



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

Eagle Eye 323 | February 1, 2019

In This Issue

GREAT BRITAIN: 11th Hour Deal Likely as Brexit Deadline Approaches	2
IRAN: Recent War Games Showcase Tehran's New Offensive Military Capabilities	6
PHILIPPINES: Bombings in Jolo Island Cathedral Kill Twenty	7
THAILAND: Voter Registration Open for First Election in Seven Years	8

GREAT BRITAIN: 11th Hour Deal Likely as Brexit Deadline Approaches

Summary: As the Brexit deadline approaches, UK Parliament will likely accept a deal very similar to Prime Minister Theresa May's Brexit deal, with the likelihood of a second referendum decreasing and growing sentiment that a no deal Brexit carries too many negative consequences. Regardless of whether Britain agrees to a deal on time, the outcome will almost certainly bring long lasting repercussions to Europe.

Key Questions:

- Will Britain and the EU likely reach a Brexit deal by the legal deadline of 29 March?
- How do the current events and outcomes of Brexit affect other nationalist movements in the EU?
- What barriers remain to achieve a Brexit deal?

Background: On 23 June 2016 the United Kingdom (UK) held a referendum vote to leave the European Union (EU), with the vote passing 51.9% to 48.1%. 71.8% of eligible voters participated, with more than 30 million people voting. Article 50 of the Lisbon treaty affords the EU and the UK two years to agree on the terms of the separation, making the deadline 29 March 2019. This date can be extended, but only if all 28 members of the EU agree to the change. Legal experts believe Britain and unilaterally terminate Brexit, but only with parliamentary approval.

Development and Analysis: On 15 January, parliament defeated British Prime Minister Theresa May's Brexit deal 432 to 202, making it the largest defeat in the past century. May previously reached the deal with officials from the EU, and while many predicted that the deal would not pass in the British Parliament, many citizens found the scale of the defeat unexpected. Those calling for Britain to leave the EU believed May's deal to give up too much, while those who oppose Brexit believed the deal to not be lenient enough. Following the defeat of May's bill, parliament called for a vote of confidence in May on 16 January. Although members of both the Conservative and Labour Parties voted against the deal, May won the confidence vote 325 to 306, signaling that some MPs still have confidence in her ability to lead. Though some conservatives likely only supported May because they personally could not survive a snap general election.

Theresa May stated during her first vote of confidence that she would not seek re-election at the next general election in 2022. Her survival in each vote of confidence means she cannot be challenged by another vote of confidence until 2020 at the earliest, therefore May will serve as Prime Minister through the Brexit deadline.

The specific text of the Brexit deal contains many controversial elements, specifically the amount of money Britain will pay to the EU as a financial settlement. The current draft agreement does not state a specific amount, but analysts believe Britain will pay at least 50 billion dollars to the EU over an undetermined number of years. This amount almost certainly frustrates lawmakers, particularly those who campaigned on the economic benefits of Brexit.

On top of the large fees, proponents of Brexit likely also find the transition period undesirable. Britain and the EU set up a transition period from 29 March to 31 December 2020 as a buffer

period where the two parties can set up long term trade deals. Under the current agreement, Britain will be obliged to obey at EU laws but will not participate in any EU committees or give input on new EU policies. This will also likely not satisfy lawmakers in favor of a hard Brexit because it guarantees the aspect of EU membership many highlighted as most unappealing, requirements to follow regulations without input on those regulations.

Britain and the EU also faced extreme difficulty negotiating policies regarding the border between Ireland and Northern Ireland. This border represents the only land border between Britain and the EU, and currently citizens of both nations can pass freely across the border. Without an agreement in place, this free passage would end, impacting trade and daily life for people who live near the border. The Brexit deal does not include a long term solution to this problem, but contains a backstop in which Northern Ireland and Ireland will operate as a single customs zone. The deal also contains other smaller and less controversial provisions such as allowing UK and EU citizens generally free autonomy to live and travel throughout Europe potentially avoiding an immigration crisis with exiting EU citizens and re-entering UK citizens, and protocols Britain exiting the European Court of Justice.

On 29 January, Parliament underwent a series of debates regarding the current and future Brexit deal. Parliament defeated a bill extending the length of the Brexit deadline, alleviating some fears of a no-deal Brexit caused by an attempt to extend the deadline. However, MPs are pushing for May to go back to the EU to renegotiate the deal, which both EU officials and May have previously stated would be unlikely. Parliament particularly wants the Northern Ireland border solution more thoroughly resolved. Before the vote, May underscored the difficulty of a renegotiation, but conceded the possibility of changes to the deal. The announcement will likely receive pushback from the EU.

Currently, three likely outcomes remain for Brexit. If parliament does not agree to pass a deal by 29 March, Britain will separate from the EU regardless of what deal exists. Uncertainty exists regarding the exact consequences of a no deal Brexit, but the British government's contingency papers give some indication. The largest possible disruptions lie in the transportation sector. Without another deal in place, after the Brexit deadline European airline's license to operate in Britain will expire, as will licenses for British airlines operating in Europe. The EU offered Britain a stopgap agreement which would extend these licenses, but if Britain does not agree by the deadline flights may stop operating between Britain and the EU. The same problem would exist with ferries. In response however, Britain began contracting ferry companies to conduct ferry service in the event of a no deal. Unfortunately, one of these companies owns no ships and never previously operated a ferry service.

In addition, Brexit will likely disrupt food and electricity in Britain. Currently, Ireland and Northern Ireland operate as a single electricity market which allows electricity infrastructure to be shared across the border. Without a Brexit deal, this market will no longer exist, and government reports indicate this could cause electricity prices in Northern Ireland to increase and may even cause power outages and shortages. Regarding food, British farmers claim a no deal Brexit would block them from exporting food to the EU, causing a decrease in their business and an increase in costs for domestic consumers. Though some of these effects are speculative, the warnings from private companies and the British government indicate strong negative

consequences if Britain undergoes a no deal Brexit. Additionally, a no deal Brexit may strand food and other imports from EU nations such as Italy and France, fueling economic instability via high tariffs imposed on UK imports and exports. Adding to economic and transportation issues, a no deal Brexit could aggravate domestic ties with Scotland and constituents of Northern Ireland. Scotland, largely supportive of remaining the EU, may find the traction it needs to put forward another independence referendum. Northern Ireland, similarly, may see a renewal of The Troubles, a 30-year dispute between Irish-Catholic nationalists and pro-British protestants. The border conflict may also embolden nationalists in Ireland, which may inspire their Northern Irish counterparts to push for an independence referendum of their own. While Westminster would need to grant permission for any such referendums, the exit of Scotland or Northern Ireland from the UK could destabilize the constitutional framework of the UK.

Britain could theoretically withdraw from Brexit. Legal opinion from the EU indicates Britain could legally withdraw their intention to withdraw from the EU without their approval. Britain could possibly pull out of Brexit either permanently, or temporarily to allow the government to propose a more concrete plan. Given the mandate set by the 2016 referendum, Britain would almost certainly not withdraw their intention to exit the EU without a second vote. Polls indicate a majority of British citizens favor a second referendum and would vote to remain in the EU in a hypothetical second referendum. May continues to deny the possibility of a second vote, making it unlikely. In addition, a second vote might only make the people's will less clear if it conflicts with the 2016 vote or does not result in a conclusive margin of victory for either side. The government also likely could not arrange a vote by 29 March. Though unlikely, a second referendum is still technically possible and something many MPs and citizens want.

Lastly, Parliament could still accept a Brexit deal similar to May's. May indicates she negotiated the best possible deal between Britain and the EU. May's assessment is likely correct, because the EU likely seeks to make Brexit negotiations very difficult for Britain to set a precedent that other nations will struggle and suffer if they attempt to leave the EU. This potentially may dampen nationalist movements around the EU as it may demonstrate that attempts to leave may be futile, or it may show that nationalist parties gain little ground in political arenas. In addition, given the short remaining time before the Brexit deadline, and the amount of time the first negotiations lasted, the EU likely could not arrange negotiations and agree to anything other than minor changes to the current agreement.

Outlook: Given the alternatives to May's deal, it may become more popular as the Brexit deadline approaches and a deal very close to May's will likely pass. May's deal represents a compromise between the EU, those who want a hard Brexit, and those who want no Brexit. Despite the rejection of her deal, the result of the no confidence vote indicates some in parliament believe May can still lead effectively. Although, many in May's party likely voted for her to remain in power because they may not remain the majority party after a snap election.

As the 29 March Brexit deadline approaches, the urgency to avoid a no deal Brexit will likely increase. With the likelihood of a second vote decreasing, many MPs may feel that the only viable option is May's deal, or something similar. As such, an 11th hour deal is likely. Representatives of the EU have stated that it is now on Britain to bring forward a deal, meaning

that any new deal created and passed by parliament will likely be similar to May's original deal, as it had EU approval.

A last-minute deal, however, may contribute to anti-EU platforms shared by many European nationalists, such as the growing movements in Italy, Poland, Hungary and smaller parties in stronger EU countries like France and Germany. Italian populists, in particular, may view the EU allowing a Brexit agreement to pass as a potential point of leverage. Late 2018 saw the EU's rejection of Italy's budget proposal, angering Italy's populist leadership which vowed not to budge, despite facing large EU fines. The deal might also give Italian populists fuel to even fight against the Euro, weakening the Eurozone. Italy's populists taking a continued stance against the EU in addition to the UK succeeding in leaving the EU may also continue to embolden other groups in Europe to push back against the EU's policies.

The UK's exit of the EU, regardless of whether it succeeds in closing a deal, will also potentially bolster nationalist platforms in Poland, as Poland will lose a key EU ally. Poland and the UK historically agreed on economic policies and shared a similar stance on Russian sanctions, and with the exit of the UK it may feel the need to side with other EU members outside France and Germany, which it normally opposed. Poland, perhaps feeling isolated without the UK, may drift towards Italy to form a counter to Germany and France, especially in light of the recent 22 January treaty agreed upon between France and Germany to strengthen commitment to their stance on EU issues. Italy already proposed creating a new Polish-Italian 'axis', but with the extra push Brexit may provide to strengthen Polish nationalist, Poland may take steps to cement that new alliance to bring together Italian populism and Polish nationalism against a Euro-focused Germany and France. Additionally, Poland and other nations may also use Brexit to push for a more lenient EU based on a single market and continue asserting state-focused needs rather than focusing on the EU project at large. Overall, regardless of the UK reaches a deal or leaves the EU with a hard Brexit, the situation will likely empower nationalist and populist movements across the EU and demonstrate that an exit can be done, however costly, and that the EU may be swayed to their political ends.

[Alli McIntyre, Robert Lundgren, Gianna Geiger, and Zach Coffee]

[IRAN: Recent War Games Showcase Tehran's New Offensive Military Capabilities](#)

Summary: Recent war games introduce Iran's newly established Rapid Reaction Brigade, highlighting a focus on offensive military doctrine.

Development: On 25 January, the Iranian Army conducted a large scale, two-day military exercise codename “Eqtedar 97”. This exercise, utilizing 12,000 personnel of the 55th Airborne Brigade and the newly developed 25th Rapid Reaction Brigade showcased Iran’s ability to effectively conduct offensive operations. The head of the regular army’s ground forces, General Kioumars Heydar, stated that the new Rapid Reaction Brigade comprised of a special-forces rapid deployment battalion and a highly-mobile offensive armored battalion. This exercise also incorporated the CH-47 Chinook and Bell 214 Helicopters which executed quick delivery of a large offensive force across a vast training area achieving “record breaking” results. This exercise comes after the Israeli airstrikes on Iran military assets in Syria.

Analysis: These recent military exercises by Iran likely display a shift in Iranian military doctrine from a defensive to an offensive strategy. Their newly-formed rapid reaction brigades highlight the restructuring of Iran's military force to enhance its conventional military power. Eqtedar 97 likely was a means of not only testing these new units but also to demonstrate Iran's military might to its regional adversaries. In addition, the newly-expressed offensive stature most likely stems from the growing confrontation between Israel and Iranian paramilitary forces in Syria. These military exercises likely come as a warning to Israel that Iran is willing and able to project its conventional power beyond its borders.

[Andrew Ruffini]

PHILIPPINES: Bombings in Jolo Island Cathedral Kill Twenty

Summary: A suspected terrorist attack on a cathedral in Jolo Island left twenty dead and heightened tensions leading into the remainder of a monumental vote on granting autonomy to the island's Muslim population.

Development: On 27 January, two bombs exploded on Jolo Island in the Southern Philippines killing twenty people. The attack targeted the Our Lady of Mount Carmel Roman Catholic cathedral, with the first bomb detonating during Sunday mass. As first responders and soldiers attempted to help the injured, the second bomb exploded outside in the parking lot. The Islamic State (IS) claimed the attack through bulletins posted on the Telegram messaging app, but many also suspect the affiliated Islamic militant group Abu Sayyaf, located on Jolo Island. The attack followed a referendum to grant more autonomy for the Muslim minority region, which voters on Jolo Island rejected. Several regions still await voting on the matter, a law signed by President Rodrigo Duterte that would create self-governing area known as Bangsamoro.

Analysis: Despite the early stages of the investigation, the perpetrators almost certainly intended the attack in response to the rejection the Muslim autonomous region proposal. The Catholic majority may interpret the attack as inherent to the Muslim population rather than an act by extremists. Should this occur, a mix of confirmation bias and anti-Islamic sentiment will likely sway voters into an 'us' versus 'them' mentality. This mentality will likely breed further desire to repress or expel the minority and in this case, the autonomous region proposal may pass as voters in the Sulu region, where Jolo is located, reconsider. Authorities previously sought to create a solution to the divide by creating the autonomous region between Islamist separatists and the majority-Catholic nation. The bombings may also inspire copy-cat attacks and other forms of violence, exacerbating the already deadly rift.

[Kaylee Coffman]

THAILAND: Voter Registration Open for First Election in Seven Years

Summary: Thailand's Royal Palace issued a decree announcing the date for a general election on 24 March. Voter registration opened on 23 January which indicated confidence that an election will occur.

Development: On 23 January the election commission of Thailand set an election date in coordination with the Royal Palace and Office of the Prime Minister for 24 March. This would signify the first election in seven years following a military coup in 2014 that overthrew democratically elected Prime Minister Yingluck Shinawatra. Polling conducted within the nation found that seven million voters are set to vote for the first time, with 90 percent of voters between 18 and 24 planning to participate.

Analysis: In the last seven years, Prime Minister O' Cha and the National Council for Order and Peace prepared for this election with military influence included in the new constitution. In learning from past general elections and military coups, the outcome will likely mirror the 2014 election, but with more advance preparation from the military. Nevertheless, if younger voters vote in large numbers as polling suggests, pushing for pro-Red Shirt Party, the government will have a similar problem to the 2014 general election. The outcome of the election will likely favor a party opposing the military's rule. If this happens, the military will likely not recognize the result and protest the vote. In recent years, however, the governing council gained a reputation of ridding the country of corruption and focusing on internal reforms which led to increased investment in Thailand by outside countries including China and Japan.

[Tyler Wilkins]

This is a global intelligence briefing prepared by the students of the Global Security and Intelligence Studies program at Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University in Prescott, Arizona. The views expressed in this briefing are those of the students, not the university.

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