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In This Issue

VENEZUELA: Mass Emigration May Exacerbate Social and Economic Turmoil	2
EUROPEAN UNION: Border Closures Likely to Restrict COVID-19 Outbreak and Trade	4
IRAN: Despite Health Advisories, COVID-19 Will Likely Create Long-lasting Issues	5
KAZAKHSTAN: Quarantine May Cause Central Asian Tensions and Economic Decline	6
ISRAEL: Emergency Regulations May Slow COVID-19 Outbreak	7
RUSSIA: Constitutional Change May Ensure Putin the Presidency for Life	8

VENEZUELA: Mass Emigration May Exacerbate Social and Economic Turmoil

Summary: The mass emigration of Venezuelans amid a humanitarian crisis will likely heighten regional tensions, exacerbate the decline of Venezuela's oil economy, and increase health concerns throughout Latin America. These consequences of mass emigration may precipitate a power vacuum in Venezuela that criminal organizations and foreign nations may exploit.

Refugee Crisis Consequences: Approximately 4.6 million Venezuelans emigrated from their home country amid the humanitarian and economic crisis crippling the Latin American nation. Refugees flee a nation with massive deficits in foodstuffs, medicine, and petroleum. Most refugees remain in Latin America and the Caribbean, with Peru and Colombia receiving the most migrants from the crisis-torn nation. The exodus of refugees detracts Venezuela's vital petroleum industry and reduced its barrel per day rate to 1.5 million barrels per day in 2018, an approximate 50% decrease of 2006 production rates. The country's state-controlled petroleum company, Petroleos de Venezuela Sociedad Anonima, can no longer sustain government social programs as oil revenues continually decline. Venezuelan refugees present potential health risks when emigrating since their home nation suffers massive deficits in medicine. The recent emergence of COVID-19 complicates health risks for such emigrants and nations even further.

Regional Tensions: Increased Venezuelan emigration will exacerbate tensions with other Latin American nations and will probably increase xenophobia toward immigrants. Negative perceptions of Venezuelans precipitated a rise in xenophobic sentiments in the form of riots, beatings and other violent forms of protest in countries such as Brazil and Peru. For some countries, the Venezuelan refugee crisis presents a tangible security risk as certain terrorist groups, paramilitary organizations, and narcotics networks, such as the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) exploit illegal immigration from Venezuela. Bogota alleges that Caracas actively supports the FARC in its efforts to overthrow the Colombian government. The poor conditions and xenophobia that refugees face enable insurgent and criminal recruitment efforts and weaken refugee support of host governments.

Oil Industry: Emigration will probably drain the Venezuelan oil industry of valuable manpower, decrease oil and natural gas production, and further economic recession as the Caracas grows increasingly reliant on foreign aid. Caracas began importing oil from other nations in the face of collapsing oil industry and civil unrest. In April 2018, Caracas imported up to 200,000 barrels per day as the emigration of Venezuela's labor force and economic crisis drove the country's vital industry into ruin. Continued emigration will further deprive Caracas' labor force, decrease oil production and a continued decline in the Venezuelan petroleum industry.

Health Concerns: The mass emigration of unhealthy and malnourished Venezuelan refugees may enable the spread of diseases and hinder governmental action. From 2014 the infant mortality rate increased by at least 30% and there were at least 414,000 cases of malaria. This

demonstrates the lack of reliable health care for the citizens of Venezuela and indicates that Venezuelan refugees that contract COVID-19 may unknowingly spread it to host nations and the rest of Latin America, exacerbating the pandemic. Such an effect could slow affected countries' economies and hinder healthcare systems.

Outlook and Implications: Increased Venezuelan emigration will probably exacerbate domestic political unrest and regional instability. The continuation of protests and labor deficits, especially in the petroleum industry, could lead to the downfall of the Maduro regime. Venezuelan President Juan Guaidó may exploit the ensuing power vacuum to assume power, but will likely face opposition from Moscow, the Maduro government's key supporter. A power vacuum and the ensuing instability inside Venezuela would probably increase transnational tensions within the South American continent and may even incentivize greater intervention in Latin American affairs by nations such as Russia.

Furthermore, emigration and its detrimental effect on the nation's petroleum output will probably empower other oil-producing nations not currently suffering from such a crisis. Russia and various Middle Eastern nations, in particular, will probably benefit from the collapse of Venezuelan petroleum exports. The decline of the Venezuelan petroleum exporting industry forces Caracas to begin importing oil from other nations, particularly its ally Russia. Caracas's importation of crude oil from Russia not only grants Moscow a larger hand in the nation's affairs but also empowers Russia as a potential economic partner in the South American continent as a whole. Along with Russia, various Middle Eastern nations will probably exploit the downfall of Venezuelan petroleum exports to enhance their own standing in the world oil market.

Continued emigration will probably increase health concerns throughout the South American Continent and also increase violent gang activity throughout the Latin American world. The influx of impoverished refugees provides an opportunity for gangs to both expand their numbers as well as provide new victims to prey on. The increase in power that these criminal organizations would gain would more than likely cause further destabilization in the region. This destabilization of the region would overwhelm law enforcement personnel and governments in the region, potentially leading to a divestiture in resources in the face of a growing pandemic. The influx of malnourished refugees during a global pandemic will likely divert resources from the citizens of the host country. This growing public health crisis, as well as the possibility of bolstered criminal organizations, will probably contribute to increased xenophobia and feelings of nationalism in the region that could result in more instability and conflict between South American countries.

[Ethan Theobald and Max Olson]

EUROPEAN UNION: Border Closures Likely to Restrict COVID-19 Outbreak and Trade

Summary: Closure of the European Union's (EU) borders to slow the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak will almost certainly limit the spread of the virus within its borders but have negative implications for the economy and EU citizens abroad.

Development: On 17 March, the EU's European Commission announced a closure of its borders to all outside and nonessential travel to slow the spread of COVID-19. Individual member nations must enforce and regulate the closure. Some countries, such as Italy, Germany, Spain, and Cyprus, have already enforced total or partial border closures and regulations on travel. The EU stated that the closure would not apply to EU citizens returning to their home countries. The EU previously avoided these restrictions and closures due to concerns about negative impacts on trade and relations. The decision and subsequent announcement came after a spike in cases throughout Europe. The European Commission has not announced plans to restrict travel within the EU as nations continue to implement individual preventative measures.

Analysis: The closure of the EU's borders will almost certainly slow the spread of COVID-19, although the primary force in slowing the outbreak will probably remain in nations' individual measures. However, as the outer border closes, air-travel and a lack of adherence to social distancing practices may increase as EU citizens return, potentially speeding up the spread. News of the closure will probably increase panic among those attempting to return, further escalating the situation. A full restriction of movement within the EU remains unlikely unless the number of cases experiences a large spike in multiple countries. The closure of both the EU and individual countries borders will likely have lasting economic impacts, as the flow of goods and products between countries will slow, especially if the virus impacts workforces. Once governments contain the outbreak, the economy may still have a slow recovery, impacting the businesses closed throughout the EU.

[Alli McIntyre]

[IRAN: Despite Health Advisories, COVID-19 Will Likely Create Long-lasting Issues](#)

Summary: The Iranian public will likely ignore government health advisories aimed to curtail the spread of the coronavirus (COVID-19) which may lead to mass panic throughout Iran as infection and death rates continue to rise.

Development: On 17 March, state media issued a stark warning which highlighted potential casualties to prompt the public to follow health advisories. In the face of growing public distrust of the government, President Rouhani defended his administration's response to the virus and further urged citizens to stay at home and respect health advisories. Critics question why Tehran has not implemented a lockdown as Iran remains the hardest hit country in the Middle East, but a government official responded that with sanctions the economy would collapse under a pandemic lockdown.

Analysis: The lack of public cooperation and unlikelihood of a lockdown will almost certainly increase the number of cases and death rate from the virus. COVID-19 hit Iran during a time of civil unrest and distrust of the government, likely leading the public to ignore health advisories put in place by the government. The unlikelihood of public cooperation will probably mean Iran's total deaths due to the virus will continue to grow quickly. Tehran will probably not enforce a pandemic lockdown due to Iran's fragile economy under Western-backed sanctions, but it may eventually deem a lockdown a necessary last resort to slow the spread.

[Tim Fergus]

KAZAKHSTAN: Quarantine May Cause Central Asian Tensions and Economic Decline

Summary: Kazakh authorities placed two cities under quarantine on 17 March, likely exacerbating domestic uncertainty, potential strains with neighboring countries, and continued economic downturn.

Development: On 17 March, Kazakh authorities imposed a quarantine on Kazakhstan's capital Nur-Sultan and Almaty, its largest city. The quarantines occurred after the number of people infected with COVID-19 grew to 33 cases overnight. The decision follows Kazakh president Kassym-Jomart Tokayev's announcement of a state of emergency in Kazakhstan on 15 March. The state of emergency will last until 15 April and will impose a nationwide quarantine along with restrictions on travel in and out of the country. Kazakhstan, along with many other central Asian nations, initially insisted that it had no cases of COVID-19.

Analysis: While Kazakhstan initially denied the presence of COVID-19 cases in the nation, the sudden eruption of confirmed cases almost certainly will cause domestic panic and possibly increase tensions with neighbors. Many of the new strict quarantine measures will almost certainly lead to the type of panic-buying already occurring in many Western nations. COVID-19 may also create new tension with ethnic Chinese in the nation, as many Kazakhs view Chinese businesses and restaurants with suspicion. The fast increase in COVID-19 cases in Kazakhstan may also strain Nur Sultan's relations with its Central Asian neighbors, especially as nation-wide quarantine stalls trade and transport across the region. Further domestic tension will likely exacerbate the already existing economic strain caused by price decreases on the global oil market. Kazakhstan's economic slowdown will likely continue as the demand for its energy exports drops domestically and internationally amid the COVID-19 pandemic.

[Gianna Geiger]

ISRAEL: Emergency Regulations May Slow COVID-19 Outbreak

Summary: Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu approved new measures to allow internal security agency Shin Bet to trace the location of coronavirus patients, which will likely help contain the outbreak.

Development: On 15 March, Netanyahu approved emergency regulations authorizing Shin Bet to track people who tested positive for coronavirus via cellphone data to help contain the outbreak. Authorities can now monitor location data from coronavirus patients to retrace their movements up to fourteen days before their diagnosis, allowing for the identification and potential quarantine of those who came into contact with the infected individual. The emergency regulations permit Shin Bet to use the data for thirty days.

Analysis: The new emergency regulations will likely slow the spread of the coronavirus, especially if Shin Bet effectively uses the data. The tracking tools will probably not completely end the spread, but will likely minimize its impact and allow more time for the Health Ministry to combat the virus. These measures will likely increase awareness of the situation and its effects, promoting preventative measures. However, allowing access to the data may raise privacy concerns, and the regulations may create controversy.

[Sarah Reiter]

RUSSIA: Constitutional Change May Ensure Putin the Presidency for Life

Summary: Constitutional Court's agreement on a new proposal may guarantee that President Vladimir Putin stays in power until 2036.

Development: On 16 March, Russia's highest court, the Constitutional Court, authorized changes to the constitution that would allow Putin to run for two more six-year terms, which may allow him to stay in power until 2036. To fully ratify this change, the Russian public will vote on 22 April. At this time, Putin has not announced that he wishes to run again after his term ends in March 2024.

Analysis: Putin most likely supported this new change in order to maintain presidential power and set up life-long control of Russia. Although he has not indicated whether he will pursue continued leadership, Putin will likely announce his next presidential campaign after his current term ends. This announcement, if it does occur, may intimidate opposition candidates, who have historically not fared well against the current four-term president. The Russian government may use its influence over the media to manipulate the public into voting for the proposed changes. If the Kremlin does manipulate coverage, the amendment may pass into legality without the true consent of the people. If Putin continues to serve as president, the public will likely not benefit or see any major policy changes, which will probably continue to serve the purposes of the Russian elite.

[Kiara Bean]

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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