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In This Issue

CHINA: Coast Guard Authorization Leads to Almost Certain Territorial Conflict	1
IRAN: Oil Tanker Seizure Unlikely to Provoke Retaliation.....	2
CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC: Violence Almost Certain to Continue.....	3
RUSSIA: Increased Protests Likely Damaging to Regional Control	4
TURKEY: Peace Talks Likely to Cause Gradual Changes in Greek-Turkish Relations	5

CHINA: Coast Guard Authorization Leads to Almost Certain Territorial Conflict

Summary: China's use of its Coast Guard to fire on vessels and demolish structures in the territory that it claims in the South China Sea (SCS) and East China Sea (ECS) almost certainly reflects a decisive push to regain territory that will lead to increased conflict in the SCS.

Development: On 22 January, Beijing authorized its Coast Guard to fire on vessels and demolish structures in the territory that it claims in the SCS and ECS. China claims the entirety of the SCS and parts of the ECS and Taiwan under the One China Policy despite protests from Vietnam, Malaysia, Taiwan, Japan, and the Philippines. On 21 January, Japan accused Beijing of restricting Japanese flight over the SCS. Beijing also continues to increase the number of bombers and fighters flying over Taiwan. In response to the increase in Chinese military aggression, Taiwan held drills to prepare for possible Chinese invasion.

Analysis: China's self-appointed power likely indicates the intention to begin asserting control in the SCS, ECS, and other disputed territory. Authorizing the Coast Guard to prevent neighboring countries from controlling territory in the SCS and ECS will likely increase tensions and conflict in the region. Vietnam, Malaysia, the Philippines, and Taiwan could work together as a force against China, if Beijing moves to take total control of the SCS. Beijing's trend of increasingly bold actions will almost certainly continue, exacerbating tensions and conflict in the SCS. Neighboring countries will likely continue to respond to Beijing's increasingly aggressive actions, increasing the likelihood of military conflict.

[Savannah Gallop]

IRAN: Oil Tanker Seizure Unlikely to Provoke Retaliation

Summary: The Indonesian Coast Guard seized an Iranian oil tanker off the shores of Kalimantan Province, triggering discussions between Tehran and Jakarta. The negotiations will likely remain peaceful while Iran copes with economic sanctions targeting its oil industry.

Development: On 24 January, the Indonesian Coast Guard seized the Iranian oil tanker MT *Horse* alongside the Panamanian oil tanker MT *Freya*. The Indonesian Coast Guard discovered the two tankers early in the morning transferring oil from one tanker to the other. MT *Horse*, owned by the National Iranian Tanker Company, has a history of transferring large amounts of Iranian oil to MT *Freya*, owned by Shanghai Future Ship Management Co. Tehran reached out to Indonesian officials for more information while Jakarta investigates the dealings.

Analysis: Ongoing trade sanctions against Iran's oil industry may have encouraged undisclosed oil trading. Tehran will likely seek diplomatic negotiations to avoid further suspicion of illegal dealings and any international penalization thereafter. This seizure will probably not result in any international punishment for the suspicious dealings, although it may prompt Iran to tread lightly in the months to come to prevent any meticulous investigations into its oil industry.

[Tim Fergus]

CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC: Violence Almost Certain to Continue

Summary: Continued attacks between government and rebel forces will almost certainly trigger broader violence in the Central African Republic (CAR) while the current administration attempts to hold onto power.

Development: On 25 January, CAR government forces killed 44 rebels, following an attempted blockade of the capital. Prior to the 27 December presidential elections, rebel groups launched a series of attacks, gaining control over two-thirds of the country. The re-election of President Faustin-Archange Touadera prompted calls from the coalition opposition group for the repeal of the results, citing voter disenfranchisement. Rebel group attacks continue, often targeting supply shipments on national highways, prompting the government to implement a 15-day state of emergency starting on 21 January. Following the 25 January attack, Ange-Maxime Kazagui, a government spokesperson, stated that the CAR government was again on the offensive and government forces began to recapture rebel-controlled territory.

Analysis: The attempts to blockade the capital coupled with the attack on rebel forces will almost certainly escalate tensions, prompting the current administration to take increased measures to hold onto power. Touadera will almost certainly feel pressured to cement his grip on power, prompting a harsher crack down on rebel forces. The destruction of necessary supply transports may cause a reduction in support for rebel groups from the public who likely feel the consequences of the attacks the most. If the public perceives rebel and opposition forces as the source of the country's turmoil, they may gather more cohesively behind Touadera. Government officials will almost certainly work to place primary responsibility for the turmoil on the rebel groups in effort to win support. Violence will likely escalate while both the current government and rebel groups attempt to gain control of the country.

[Alli McIntyre]

RUSSIA: Increased Protests Likely Damaging to Regional Control

Summary: In response to the arrest of political activist Alexei Navalny, Russian President Vladimir Putin faces an escalating rise of mass protests and civil unrest, potentially indicating a decline in his political control in Russia and surrounding countries.

Development: On 23 January, news of Navalny's arrest sparked one of the largest Russian protests in the recent decade, with an estimated 15,000 protestors in Moscow – resulting in the arrest of over 3,000 protestors. Similar protests rallying against Navalny's arrest took place throughout St. Petersburg, the Siberian city of Yakutsk, and the island city of Yuzhno-Sakhalinsk. In response to the protests and the rapid spread of protest related videos, Moscow ordered its media committee to censor protest videos. Media regulator, Federal Service for Supervision of Communications, Information Technology, and Mass Media (Roskomnadzor) warned the public of legal action for posting content related to the protests. Leaders in the European Union (EU) and Poland condemned the violation of human rights following the release of viral videos featuring police brutality. Navalny's poisoning attempt in 2020 coupled with the subsequent protests against Putin prompted Polish President Andrzej Duda to declare Russia as an untrustworthy country and urged the EU to step up sanctions on Russia.

Analysis: Putin's political power and reputation may weaken throughout the country due to widespread media footage of civil unrest despite media efforts of censorship. Further sanctions from the EU may increase due to reports of police brutality. Previously facing sanctions related to the Navalny poisoning case, more repercussions could prove financially harmful to Russia. Continual detention of Navalny and viral videos of human rights violations will almost certainly inflame protests nationwide and loosen Putin's regional control. The labeling of untrustworthy from Poland officials may persuade neighboring nations to shift away from Putin, further weakening his political control within Russia's allied nations.

[Damon Reyes]

TURKEY: Peace Talks Likely to Cause Gradual Changes in Greek-Turkish Relations

Summary: Turkey and Greece began talks after years of tension and conflict over resources within the Aegean (AS) and Mediterranean seas (MS). Although these talks might prove ineffective in easing tension in the short term, they may lay the groundwork for more amiable relations and diplomacy in the long term.

Development: On 25 January, Ankara and Athens began talks in hope of de-escalating tensions in the region. Ankara and Athens continue to disagree over oil and mineral rights in the AS and MS, as well as Greek military deployments on small islands near the Turkish mainland. Despite pressure from the European Union (EU) and NATO to reach reconciliation, Greece and Turkey disagree on the agenda of these talks.

Analysis: In the short term, Athens and Ankara will likely continue to dispute resource rights within the region without much fluxion in the high tension between the two. However, because of mutual involvement with NATO, Athens and Ankara may pursue rapprochement especially if Turkey hopes to join the EU. The involvement of both countries with these international bodies likely means they will have to come to terms and quell tensions in the region.

[Ethan Theobald]

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. Currently, 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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The views expressed in this publication are those of the authors, and do not represent the position Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University or the College of Security and Intelligence.

Alli McIntyre, a junior 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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