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FRANCE: Growing Islamophobia Will Likely Increase Tensions, Weaken Diplomacy

Summary: Growing Islamophobia in France may exacerbate Islamic extremism and will almost certainly heighten tensions between ethnic French and Muslims. Tensions will likely catalyze anti-immigration policies in Paris and may hurt French diplomatic standing globally.

Growing Xenophobia: During January 2015, the French government banned burqas, niqabs, and declared halal food in supermarkets to be “communitarian” or leading to extremism. The regulation of Islamic culture intensified after subsequent terrorist attacks. French President Emmanuel Macron’s 2 October address discussed numerous policies to limit terrorist attacks. Public view of Muslims rapidly deteriorated following the 201 foreign donations to mosques and banning foreign born Imams, hoping to “liberate” Islam and making it more compatible with French society. This step could further the restrictions of Muslims in France, which will probably increase the number of Islamic extremists and may give them reason to further justify terrorism.

Islamic Terrorism: Islamic terrorism and jihadist recruitment will probably increase in France. In 2016, reports stated that French citizens made up a third of European born Islamic State recruits, and on 3 October, Michael Harpon, a computer specialist for French law enforcement, killed four people and seriously injured another inside of the Paris police headquarters. This attack ignited a spree of attacks including a beheading on 16 October, and a knife attack on 30 October. France’s public opinion toward Islam may deteriorate following further attacks.

Standing Abroad: Paris’s newfound policies catalyzed boycotts of French products in multiple countries including Morocco and Malaysia. After Macron’s 2 October address to the nation, Malaysia’s ex-Prime Minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad condemned France’s Islamophobia in a statement encouraging French-Muslims to commit acts of violence against Paris.

Outlook and implications: Islamic terrorism and French xenophobia will likely continue to work in a cycle where one makes the other worse. As a result, if more attacks occur, Paris will probably respond with strict prohibitions and restrictions. Conversely, xenophobia may catalyze French-Muslim citizens to engage in acts of violence and cause non-Muslim French citizens will probably view immigrants and Muslim citizens with increased suspicion.

France’s growing distance from the international Muslim community could impact economic relationships. Predominantly Islamic states like Morocco, Malaysia, and Lebanon will possibly reduce economic engagement with Paris amidst increasing Islamophobia. Islamic nations might also encourage the international community to condemn France for its restriction of religious freedom and practices. Condemnation from the international community could weaken France’s global standing and encourage Paris to revise its restrictions.

[Ethan Theobald]

CHINA: Modernization Likely to Increase Mobility and Efficiency of Military

Summary: Chinese military modernization will likely increase its flexibility when it comes to conflict in unforeseen scenarios and provides insight into its military concerns and predictions.

Development: On 3 November, Beijing released its new five-year plan, which highlighted a focus on national strength. Beijing plans on focusing its efforts towards modernizing the military by improving equipment, beginning with those in operations at the contested China-India border this winter. Beijing consulted private manufacturers to create heated clothing made with graphene for the People's Liberation Army (PLA) to wear in the severe cold climate of the China-India border. Other improvements for the PLA include drones for transport, strikes, and reconnaissance and a new generation of off-road assault vehicles. Naval improvements include the implementation of new missile technology. Beijing predicts full military modernization by 2027.

Analysis: The modernization of China's military likely indicates that Beijing predicts future obstacles as it increases its aggression over disputed territories. In focusing on the modernization of the military, Beijing displays likely uneasiness about its current state, yet remains steadfast in taking back disputed land, including at the China-India border. New materials and vehicles developed for the harsh mountain environment will give the PLA flexibility to remain in difficult conditions without fear of decreasing performance or having to retreat from an area. Naval improvements indicate Beijing's willingness to engage in conflict by sea, but the prioritization of the army signals a greater expected need for terrestrial preparedness.

[Savannah Gallop]

IRAN: Restrictions Likely to Slow COVID-19 Infection, Enable Recovery

Summary: The implementation of new restrictions designed to combat the rise in infections, deaths, and hospitalizations caused by COVID-19 will likely slow the spread of the virus.

Development: On 31 October, reports emerged of Iran's new restrictions which intend to slow the spread of COVID-19 as it experiences its third wave of cases and a quadrupled number of infections in less than two months. President Hassan Rouhani announced cinemas, cafes, gyms, and pools will remain shut for 10 days, while educational facilities will go to online platforms. Iran's Health Ministry spokesperson, Dr. Sima Sadat Lari, urged Iranians to limit public transport and wear masks. Tehran implemented fines for people who ignoring health protocols.

Analysis: The restrictions put in place will likely help slow the spread of the virus and allow for the people infected to recover and thus limit the spread. The fines that Tehran put in place will push people to adhere to the restrictions. However, the short time the restrictions are in place could cause a fourth surge of cases soon after the lifting of restrictions. Dependent on the infection rates during and following the restrictions, Tehran may prolong restrictions to confidently control and maintain the spreading of the virus. Tehran may also create harsher punishments for violators who neglect to follow the restrictions put in place.

[Mia Hamlin]

CHILE: President's Support for Suspended Official May Exacerbate Internal Divisions

Summary: Chilean President Sebastián Piñera's continued support for former Interior Minister Victor Perez may escalate divisions within the government.

Development: On 3 November, Chile's Chamber of Deputies suspended Interior Minister Victor Perez, who subsequently resigned. To control protests and reduce violence, President Piñera tasked Perez with implementing the New Protest Control System. After a Carabinero killed a 16-year-old boy during a protest in Santiago, the Lower House charged Perez with unnecessary use of force in controlling protests. The Senate has not yet voiced its approval of the charges, which would ban Perez from holding office for the next five years. Maintaining his pattern of frequently rearranging his cabinet, Piñera appointed the Undersecretary of the Interior Ministry, Juan Francisco Galli, as Interim Minister, while voicing support of Perez.

Analysis: Piñera's continued support for Perez, despite Perez's suspension and subsequent resignation, may exacerbate divisions in the government. Piñera's history of asking for cabinet members' resignations and their rapid replacement may cause him to lose internal support. Officials may begin to fear their own replacement, prompting internal distrust and potential conflict. Piñera's continued support for Perez contradicts his advocacy for the New Protest Control System which may threaten Piñera's external support system. The public likely views the Control System negatively and may take offense at Piñera's continued support. This will almost certainly impact the protests and Piñera's approval rating. The probable drop in both internal and external support will almost certainly harm Piñera's ability to govern.

[Emma Sanders]

SINGAPORE: Digitizing Companies' Operations Will Likely Promote Economic Stability

Summary: In an effort to stabilize economic growth amidst the COVID-19 pandemic, 2,700 local companies received subsidies to digitize business operations. The increased efficiency of business operations and profits will likely secure the growth of commerce on a global scale.

Development: On 6 November, the Ministry of Communication and Information announced that 2,700 local companies received up to \$10,000 each for digitizing business operations. This \$6.8 million initiative serves to support struggling companies from COVID-19-driven hardships. The COVID-19 pandemic created a larger dependency on digital communications, which requires internet accessibility, requisite devices, and digital literacy. The capability of companies to expand digital resources increases the visibility of assets, competitive strategies from data analysis, and profit margins. In-person shopping limitations due to COVID-19 restrictions placed greater emphasis and demand on businesses online capabilities.

Analysis: Efforts to create standardized digital capabilities will most likely contribute to economic prosperity through increased consumer spending and business efficiencies. Expanded and improved online capabilities will almost certainly result in increased traffic and sales through companies' digital platforms. Auditing and tax processes will likely become more efficient as a result of digital records, increasing government tax revenues. A ripple effect of more companies digitizing business operations may result from efforts to compete with digitally superior enterprises. The establishment of digital commerce in partnership with traditional shopping practices following the eventual lifting of COVID-19 restrictions will almost certainly bolster and stabilize Singapore's economy in the long term.

[Madison Jackson]

RUSSIA: Energy Sector Growth Will Almost Certainly Harm Climate Initiatives

Summary: The projected development of Moscow's fossil fuel and gas exports will likely harm climate change initiatives and may prompt new global and economic challenges due to these policy contradictions.

Development: On 5 November, Russian President Vladimir Putin signed a decree ordering the Russian government to abide by the 2015 Paris Agreement to help fight climate change while also increasing its own gas exports. Putin formally ordered the government to work towards a cut in greenhouse gas emissions of up to 70% against 1990 levels by 2030. Following this statement, Putin furthered his claim by stating that any action must allow continued economic development. Due to Moscow's reliance on oil and gas production, Russia remains the world's fourth largest emitter of greenhouse gases. Moscow plans on exploiting its own fossil fuel reserves to try and rebuild its economy after the negative impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. Russian Minister of Energy Alexander Novak indicated that oil and gas exports will continue to grow through 2021 and that Moscow expects to increase production of cleaner energy alternatives, liquid natural gas (LNG), and hydrogen.

Analysis: Moscow will most likely pursue fossil fuels and oil exports to try and recover from losses sustained during the COVID-19 pandemic. Added pressure from the Paris Agreement and climate change activists could force Moscow to only pursue cleaner alternatives like LNG or hydrogen. Putin will most likely address Moscow's climate goals while aiming to revive the Russian economy to placate both Russia's energy sector and international climate accords. Emphasis will likely remain on boosting the economy in the short term, which will almost certainly conflict with initiatives to reduce its greenhouse emissions. Moscow will likely aim to diversify its economy and become less energy export-dependent to satisfy its own population and the Paris Accords.

[Michael Tokos]

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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Riley Coder, a senior in the GSIS program, currently serves as EE's Editor in Chief. For questions or comments, contact the team at editorsee@gmail.com or Professor Avery at 928.777.4708.

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