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BRIEFS

BRAZIL: Bolsonaro's Campaign Likely to Gain Popularity After Assassination Attempt

Summary: Right-wing presidential candidate Jair Bolsonaro's survival of an assassination attempt will likely boost his popularity in polls.

Development: On 6 September, an attacker stabbed front-running Brazilian presidential candidate Jair Bolsonaro while supporters carried him through a campaign rally in the city of Juiz de Fora. Bolsonaro was immediately transported to a nearby hospital, where he underwent emergency surgery to treat the near-fatal stab wound. Police arrested the possibly mentally unstable accused attacker, Bispo de Oliveira, whose social media depicts strong, leftist views railing against Bolsonaro's far-right political campaign. Interim President Michel Temer and fellow presidential candidates have condemned the attack, agreeing that the violent intolerance seen amid Brazilian society has no place in a democratic nation. Although Bolsonaro leads polls in Brazil, his rise to attention began with his lack of political correctness and haste to make highly controversial statements expressing racism, sexism, and homophobia. Due to Brazil's popular ex-President, Lula de Silva's official barring from candidacy on 1 September for fraud, Bolsonaro, a political outsider, has gained unexpectedly strong support.

Analysis: Bolsonaro's campaign should gain new momentum considering the sympathy he will likely receive after the attack and because the attack seems to validate his platform of the need to decrease violent crime across the country. Although Bolsonaro will probably face a lengthy recovery, he probably will not withdraw from the race. Rather, his campaign may very likely prosper under Brazil's state of social chaos as more civilians desire a leader from outside of the elite class of corrupt establishment politicians. For months, followers of Brazil's presidential race have noted resemblance between populist Bolsonaro and US President Donald Trump regarding their rises to political power and unapologetic expressions of view. Some hopefuls believe that Bolsonaro's right-wing extremism could put an end to the country's political corruption and create a gateway to an administration focused on the people. Bolsonaro shows no hesitation to admit his lack of concrete plans to combat the country's crises of high unemployment and violent crime, except for declaring the need to reform human rights policies. Brazilians will likely vote during the primary election on 7 October for a candidate who demonstrates exceptional potential to make change, rather than one who preaches an explicit agenda during campaign speeches. If elected, Bolsonaro will probably take a non-traditional approach to leadership that could more closely resemble a dictatorship than a democratic presidency.

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[CHINA-PAKISTAN: Agree to Economic Corridor, Bringing OBOR Closer to Fulfillment](#)

Summary: China and Pakistan agreed to solidify the construction of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) in the face of strong opposition from India. If completed, China will achieve a milestone in fulfilling its One Belt One Road Initiative (OBOR) by linking its economy directly to South Asia.

Development: On 8 September, Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi met with several top Pakistani government officials and confirmed the construction of CPEC. The “economic corridor” would form a key artery of China’s OBOR, consisting of a collection of infrastructure projects intended to link the South Asian and Chinese economies. Pakistani President Arif Alvi lauded OBOR, stating that the CPEC has brought and will continue to “bring benefits to the Pakistani people” while Pakistani National Assembly Speaker Asad Qaiser confirmed that the Pakistani National Assembly will “fully support the development of CPEC” and make the project “a top priority.” India, however, objects to CPEC, as it would cut through Kashmir, a region over which India and Pakistan have had an ongoing territorial dispute. During the meeting in Islamabad, China and Pakistan agreed to also enhance cooperation on defense and security, with Wang describing their two countries as “iron brothers,” stating that China will “stand firm with the Pakistani side.”

Analysis: China and Pakistan will certainly push through with the construction of CPEC, despite India’s unyielding opposition to the project. The two nations have already begun construction and have pledged to see it through to completion, whether or not it has India’s support. China must, however, seek approval from New Delhi if it aims to use India-controlled Kashmir for CPEC if China desires to keep its ties with India—an already tenuous relationship given Wang’s statement and the 2017 border standoff between India and China. China may continue its efforts to coax India into joining the project, but India seems steadfast in denying its participation in the initiative, taking offense as the project “infringes [upon its] sovereignty.” Given India’s concerns, China will most likely stay within Pakistan-controlled Kashmir and continue to cooperate with Pakistan on enhancing its defense and security in the case of physical conflict with Indian troops in Kashmir, but not supply troops of its own. Ultimately, China will do anything within its means to complete CPEC, short of cutting its ties with India completely, as it still seeks to absorb the Bay of Bengal and the Indian Ocean into OBOR, an easier task given India’s cooperation. Regardless, Beijing will likely succeed in linking its economy directly to Europe and thusly bringing OBOR one large step closer to actualization.

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[IRAQ: Deadly Protests Continue Amid Unclear Government Transition](#)

Summary: Weeks of violent protests have continued to escalate while the government struggles to react facing transitions as the current interim Prime Minister loses support.

Development: On 8 September, the Iraqi parliament convened for an emergency session, following weeks of violent protests in Basra. The protests resulted in a call for the resignation of the current interim Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi, who has also lost the support of Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani, the leading Shiite cleric in Iraq. Al-Sistani stated the next prime minister should not have served as a politician in the last 10 years. Iraq's government is transitioning after the national elections in May. However, no party won a majority and parliament failed to elect a speaker last week. Al-Abadi aspires to a second term in office but recently lost a political alliance with the Sadrist Movement party, led by Muqtada al-Sadr, which had the greatest gains in May's elections. Protests began in Basra in July with demands for jobs, better public services, and the end of government corruption. Anger and frustration increased after 30,000 people were hospitalized for drinking polluted water, spurring protestors to torch government buildings. Iraqi security forces have been encouraged to react decisively to vandalism occurring during protests which has led to 27 deaths since July.

Analysis: The protestors appear unlikely to back down. Another harsh security force response would likely add to the cohesion and intensity of protests and counter-attacks. As a result, as many observers note, violence will likely continue until the government responds to their demands. With a majority Shi'ite population in support of Ayatollah al-Sistani and compounding rival political blocs, al-Abadi will likely not remain as prime minister. Al-Abadi's exit would cause the US to lose influence in the Iraqi government due to al-Abadi being the US's preferred candidate, while other candidates either oppose outside influence or favor Iran. Due to al-Abadi losing al-Sadr as a political ally, the majority in parliament will likely shift in the coming weeks. The next prime minister will likely be either Hadi al-Amiri or Nuri al-Maliki, who formed an alliance against al-Abadi. This would align the Iraqi government more with Iran as both of these candidates are Iran's most prominent allies within Iraq.

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[RUSSIA-CHINA: Join on Military Exercise, Increasing Bilateral Cooperation](#)

Summary: China's participation in Russia's Vostok 2018 illustrates the increasing cooperation between the two countries likely leading to a more formal mutual defense pact, although a significant long-term commitment appears unlikely.

Development: On 11 September, Russia held its largest military exercise ever, Vostok 2018, in its Far East region. The event included nearly a third of its military: 300,000 troops, 1,000 military grade aircraft, 36,000 tanks, and part of its Pacific fleet. Additionally, around 3,000 Chinese troops participated in the exercise, marking the first time that Russia has fully integrated Chinese infantry into the exercise and illustrating increased cooperation between the two countries. At the same time, Russian President Vladimir Putin and Chinese President Xi Jinping are meeting in Vladivostok to discuss Sino-Russo relations and the possible strengthening of bilateral ties.

Analysis: The cooperation between Beijing and Moscow in Russia's Far East region illustrates a newfound bond between the two countries, one that will likely lead to a short-term military alliance to deter the US, but likely not to a long-term commitment similar to that of NATO. This event comes as both Russia and China have reached a low point in relations with the US. Russia's military campaign in Syria and China's aggressive expansion into the South China Sea conflict with US strategy which has partially resulted in the worsening of relations. Japan and South Korea's decision to deploy, US supplied, THAAD and Aegis anti-ballistic missile systems have also greatly angered Russia and China. Additionally, the US trade war with China and US and UN sanctions on Russia have caused strain. These factors will likely force the two countries to cooperate economically to make up for lost US trade, making an alliance more plausible. Bilateral trade between the two countries last year was \$84 billion and is estimated to reach \$100 billion this year, a dramatic increase. A more formal alliance could certainly benefit both countries. Putin seeks investors and trade partners to aid Russia's weak economy. Given that Xi wants to continue to improve China's military capabilities, Russia's military technology along with its battle experience can greatly help China achieve this goal as it transforms into a 21st century fighting force. Overall, the increase of political, economic, and military confrontations with the US shows that these countries are revisionist powers determined to challenge US authority, ultimately forcing the two to work much more closely. Despite increasing cooperation, historical events like the Sino-Soviet split and the 1969 War demonstrate that each's geopolitical interests prevent Russia and China from achieving an alliance like NATO.

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SWEDEN: Far-Right Democrats Make Large Gains in National Elections

Summary: The far-right Sweden Democrats made significant gains in Sweden's national elections, which will likely compromise the agendas of Sweden's establishment parties and further legitimize other nationalist parties in Europe.

Development: On 9 September, Sweden held a national election in which no major coalition gained a majority, and the far-right Sweden Democrats (SD) made substantial gains in Sweden's parliament. The coalition of center-left parties, led by Swedish Prime Minister Stefan Lofven, won about 40% of the vote. The main opposition coalition, the center-right Alliance bloc, fell 0.3% short of a plurality of the vote. SD won 17.6% of the vote, which equates to 63 seats in parliament, as compared to the 49 seats it held in the last parliament. SD has ties to openly racist groups in Sweden, and many politicians, including Lofven, describe the party as neo-fascist.

Analysis: Neither establishment coalition is close to a majority, so forming a productive government will almost certainly require a partnership across the major party line, or one major coalition compromising with SD. Given the rhetoric against SD, no major party will likely initially seek to ally with it. The current balance of votes indicates that at least two minor parties would need to move across party lines to form a coalition, also an unlikely scenario. Therefore, Sweden likely faces a long period of negotiations between parties, prone to yield little progress

on policy. By not forming a coalition, however, both sides risk creating an unproductive government that fails to address their party platforms and plays into SD's rhetoric. SD will almost certainly feel more emboldened to advance its policy priorities thanks to the election results and other nationalist movements across Europe. Given this, SD may seek to further distance itself from its Neo-Nazi ties to appear as a more legitimate and reasonable political party in the eyes of political opponents.

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