

State cyber actors use their capabilities chiefly for espionage purposes. However, it is possible that they will obtain access to strategically relevant IT systems worldwide in order to use them for sabotage purposes at a later date.


## THREAT FROM NON-STATE CYBER ACTORS



Of all the non-state cyber actors, it is Russian criminal ransomware groups which inflict the greatest damage on critical infrastructure. They cause financial damage, issue blackmail threats to publish confidential data and actually do publish such data. If data is encrypted and no backup copies are available, the attack can adversely affect the functioning of critical infrastructure. For example, in 2024 a ransomware attack on a Swiss educational institution resulted in access to multiple IT systems being blocked. Unlike state groups, financially motivated hackers choose their targets opportunistically, targeting poorly protected networks belonging to companies or their IT suppliers. They have no scruples, as has been shown, for example, by attacks on health-care facilities in this country and elsewhere.

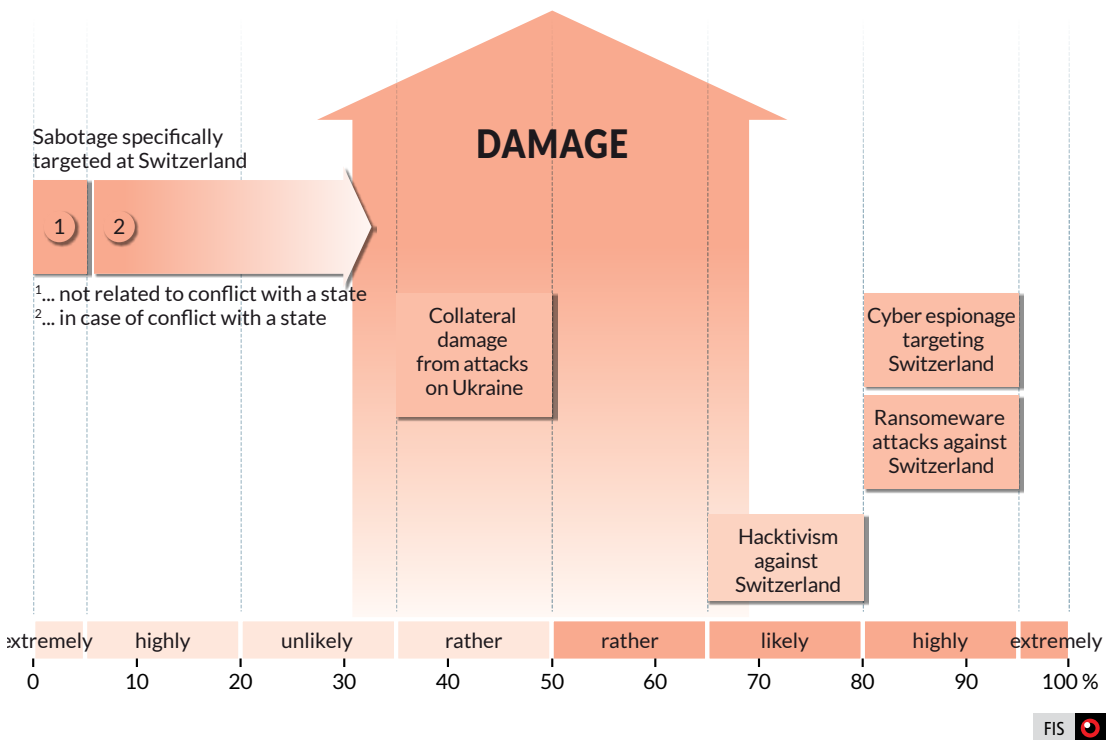
The aim of politically-motivated hacktivists is to attract media attention through overload attacks or the defacement of websites. Less frequently, they also attempt to manipulate vulnerable and poorly protected industrial facilities. High-profile examples include attacks on Western targets by pro-Russian groups. Since October 2023, there has also been an increase in attacks by pro-Palestinian and pro-Iranian hacktivists; such attacks have primarily been aimed at Israeli and American targets. Relevant websites or applications have seldom been disrupted. Nonetheless, several applications were down for hours following an overload attack on the Swiss federal administration's IT infrastructure in January 2025. The entry into force at the beginning of 2025 of the ban on face coverings was the justification the hacktivists gave for the attack.

States sometimes commission criminal or politically-motivated hackers. This enables them to conceal or deny their involvement in cyber attacks in the event that these are uncovered.

 Cybercriminals are efficient when it comes to the division of labour. For example, some focus on developing malware and others on detecting vulnerabilities in systems. They then sell the relevant programmes and know-how to other cybercriminals. It is therefore likely that the number of ransomware attacks on Swiss companies and to a lesser extent also on public authorities will remain high.

Whenever Switzerland takes a political stance and is therefore perceived in a negative light by one party to a conflict, it is highly likely that there will be overload attacks by the latter's supporters. This currently applies mainly to the war against Ukraine and the conflict in the Middle East. Overload attacks by pro-Russian or pro-Palestinian hacktivists are also to be expected when Switzerland hosts major events with high levels of media coverage, such as the World Economic Forum. Such attacks are extremely unlikely to lead to the failure of critical services in Switzerland.

### Cyber threats to Switzerland





# KEY FIGURES 2024





Organization chart FIS



SITUATION ASSESSMENTS

Switzerland needs the FIS because ...  
... the FIS identifies the major threats facing Switzerland and reports on them.

Recipients of the FIS’s situation assessments included the Federal Council as well as other political decision-makers and relevant authorities at the federal and cantonal levels, military decision-makers and the law enforcement agencies. The FIS provides them periodically, spontaneously or with regards to certain schedules, either upon request or on its own initiative, with information and findings, either in written or verbal form, covering all areas of the Intelligence Service Act (ISA) and the FIS’s classified mission statement.

Intelligence-sharing platform

In 2024, the FIS provided assistance to the cantons through five intelligence-sharing platforms, managed by its Federal Situation Centre.

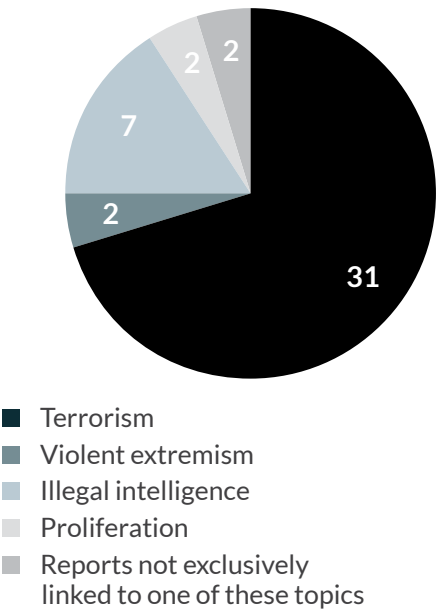


OFFICIAL REPORTS

Switzerland needs the FIS because ...  
... the FIS provides unclassified information to the relevant authorities for use in criminal and administrative proceedings.

In 2024, for example, it delivered 16 official reports to the Office of the Attorney General and 28 to other federal authorities such as the Federal Office of Police, the State Secretariat for Migration or the State Secretariat for Economic Affairs (excluding supplements to existing official reports).

Official reports submitted to federal authorities by topic  
Total 44

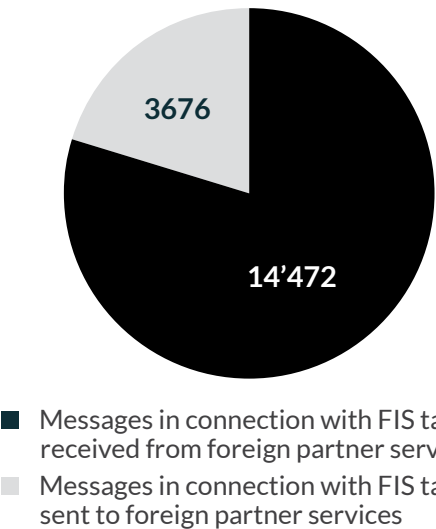


INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

Switzerland needs the FIS because ...  
... the FIS cooperates with foreign authorities that perform duties as defined by the ISA. To this end, the FIS also represents Switzerland in international bodies.

The FIS exchanges intelligence with over a hundred partner services from various states and with international organisations, including the relevant institutions at the UN and the EU dealing with security issues.

Exchange of information with partner services



AWARENESS-RAISING PROGRAMME

Switzerland needs the FIS because ...  
... the FIS, working together with the cantons, runs programs for raising awareness of illegal activities relating to espionage and proliferation.

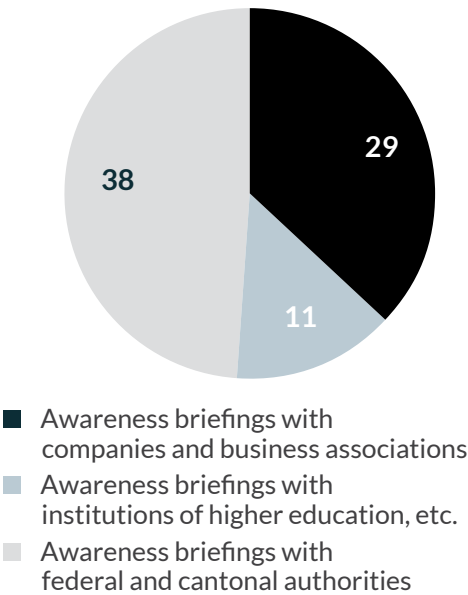
Through its Prophylax program, the FIS liaises with companies, business associations, universities, institutions of higher education, research institutes and authorities. In this context, the FIS advises on concrete security measures against the illegal transfer of knowledge or the leakage of information or data.

PREVENTION

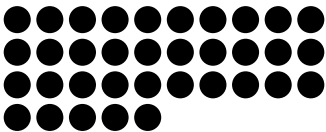
Switzerland needs the FIS because ...  
... the FIS, working together with the cantons and the federal authorities, also conducts preventive briefings relating to illegal intelligence and proliferation.

The FIS also contacts companies and institutions of higher education for preventive briefings.

Awareness briefings  
Total 78



Preventive briefings  
Total 35



INTELLIGENCE-GATHERING MEASURES REQUIRING AUTHORISATION

Switzerland needs the FIS because ...  
... the FIS can use intelligence-gathering measures requiring authorisation in cases presenting a particularly serious threat in the areas of terrorism, illegal intelligence, proliferation, attacks on critical infrastructure or the protection of other important national interests as defined under Article 3 ISA.

Intelligence-gathering measures requiring authorisation are regulated under Article 26 et seq ISA: the measures must in each case be authorised by the Federal Administrative Court and approved by the head of the Federal Department of Defence, Civil Protection

and Sport following consultation with the head of the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs and the head of the Federal Department of Justice and Police.

Intelligence-gathering measures requiring authorization are valid for a maximum of three months. Before the authorised period expires, the FIS can submit a substantiated application for an extension of the authorization for up to three more months. The measures are subject to close monitoring by the Independent Oversight Authority for Intelligence Activities as well as by the Control Delegation.

Authorised and approved measures

Area of activity (art. 6 ISA)	Operations	Measures
Terrorism	2	55
Illegal intelligence	2	62
NBC proliferation	0	0
Attacks on critical infrastructure	2	47
Total	6	164

Individuals affected by these measures

Categorie	Number
Targets	11
Third persons (as defined under Art. 28 ISA)	11
Unknown persons (e.g. only phone number known)	13
Total	35

- Counting method
- In the case of measures, an authorised and approved extension (which can be granted several times for a maximum of three months each time) is counted as a new measure, as it had to be requested and justified anew following the proper procedure.
  - Operations and individuals affected, on the other hand, are counted only once for each year, even when measures have been extended.

## CABLE COMMUNICATION INTELLIGENCE

The ISA has also given the FIS the power to conduct cable communication intelligence in order to gather information about security-relevant events abroad (Art. 39 ff. ISA).

As the purpose of cable communication intelligence is to gather information about other countries, it is not designed as a domestic intelligence-gathering measure requiring authorisation.

However, cable communication intelligence can be conducted only with the obligation of Swiss telecommunications service providers to forward relevant signals to the Swiss Armed Forces' Centre for Electronic Operations. The ISA therefore provides under Article 40 f. an authorisation and approval procedure for orders to the providers, which is similar to that for intelligence-gathering measures requiring authorisation.

At the end of 2024, 3 cable communication intelligence orders were being processed.

## RADIO COMMUNICATION INTELLIGENCE

Radio communication intelligence is also directed at foreign countries (Art. 38 ISA), meaning that only radio systems located abroad may be recorded. In practice, this relates primarily to telecommunication satellites and shortwave transmitters.

In contrast to cable communication intelligence, radio communication intelligence is not subject to authorisation, because in the case of the latter, it is not necessary to oblige telecommunications service providers to record data.

At the end of 2024, 12 radio communication intelligence orders were being processed.



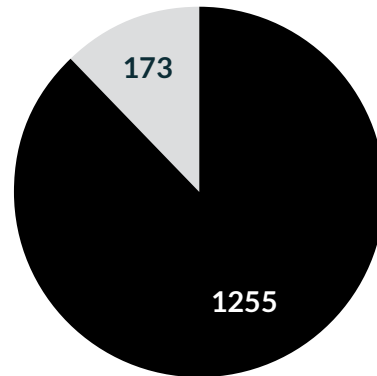
SCREENINGS BY THE FOREIGN CITIZEN’S SERVICE  
AND REQUESTS FOR ENTRY BANS

Switzerland needs the FIS because ...  
... the FIS screens selected individuals from abroad for possible threats to the country’s internal security.

If the FIS considers that the individual concerned poses a potential risk, it may recommend that the application be denied. It may also submit reservations to the competent authorities, i.e. the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs, the State Secretariat for Migration or the Federal Office of Police, depending on the request involved.

	Total number of screenings	Rejection recommended
Request for accreditation of diplomats and international officials	4557	17
Visa applications		7
Applications for work and residence permits required under the law on foreign nationals		4
Asylum seekers’ dossiers (protection status S)	5694	00
Applications for naturalisation	38'691	4
Records as part of the Schengen visa consultation procedure Vision	1'592'602	2
Screening of the API (Advance Passenger Information) data <small>API data that does not yield any matches with the data held by the FIS is deleted after a processing period of 96 hours</small>	3'611'873 persons on 20'904 flights	

## PERSONAL SECURITY SCREENINGS

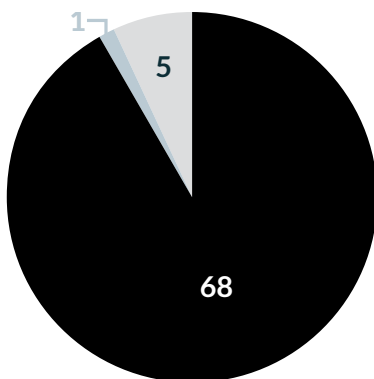


- Verifications abroad
- In-depth assessments  
*of individuals recorded in FIS' information and storage systems*

Personal security screenings are a preventive measure to safeguard Switzerland's internal security and protect its population. They are targeted at persons performing sensitive functions with access to classified information, material or facilities.

On behalf of the Federal Chancellery and the Special Service for Personnel Security Investigation at the DDPS, the FIS conducts verifications abroad and undertakes in-depth assessments of individuals recorded in its information and storage systems.

## Requests for entry bans



- Issued
- Rejected
- Still being processed at the end of 2024

Of the 74 entry bans to Switzerland that the FIS submitted to the Federal Office of Police to protect Switzerland's security, 68 were issued. 5 were still being processed at the end of 2024. One request was rejected.

TRANSPARENCY

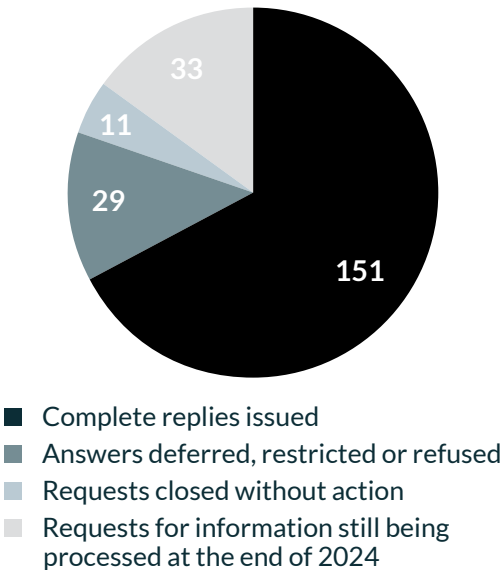
In 2024, a total of 224 requests for information based on Article 63 ISA and Article 25 Federal Act on Data Protection (FADP) were received. Among these requests, 3 were related to previous applications. A total of 151 applicants who had filed a request were provided with complete information on whether the FIS had processed data relating to them prior to the time of filing of the request and, if so, what data was involved.

In 29 cases, the answer was deferred, restricted or refused because of interests requiring the maintenance of secrecy or overriding interests of third parties (Article 63 paragraph 2 ISA and Article 26 paragraph 2 FADP).

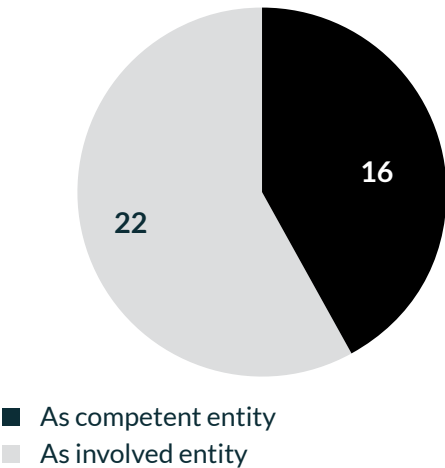
In 11 cases, the formal requirements (such as the provision of proof of identity) for the processing of a request were not met despite a request to provide the necessary information after a three-month period: these requests were therefore closed without action. At the end of 2024, 33 requests for information were still being processed.

In 2024, the FIS also received 38 requests for access under the Federal Act on Freedom of Information in the Administration (FoIA).

**Requests for information**  
Total 224  
*(of which 3 inquiries regarding previous requests)*



**Requests for access under the FoIA**  
Total 38



## STAFFING AND FINANCES

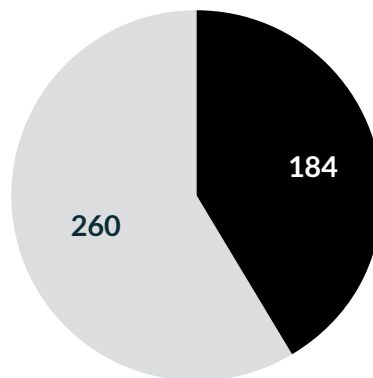
The FIS attaches particular importance to family-friendliness and in 2016 was one of the first federal offices to be certified as a particularly family-friendly employer.

The core values of the FIS are openness, respect, trust, courage and farsightedness.

The effectiveness of the service depends on its highly-qualified employees, who come from diverse professional backgrounds. Many of them regularly travel worldwide in the course of their work.

The FIS communicates in all Switzerland's national languages. Its employees are able to understand and speak a multitude of languages. The FIS promotes the greatest possible diversity, in part as a way of optimizing team performance in the intelligence service.

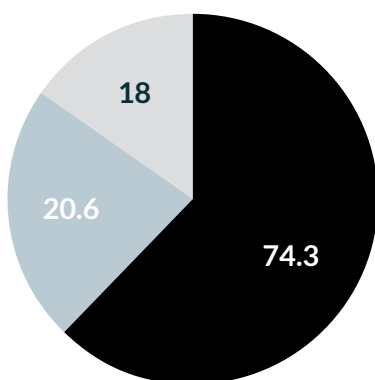
**Employees**  
Total 444  
(At the end 2024)



■ Female  
■ Male

### Finances

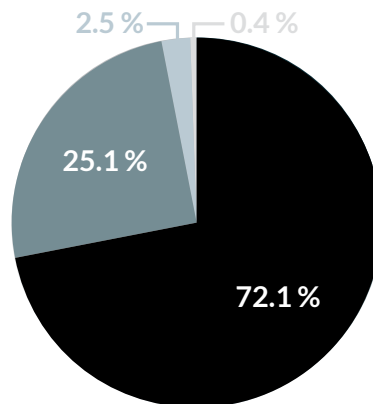
In millions of francs



■ Expenditure on personnel  
■ Expenditure on equipment and operating expenses  
■ Cantons' intelligence service expenditures

### Linguistic distribution

(At the end of 2024)



■ German  
■ French  
■ Italian  
■ Romansh

## LIST OF FIGURES

Cover page: Al-Hol camp, where relatives of jihadists from the “Islamic State”, among others, are regrouped, northern Syria, 27 January 2024.  
© Keystone / AFP / Delil Souleiman

1 Oval Office,  
Washington, 10 February 2025  
© Keystone / AP / Alex Brandon

2 After the capture of an official building by the opposition in the city of Hama, Syria, 6 December 2024  
© Keystone / AP / Omar Albam

3 © Keystone / Tass / Vyacheslav Prokofyev

4 After the attack on the marketplace in Mühlhausen, France, 22 February 2025  
© Keystone / AFP / Sébastien Bozon

5 Clashes at an unauthorised pro-Palestinian demonstration, Zurich, 12 June 2025  
© Keystone / Michael Buholzer

6 Action by Junge Tat at the Eurovision Song Contest, Basel, 15 May 2025  
© Keystone / Til Buergy

7 Exhibition of guided missiles at the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps' National Aerospace Park in Tehran, Iran, 15 November 2024  
© Keystone / AP / Vahid Salemi

8 Stock photo  
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9 Stock photo,  
Daillens, Switzerland, 8 November 2022  
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**Contact adress**  
Federal Intelligence Service FIS  
Papiermühlestrasse 20  
CH-3003 Bern  
[media@ndb.admin.ch](mailto:media@ndb.admin.ch)  
[www.fis.admin.ch](http://www.fis.admin.ch)

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Federal Intelligence Service FIS  
Papiermühlestrasse 20  
CH-3003 Bern

[www.fis.admin.ch](http://www.fis.admin.ch) / [media@ndb.admin.ch](mailto:media@ndb.admin.ch)

