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LEBANON: Improved Relations with Gulf States Unlikely to End Economic Crisis

Summary: Minister of Foreign Affairs and Emigrants Abdallah Bou Habib stated that Beirut no longer acts as a launch pad to infringe on the affairs of the Gulf States. However, mending relations with the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) probably will not end its economic crisis.

Development: On 29 January, Habib announced that Lebanon would no longer act as a launch pad to violate the interests of Gulf Arab countries, according to *Aljazeera*. This comes after months of declining relations with Gulf countries after Information Minister George Kordahi's remarks over the Saudi-led war in Yemen sparked a diplomatic rift. The rift further rocked Lebanon's deteriorating economy as the exports GCC member countries make up a large percentage of Lebanon's GDP. Since 2019, Lebanon has faced one of the worst economic crises in world history as the Lebanese pound depreciated 95% to the dollar. Over three quarters of the nation lives under the poverty line with a compounding fuel and health crisis exacerbating these issues. The Lebanese parliament, which has not met since October 2021, has elections scheduled for May of this year. On 22 January, Kuwait's foreign minister Sheikh Ahmed Nasser Al Mohammed Al Sabah met with Lebanese Prime Minister Najib Mikati to begin efforts to restore trust in the first senior Gulf official visit since the rift sparked in October of 2021.

Analysis: While the relations between Beirut and GCC member countries may improve in the near term, this will likely do little to pull Lebanon out of its severe economic crisis. The Lebanese parliament will likely need to initiate major reforms along with an International Monetary Fund (IMF) injection to have any chance of economic redemption. However, due to lack of action from the Lebanese parliament, no reforms will likely occur ahead of May's elections. Without enacted reforms, the much-needed aid from the IMF will almost certainly not come through.

[Tim Fergus]

NORTH KOREA: Missile Tests Likely to Continue Facing Minimal Backlash

Summary: Pyongyang will likely continue testing missiles to display capabilities to concerned countries unlikely to take immediate action.

Development: On 30 January, Pyongyang conducted a firing test of the Hwasong-12 intermediate range ballistic missile (IRBM). Tokyo and Seoul first detected the launch with Pyongyang confirming on 31 January. This test marked the first successful firing test of a missile of that size since 2017 and the seventh test of the month. Pyongyang explained the precautions put in place ensured the safety of neighboring countries, but the capabilities displayed by the test caused an increase in concern, with both Tokyo and Seoul condemning the test.

Analysis: Pyongyang will likely continue testing IRBMs both as an intimidation tactic and to continue increasing proficiency with its weapons. While neighboring countries will almost certainly keep an eye on North Korea and its increasing capabilities, they will not likely act beyond condemning the tests until Pyongyang acts in a way that endangers another country. Concerned countries may increase posturing with military capabilities as a warning for North Korea, but conflict remains unlikely.

[Savannah Gallop]

HUNGARY: Non-Action Likely Despite EU and NATO Promises

Summary: Despite promises of repercussions from the European Union (EU) and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), Budapest will likely not take action against Moscow should it become increasingly aggressive towards Ukraine.

Development: On 1 February, Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban met with Russian President Vladimir Putin. At a press conference following the meeting, Orban stated that proposed sanctions against Russia would likely fail, that Moscow's claims of security concerns are reasonable, and that he did not believe Moscow would escalate the situation with Ukraine. Orban's remarks contradict statements from the EU and NATO regarding rising tensions between Moscow and Kyiv, which pledge to respond forcefully if Moscow invades. Hungary remains a member of both organizations, despite Orban's recent disagreements with the EU and claims of it overstepping its bounds, according to the *Seattle Times*. At the meeting, Orban also requested the extension of a 15-year gas contract with the Russian gas company Gazprom. Orban received domestic criticism over the meeting, with an alliance of political opponents calling the trip to Moscow "treasonous."

Analysis: Orban's statements after his meeting with Putin indicate that Hungary would likely not become involved in a response from the EU or NATO to a Russian invasion of Ukraine. In contradicting statements from the EU and NATO, Orban likely hopes to draw distinction between these organizations and Budapest. The request to extend the contract with Gazprom may factor into Orban's decision should the EU or NATO request members to respond. The economic ties with Moscow and tumultuous relations with the EU will probably make Budapest less likely to act strongly against Moscow. Orban likely hopes to fall back onto the gas contract as reasoning for potential non-action should criticism arise from international and domestic sources.

[Alli McIntyre]

MYANMAR: Coup Anniversary Strike Likely to Increase Military Retaliation

Summary: On the one-year anniversary of the military take-over, activists staged a “silent strike” against the military despite threats of further crackdown. This may lead to an increase in military public suppression techniques.

Development: On 1 February, Myanmar’s junta military government warned the public against participating in protests on the anniversary of the coup. Activists arranged a “silent strike” throughout 1 February, shutting down shops and staying at home. The junta announced those who strike may face legal charges, including seizures of their property. The military arrested a dozen other shop owners who closed their shops on Tuesday. In response to the staged strike, the military held festivals, military rallies, and cycle contests in Yangon and Mandalay. However, resistance fighters claimed to have directed bombings during the anniversary, targeting police stations and officer homes. One bombing included an explosion in Tachileik on a pro-government rally which killed two and injured 37 others.

Analysis: As a result of the “silent strike,” the junta government most likely will continue to crack down on any form of protests. The military, after dozens of arrests and seizures, will likely spark further unrest in urban areas and increase activist resistance. However, activists will almost certainly continue their deadly attacks on military rallies through the use of bombings. The junta government’s goals to settle tensions while hosting various leisure events in major cities remain probable but will likely face strong opposition.

[Damon Reyes]

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, serves as EE's faculty advisor.

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Alli McIntyre, 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. If you use material from this publication, you should attribute: Eagle Eye Intelligence Edition 397, a publication created by students at Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University in Prescott, Arizona.



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