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TAIWAN: Chinese Militarization Will Almost Certainly Raise Tensions, Prompt Conflict

Summary: Due to its militarization, a growing independence movement, and likely increase in support from regional allies, China will probably view Taiwan as a growing issue and take diplomatic or military action to quell dissent.

Longstanding Tensions: Beijing strongly maintains the “One China Principle,” which considers the Republic of China under the control of mainland China. Despite the policy, Taiwan continues to govern independently. Talks between Beijing and Taipei remain limited due to Beijing’s reluctance to recognize Taipei as a legitimate, independent governing body. Few countries officially recognize Taiwan as an independent nation, although many hold unofficial diplomatic relations to avoid angering China. Independence movements within Taiwan continue to grow, with President Tsai Ing-wen leading the Democratic Progressive Party that supports official independence from China.

Militarization: The militarization of both China and Taiwan will almost certainly continue. Beijing significantly increased the frequency of military exercises near Taiwan, causing Taipei to intercept a higher number of aircraft and ships than in the past. Beijing likely continues the military exercises, such as the aggressive increase in fly-overs, to provoke Taipei into making the first offensive strike. Taipei striking first may allow Beijing to avoid some international condemnation if it initiated overt military action. However, Taipei’s military remains less powerful than Beijing’s and a first strike would likely prove unsuccessful. Taipei’s military vehicles are in varying states of disrepair despite efforts to modernize its military to combat Beijing’s aggressiveness. The modernization efforts probably grow Taipei’s military capabilities, but likely will not place the countries on equal footing. Beijing’s military continues to develop along with economic growth and improved technology.

Growing Independence Movement: Support for Taiwan’s independence movement from China since Tsai’s election in 2016 indicates growing dissatisfaction with China among citizens. Tsai won strong support among Taiwanese citizens due to her vow of upholding Taiwan’s sovereignty. Public support of the independence movement will almost certainly continue to grow as Chinese authority continues to provoke citizens. Taiwanese militarization will almost certainly amplify citizens’ investment within the movement. On 2 September, Taiwan revealed its new passport cover, which emphasized Taiwan. Providing citizens with official identities and publicly refuting Beijing may result in strengthening Taiwan’s public opinion of the independence movement and motivate further support. Some Taiwan citizens remain fearful of Taiwan’s economic dependence on China and daunting differences in military assets. Despite the economic dilemma and military disadvantage, Taiwanese leaders continue to promote independence and may further motivate support amongst citizens.

Regional Alliances: While countries may remain unwilling to formally establish diplomatic ties with Taiwan, stronger relations between Taiwan and other countries will likely form to defend

against Chinese expansionism. In January 2020, Tsai introduced the New Southbound Policy aimed at strengthening relations with other countries, focusing on those in South and Southeast Asia. Countries bordering the South China Sea (SCS) will almost certainly seek to grow relationships with Taiwan while China continues to operate in the SCS. Tsai may pledge support in the SCS for countries that ally with Taiwan in its pursuit of independence. Potential allies may see Beijing's reaction to Taipei's push for independence as an indication of China's increasing expansionism, making stronger regional relations more appealing. Taiwan may also look to India for a potential alliance, due to India's current conflict with China.

Outlook and Implications: Diplomatic or physical conflict in some form will probably occur. Diplomatic actions include possible negotiations, although the likelihood of success remains low due to China's probable unwillingness to grant large concessions to Taiwanese demands. Physical actions include the continuation of naval drills and fly-overs which would probably culminate in military conflict. Although China likely does not want to conduct offensive strikes, China may feel threatened enough to take action if Taiwan continues to increase military strength and regional alliances. Without strengthened alliances, Taiwan would probably lose a military conflict with China, even with bolstered military capabilities. The independence movement within Taiwan will almost certainly continue, spurring citizens to call for dramatic change and further separation from China. Diplomatic and military resolutions to the conflict remain probable, but the current trajectory of rising tensions indicate the increasing likelihood of military conflict.

[Alli McIntyre, Savannah Gallop, Clarisse Joy Absalon]

SYRIA: Forest Fires Likely to Foster Regional Peace Until Contained

Summary: The eruption of massive forest fires will likely cause a wave of peace for Damascus while it controls the damage and restores the loss of resources before returning its focus to the regional conflict.

Development: On 11 October, massive forest fires in the Latakia, Tartous, and Homs counties killed at least three people, sent over 70 more to the hospital, and displaced thousands of families. The fires burned through crops, thousand-year-old forests, and greenhouses. Damascus publicized its mobilization of personnel in the largest fires the area has seen in years. Firefighters continue to work to extinguish the ongoing natural disaster, which is spreading by extreme temperatures and strong winds similar to fires in Lebanon in 2019. The fires prompted uprisings in Lebanon in protest of the ill-preparedness of the government during the disaster. On 12 October, the Chamber of Industry of Damascus launched the “Cold and Peace” initiative to help aid those affected by the fires monetarily and through food donations.

Analysis: The severe fires will likely prompt peace within Syria while Damascus works to control the spread, repair the damage, and aid affected citizens. Damascus will almost certainly need to focus on helping affected citizens before it can reengage in regional conflict. Many of Syria’s resources will almost certainly go toward repairing damage and stopping the spread of the fires instead of fighting rebels in other territories. To avoid more rebellion in Syria similar to that which occurred in Lebanon, Damascus will probably approach the conflict with caution while fires continue. If Damascus focuses on the war, protests may occur because of the lack of attention given to the natural disaster. If Damascus instead focuses on the natural disaster, then support for those affected will likely arise and mitigate the impact of the fires and boost Damascus’s reputation. The attention given to helping those affected might also give it a diplomatic boost in the civil war once the fires have subsided due to a positive, caring image.

[Tianna Sardelli]

LEBANON: Negotiations with Jerusalem May Support Economy, Restrict Hezbollah

Summary: Historic Lebanese and Israeli diplomatic progress could improve the Lebanese economy and may detach Hezbollah's hold on the Lebanese government.

Development: On 1 October, Beirut and Jerusalem announced a framework to revive negotiations over maritime borders. The UN will host these talks, which began 12 October. Despite this, neither nation regards the negotiations as a way to resolve the 30-year relationship of formal, albeit static, war. A resolution of disputes over the maritime boundaries would grant Lebanon access to a region of the Mediterranean Sea rich with natural gas. Hezbollah's power in Lebanese politics increased with the country's recent trend of economic and political instability, although the group remains at odds with Israel.

Analysis: Beirut and Jerusalem's rekindled negotiations could result in the boosting and stabilization of Lebanon's economy. The potential success of talks may also improve diplomatic relations between Israel and the broader Middle East. Moreover, such stabilization in the national and financial sectors may in turn limit Hezbollah's capabilities and support due to the group's reliance on filling weak governance. However, with Hezbollah so entrenched in the Lebanese government, the group may funnel the proceeds from natural resource development to finance its own interests and undermine the government further. Concern over Hezbollah's potential control over funds generated from the resolution of the border disagreement may impede effective negotiations.

[Sinclare Hardy]

CHINA: Conflict on Indian Border May Escalate as Militarization Continues

Summary: China's increased military presence at the China-India border will almost certainly increase tensions with India, and may lead to military conflict.

Development: On 5 October, China's military released a video of an increased presence of troops near the China-India border. On 30 September, New Delhi had rejected China's 1959 territorial border claims regarding a shared border. In anticipation of retaliation, India opened a tunnel under the Himalayas to enable quick transportation of supplies to the border. Beijing also hosted festivals and parades on the border to promote its military strength and national pride.

Analysis: India and China will likely continue to bolster military presence on the border, increasing tensions and the likelihood of armed conflict. The video of Chinese troops near the border following India's rejection of Beijing's border claim indicates Beijing's unwillingness to release control. Both China and India may turn to regional allies to shore up diplomatic support, supplies, and military capabilities. Due to Beijing's escalating military displays on the India-China border, increased physical conflict remains likely. The construction of a supply route through the Himalayas indicates India's anticipation of potential conflict, increasing the probability of such an event.

[Savannah Gallop]

CANADA: Cyber-attacks Likely to Continue, Harm Business Operations

Summary: Although Canadian businesses suffered from cyber-attacks in relation to COVID-19 throughout the year, the bolstering of cyber-security in companies remains unlikely and will most likely result in further security exploitation.

Development: On 6 October, the Canadian Internet Registration Authority (CIRA) released a cybersecurity report that disclosed that one-third of respondents surveyed reported a cyber-attack related to COVID-19. Attacks include COVID-19 themed attacks, such as fake contact tracing applications and non-themed attacks. Despite the increase in cyber-attacks, the CIRA's report suggests that companies will not see an increase in funding or hiring for cybersecurity.

Analysis: The lack of concern from Canadian businesses may prove fatal to their operations, infrastructure, and earnings in the coming year. Attackers' use of COVID-19 themed cyber-attacks likely results from playing off of people's fear, the media, and increased technology usage. The COVID-19 themed attacks will probably decline as the threat presented by COVID-19 decreases. However, the continued relative success of the attacks and lack of retaliatory action will almost certainly embolden attackers and may result in further damage.

[Jesse Hix]

RUSSIA: Successful Hypersonic Missile Testing May Heighten Regional Tensions

Summary: The successful test of a new Russian hypersonic missile showed an increased flight time over a large distance and the ability for successful launches from submarines and surface ships, almost certainly escalating tensions in the region.

Development: On 6 October, the Russian military completed a missile test for the hypersonic Tsirkon missile, hitting a target from sea. According to reports, the Tsirkon missile can fly nine times the speed of sound to hit underwater and ground targets over 600 miles away. During the exercise, the missile flew 279 miles in four and a half minutes achieving Mach 8, launching from the frigate Admiral Gorshkov in the White Sea. Chief of the General Staff Valery Gerasimov announced plans to outfit ships and submarines with the hypersonic missiles after completing state tests.

Analysis: The addition of the Tsirkon missile to the Russian arsenal will likely alarm neighboring countries and prompt an increase in funding in military development to match the Tsirkon's speeds and capabilities. The missile showcases will probably garner attention from its allied countries such as Iran, Syria, or Belarus that may seek to purchase the new missile systems. The increased attention on the missile and the advanced capabilities may prompt a reviewal of the United Nations arms embargo to mitigate potential sales of the weapon.

[Damon Reyes]

SINGAPORE: Investment May Boost Economic Longevity, Stabilize Birth Rates

Summary: The Baby Support Grant provides financial incentives to potential parents in effort to reverse declining birth rates as well as secure a future generation and workforce. The investment into the next generation may stabilize and guarantee a lasting economic stability.

Development: On 9 October, Singaporean Deputy Prime Minister Heng Swee Keat, announced a \$2,200 financial incentive for couples who give birth to a child between October 2020 and September 2022. Many couples postponed parenthood plans due to the financial uncertainty of the pandemic. A 12.6% shrink in GDP in the second quarter caused economic stability concerns and altering of social norms like family planning. Singapore maintains one of the lowest birth rates in the world with a 1.1 birth rate per woman, and the Baby Support Grant intends to aid potential parents while also supporting future national security interests.

Analysis: Concerns about a limited available workforce and a majority pulling out of social security most likely accelerated the Baby Support Grant. Singapore's policies support younger generations, which may prompt continued support of the People's Action Party in following years. If Singapore continues to pass policies supporting population growth, future workforce dilemmas may decline in prevalence. Singapore's efforts to mitigate future labor deficits suggests a possible shift in long-term economic stability. The Baby Support Grant may also cause long term societal shifts, potentially making increased birth rates the norm, which in turn would further reduce future labor deficits.

[Madison Jackson]

UKRAINE: Cyber Defense Legislation Will Probably Violate Privacy

Summary: Kiev proposed new legislation allowing law enforcement to view data after a recent spike in cyber-attacks that will probably violate user privacy.

Development: On 7 October, a report detailed the concern for Ukraine's recent spike in cyber-attacks. In 2017, Russian hackers unleashed the NotPetya virus, targeting Ukraine's economy and exposing its weak cyber defense infrastructure. Since then, hackers have targeted Ukraine at increasing frequencies. In response to the growing number of attacks, Kiev brought new legislation forward to address concerns of its cybersecurity. The legislation includes gathering evidence and information in connection with these attacks by any means necessary. Supporters of the legislation believe this could represent a step in the right direction. However, many human rights activists call this a step too far, due to potential corruption tied to previous decisions prompting the belief that this legislation could lead to a potential loophole riddled with privacy abuse.

Analysis: Kiev will likely push forward with its new legislation despite human rights activists' calls to halt further proceedings. Further advances in cyber defense will likely lead to lies and mistakes, due to previous corruption. Human rights activists will almost certainly continue to call out the corruption within Kiev's legislation, especially if Kiev engages in deception. Information gathered by the state will likely prove controversial based on privacy concerns. The attacks likely stem from Moscow as extensions of the original NotPetya virus operation aimed to destroy Kiev's economy. Therefore, Kiev will probably continue to push further legislation to protect its economy and to defend itself against Russian cyber-attacks.

[William Noujaim]

YEMEN: Ansar Allah's Armed Drone Attack Signals Potential Negotiation Strategy

Summary: The Ansar Allah rebels targeted the Saudi city of Najran with a drone carrying explosives in response to recent military setbacks, indicating an attempt to gain more negotiation power.

Development: On 11 October, the Yemen-based terrorist organization Ansar Allah launched an explosive drone in Najran. The Saudi air defense system intercepted and destroyed the drone before it reached its target. This comes after similar attacks in southern Saudi Arabia on 7 and 10 October, which Riyadh also foiled. All three attempts targeted civilians. On 11 October, the UN envoy to Yemen arrived in Riyadh, with intentions to have the warring parties engage in peace talks and subsequently sign a joint declaration to continue political talks and start a cease-fire.

Analysis: Ansar Allah's attempted attack on Saudi Arabia probably reflects its desire to strengthen its negotiating position, and similar attacks will probably follow. Ansar Allah may promise to stop the attacks if its demands are met. The recent loss of a strategically important base in Jouf probably prompted retaliations from the perspective of Ansar Allah to recover its negotiating strength. However, the attacks will likely escalate tensions, making overall negotiations more difficult. Nevertheless, the effort by Ansar Allah to strengthen its negotiating position does show promise for the efforts of the UN envoy in Riyadh.

[William Moody]

About GSIS

Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University's (ERAU) Bachelor of Science in Global Security & Intelligence Studies (GSIS) degree program at our Prescott Campus blends both academic and professional studies to equip students with the knowledge and skills necessary to become future leaders in intelligence, security, and law enforcement. The program provides students with a sound foundation in the liberal arts, including international relations, foreign languages and cultures, international law, foreign policy, political and military history, and other essential topics.

About EE

Eagle Eye Intelligence (EE) is an intelligence and research organization led by the students of the GSIS program at ERAU in Prescott, Arizona.

Dr. Philip E. Jones founded EE and Embry-Riddle's GSIS program in 2002, following a career with the Central Intelligence Agency and consulting work in international development and global security. Professor Dale R. Avery, a former career intelligence analyst at the Central Intelligence Agency and Office of the Director of National Intelligence, serves as EE's faculty advisor.

EE strives to provide actionable intelligence and analysis to its customers during the academic year. We are driven by a number of goals – continuous development, nonpartisanship, interdisciplinary studies, global awareness, and professionalism.

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