

THE GLOBAL INTELLIGENCE MONITORING CENTER



AN ANALYTICAL INTELLIGENCE WIRE PREPARED BY THE STUDENTS OF EMBRY-RIDDLE AERONAUTICAL UNIVERSITY IN PRESCOTT, ARIZONA.

NUMBER 321
30 November 2018

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ARTICLES

BRITAIN: Brexit Deal Approval Marks Beginning of Final Domestic Debate

Summary: Prime Minister Theresa May and the EU approved a Brexit deal that now faces a vote in British Parliament on 11 December. The deal faces heavy criticism but may end up more popular than any other realistic alternative.

Development and Analysis: On 25 November, EU leaders approved May's final Brexit deal. The deal will face one final vote on 11 December in British Parliament, which represents the last effective hurdle to a deal. The EU's approval most likely marks the end of a difficult road to achieve a final deal and introduces an upcoming period of critical domestic debate.

On 12 November, May postponed an emergency Brexit meeting. This came after May claimed to British Parliament on 22 October the completion of 95% of the Brexit negotiations, which triggered a skeptical reaction. Since May's announcement, officials struggled to come to a consensus on a plan, with factions within Parliament deeply divided on the issue. A main issue remains regarding how much control the EU will retain over Britain, with former foreign secretary Boris Johnson claiming that May's compromise plan still gives the EU too much power. Officials believed that the amount of division within the different parties would likely lead to a no-deal scenario. The parties also disagreed on the terms of the land border between Ireland and Northern Ireland.

As the deadline to reach an agreement quickly approaches, May announced on 13 November that British and EU officials agreed on a tentative deal and set a special cabinet meeting on 14 November. On 14 November, the government released the 600-page withdrawal agreement, which ensures no hard border between Britain and the EU, requires Britain to pay a \$50 billion fee to the EU, approves the transition period where Britain remains bound by EU laws until December 2020 when both sides must agree to a final trade deal, and allows free movement of British citizens living in the EU and vice versa.

Throughout the negotiations, Britain faced many challenges because of its lack of leverage. To keep the EU strong and to deter other fractures, the EU had high incentive to make the negotiations as difficult as possible. Although the EU's economy would likely also suffer in the event of a no-deal, it does have political upside in possibly deterring other nationalist movements in Europe from seriously mounting efforts to leave the EU.

In response to the deal, five members of May's cabinet resigned, including Dominic Raab, the Brexit Secretary who oversaw the creation of most of the agreement. Most of Parliament, including many members of May's own party, rejected the initial deal claiming it gave too much away to the EU. Despite the domestic controversy, the deal passed EU Parliament easily with little fanfare. Ahead of the 11 December vote, May claims that rejection of this deal will

effectively cause a return “back to square one” and admitted she did not know the consequences of the deal failing to pass Parliament.

The plan’s orchestrators’ outright rejection of the deal coupled with the easy approval among EU members likely indicates that the agreement will negatively affect Britain. If the deal did not satisfy individual EU members, they would most likely withhold support. EU members must approve the deal unanimously, so any dissenting members had an effective method of protesting. Their lack of protest, however, indicates the EU is receiving everything they want from this deal. Conversely, along with many key members resigning, the Brexit secretary’s (charged with negotiating the agreement) resignation almost certainly points to the deal not favoring Britain.

May’s actions now place Britain in a precarious situation. May continually rejects calls for a second referendum, which combined with the logistical challenges of another vote, make it very improbable. Her statements indicate she sees no alternative to passing this deal and allowed almost no flexibility for negotiating individual aspects of the deal. May’s vehement backing of this relatively unpopular deal likely means that May believes she cannot get the EU to pass a better deal. She also likely believes that she can gain enough support from her party to pass the deal by framing the vote as a choice between her deal and no deal.

Though May will likely face challenges to her deal, it will likely pass through Parliament because of the limited alternatives. Forcing her party to pick between her deal and no deal may force Parliament to pick her deal because it may cause less damage to the country. Given this choice, many in Parliament will likely see May’s deal as favorable and vote to pass it. The high risks of a no-deal Brexit will likely deter Members of Parliament from voting no, and they can fall back on the will of the people from the original referendum to justify their decision on passing the deal.

[Alli McIntyre and Zach Coffee]

BRIEFS

EGYPT: Human Rights Watchdog Developed to Improve Government's Image

Summary: Egypt established a new human rights program to distract from controversy against its own state and bolster its image as progressive government on the international stage.

Development: On 26 November, Egypt created new human rights policies that establish the High Permanent Commission for Human Rights after receiving scrutiny from the Human Rights Watch (HRW) and a formal review from the UN Human Rights Council (UNHRC) set for late 2019. The organization consists of representatives from the military, intelligence agencies, and the Foreign and Interior Ministries. Its official-stated mission involves collaborating with the UN and responding to claims regarding human rights violations; however, critics believe that its underlying purpose aims to protect the government from allegations of human rights abuses.

Analysis: Scrutiny from the HRW and the upcoming formal review from the UNHRC likely prompted Egypt's establishment of the commission. Egyptian President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi will almost certainly continue to advocate for the new human rights commission with the intent to advance Egypt's image as a progressive nation following the military overthrow of the democratically-elected government in mid-2013 and the subsequent crackdown on freedom of press and political activists. Although the government continues its attempt to reform international views of Egypt, the UNHRC will probably recognize its feeble attempts to combat criticism. The creation of this program may also signal further restrictions on Egypt's freedom of expression, especially as the commission employs no human rights activists, and instead consists of individuals from the Egyptian government.

[Hunter Binkley and Riley Coder]

MEXICO: Humanitarian Crisis in Tijuana Causes City to Seek International Aid

Summary: Tijuana Mayor Juan Manuel Gastelum declared a state of humanitarian crisis due to the influx of migrants waiting for asylum in the US. Possible international aid might call attention to the crisis and further pressure Mexican authorities to increase support for migrants.

Development: On 22 November, Gastelum declared a humanitarian crisis in Tijuana with the influx of approximately 5,000 migrants seeking asylum in US, requesting help from the UN's Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA). Gastelum stated the city spends nearly \$25,000 daily to support migrants with shelters stocked with food, hygiene products, and medical supplies but criticized the Mexican government for avoiding its legal obligations towards treating the migrants. However, migrants face the spread of disease, specifically respiratory infections and malnourishment, and have fallen victim to drug traffickers and gang violence. Some sleep under bridges, camp in tents throughout the city, or secured a spot

in an overcrowded sports stadium which authorities cleared for the migrants. In recent years, US and Mexican authorities created a waiting list to manage the flow of asylum seekers, leaving the remaining members of the caravan stuck in the border city of Tijuana possibly for months. Gastelum called on other international institutions to “bring in and carry out” humanitarian aid.

Analysis: Because Gastelum requested help from UNOCHA, Mexico’s federal government may step up its involvement with handling the migration crisis under international condemnation. Tijuana will also likely exert more pressure on its federal government to assist with the crisis due to the growing expenses of providing such care while diseases spread and crime rates rise. Not solely a migration crisis, other challenges such as refugee status and homelessness will probably continue to provoke unrest among the Mexican population. Resistance groups within Mexico will likely grow as the lengthy waiting list will probably force migrants to remain in Tijuana until immigration authorities grant asylum to those on the list, which could possibly take months. If Tijuana faces an increase in violence against the migrant groups, this could increase the intensity of the humanitarian crisis and might catch more attention from humanitarian aid groups. International aid would likely show the significance of the crisis and could possibly hold more power than any government-sponsored movement if the UN ultimately decides to provide aid to Tijuana.

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[TAIWAN: Pro-China Party’s Success in Elections Suggests New China-Friendly Rhetoric](#)

Summary: Taiwanese President Tsai Ing-wen resigned as ruling party leader after its damaging losses in local elections to a pro-China party, indicating a shift in the nation’s attitude becoming friendlier to China than in recent years.

Development: On 24 November, Tsai resigned from her position as the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) leader after local government elections results revealed that the opposition party, Kuomintang (KMT), swept the polls. Before the elections, the DPP controlled 13 out of Taiwan’s 22 cities and counties but now (post-elections) it controls only six. The former ruling party of Taiwan, the China-friendly KMT takes a pro-China stance as opposed to the DPP’s pro-independence stance. The elections follow the massive 20 October protest demanding a referendum that would determine an official secession from the China, which heightened tensions amid the already deteriorating relationship between Taiwan and mainland China. Although Tsai resigned as party leader, she will still serve out the remainder of her presidential term for two more years until the 2020 presidential elections.

Analysis: Tsai’s resignation and KMT’s success in the elections likely signify the end of a political paradigm in Taiwan, as voters evidently abandoned the pro-independence DPP in favor of the pro-China KMT. Considering that only a month ago Taiwanese people demonstrated pro-independence leanings, the recent voting results portray a drastic change in their attitude towards China: one more friendly and accepting of the mainland than in recent years. The results also possibly reflect their desire to rebuild Taiwan’s relationship with China and abandon their

previous aspiration to formally declare independence and secede from the mainland. If the people continue supporting the KMT, the party could very likely become competitive against the declining DPP during the 2020 presidential elections and could possibly even win. Such a victory would almost certainly strengthen the island's ties with mainland China, but an official reunion seems not as likely this soon. With time, however, if the people continue electing pro-China parties to office in the future, the possibility of reunification becomes much more achievable. As for Tsai, the current president will probably not re-run for the 2020 presidential elections considering her resignation as party leader—and especially after the DPP's major losses and current decline.

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UKRAINE: Parliament Declares Martial Law After Sea Clash with Russia

Summary: Russian coastguard's attack on Ukrainian naval ships exiting the Kerch Strait leads to Ukrainian declaration of martial law in eastern Ukraine amid escalation in Crimea.

Development: On 27 November, parliament supported Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko's call for a 30-day period of martial law in the eastern part of the nation. Under martial law, authorities may ban protests, install a curfew, restrict media, and draft citizens for military duty, which will affect 10 provinces bordering Transnistria (a breakaway region of Moldova) and Russia. This move comes after Russian coastguard ships pursued, fired at, and seized three Ukrainian vessels passing through the Kerch Strait, off the coast of Crimea on 25 November. Russia claimed the Ukrainian vessels illegally entered the strait, while Ukraine cited a 2003 Moscow-Kyiv agreement that allowed access to both the Kerch Strait and the Sea of Azov. Both the Kerch Strait and the Sea of Azov abut Crimea, which Russia annexed in 2014. A new Russian bridge constructed over the Kerch Strait also contributes to tensions in the region. In addition to concerns over Russia, many criticize Poroshenko's introduction of martial law with growing fears over Ukraine's fragile democracy.

Analysis: While Ukraine and Russia frequently tussle, this event triggered an explosive escalation of the conflict not seen since the annexation of Crimea in 2014. This clash also illustrates an emboldening Russia in Crimea, as it ignored a previous agreement, pointing to continued aggression and possibly opening a new front in the conflict in Donetsk between the Ukrainian army and Russian-backed separatists. Although this flare-up pushes the countries closer to the possibility of war, continued skirmishing in Eastern Ukraine and around the Sea of Azov seem more likely. The period of martial law may interrupt Ukrainian elections due next May; however, considering the length of the period this seems unlikely. Poroshenko, becoming increasingly unpopular among Ukrainian voters, possibly invoked the 30-day period to boost his popularity. The 30 days will more likely exacerbate regional conflicts not only in Donetsk and Luhansk, but other regions containing Ukraine's population of Russian speakers.

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