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KAZAKHSTAN: Anti-Russian Sanctions Likely to Impact Kazakh Economy

Summary: Nur-Sultan implemented new measures to maintain economic control amid the Russia-Ukraine conflict and anti-Russian sanctions. This could lead to new trade alliances, which will likely help push economic development in the region.

Development: On 2 March, Kazakh Prime Minister Alikhan Smailov signed a decree creating an office in charge of carrying out anti-crisis measures addressing the potential impact of the country's economy due to anti-Russian sanctions. Recent sanctions include the removal of Russian banks from SWIFT, leaving it disconnected from the international financial system and harming its ability to operate globally. Russia is the main trade and economic partner of Kazakhstan, and its companies are top investors in the Kazakh economy, producing the highest trade turnover rates in Kazakhstan since 2018, according to the Central Asian Bureau for Analytic Reporting. The office plans to ensure financial market stability in Kazakhstan by maintaining inflation control and implementing the Tenge Deposit Protection Program, providing 10 percent accrual on household deposits throughout the country, according to Astana Times.

Analysis: The new office implemented by Smailov may help to keep the Kazakh economy from failing. However, the anti-Russian sanctions could prove beneficial to Kazakhstan in terms of establishing new trade alliances, which could support employment and the creation of new jobs, which the country desperately needs. New high-value trade alliances could likely progress economic development for Nur-Sultan.

[Maggie Dostal]

CUBA: Social Unrest Likely to Decrease Amid United Nations Ruling of Russian Conflict

Summary: Cubans continue to protest the Russian--Ukraine conflict, despite Cuba's strong ties and history with Russia. Cuba voting against Russia during a United Nations (UN) assembly will likely decrease social tensions but worsen the economic crisis.

Development: On 2 March, the UN held a general assembly discussing the demands of ending the Russian offensive attacks in Kyiv, in which Havana voted against Moscow. However, days earlier, Havana blamed the Western actors and NATO for the Russian aggression in Kyiv, without condemning Moscow and its use of propaganda. Despite recent opposition, Havana remains economically dependent on Moscow and the Russian banking sector. This dependence has created a strong alliance between Moscow and Havana. However, Cubans protested the Russian attack on Kyiv, which led to the arrest of citizens. Despite Moscow's increasing efforts to keep Havana as a strong ally, Havana refuses to back the Russian-driven conflict.

Analysis: The Cuban representative to the UN voting against the support of Moscow will likely diminish protests against the war in Havana. Cuban citizens will likely show more support toward the political decision of standing against Moscow and the social climate of Havana will likely stabilize. However, the Cuban economy will likely continue to fall. Failure to support Moscow could lead to further political tensions and economic ramifications. The continued downfall of the economy may lead to later protests over the living conditions of Cubans.

[Isabella Beiler]

RUSSIA: Ukraine Invasion Likely to End in Late March

Summary: Defeat by the end of March seems likely for official Ukrainian forces if the situation does not radically change. Even if the situation changes, official conflict in Ukraine will probably finish by the end of the month.

Development: On 2 March, Moscow reported gaining control over Kherson, a city of about 300,000 people and less than 58 miles away from the Crimean border. Kerson's government disputed the claim, stating that the Russian Army surrounded them, but they still held control of the city. Reports from across Ukraine show the invasion seems slower than the initial strikes. In the face of steep losses by the Russian Army, Russian protests of the invasion show signs of growing support. Even some Russian oligarchs have voiced their support for Ukraine, such as Mikhail Freedman, one of the wealthiest men in Russia. Meanwhile the bombardment of Ukrainian civilian centers and historic sites continues to intensify. In response, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy refuses to attend peace talks until the bombardment ends.

Analysis: Despite the slowdown, Ukraine will probably not succeed in fully repelling the Russian Army. As it stands, Russian forces will probably destroy all official resistance in Ukraine and begin annexing it. Even if the situation changes, conflict will probably finish by the end of March. In the highly unlikely case that Moscow stops the bombardment and makes reasonable demands of Ukraine, the war may end in Ukraine's survival at the cost of territory. The most likely scenario in which Ukraine survives requires direct foreign intervention, which seems moderately unlikely due to threats from Moscow and other nations' needs for self-defense. Regardless of which outcome occurs, unofficial Ukrainian resistance will almost certainly persist in occupied regions of Ukraine.

[Jason Estrada]

IRAN: Nuclear Deal in Play Likely In Efforts to Balance Oil Prices

Summary: The recent Iranian nuclear deal talks could possibly relieve oil prices in countries with sanctions against Moscow. A nuclear deal allowing more oil in circulation would likely help global markets.

Development: On 28 February, Iranian diplomats gathered in Vienna to discuss a nuclear deal. After the Russian invasion of Ukraine, high Russian-oil-importing countries like Canada placed sanctions on Russian oil. When NATO countries placed more sanctions on Russia, oil prices increased exponentially throughout the global economy. Tehran produces a little over four million barrels of oil per day, while Moscow produces 11 million barrels per day. Tehran is closing in on a new nuclear deal with Western powers along with Beijing, despite Beijing buying record amounts of oil from Tehran in 2022.

Analysis: If a nuclear deal goes through with Iran and Western powers, oil prices will most likely moderate with the availability of more oil in the global markets. In reports of Moscow's recent decisions and its preparation for the future, Moscow will likely not retreat from Ukraine, which will certainly continue the rise in oil prices. Beijing's recent immense purchases of oil from Tehran may further stress the global oil market due to the sudden decrease.

[Tucker Jones]

CHINA: Newly Discovered Malware Could Compromise Southeast Asian Governments

Summary: The recent discovery of a decade-old Chinese hacking tool could imply dangerous security risks for countries across Southeast Asia which may embolden Beijing.

Development: On 28 February, the US cybersecurity firm Symantec announced the discovery of a Chinese backdoor hacking tool called Daxin, according to the South China Morning Post. Symantec reports that the malware remained hidden from public attention for over a decade, describing it as “highly sophisticated” in comparison to previously discovered malware. The firm also reports that Daxin’s capabilities included the ability to stay hidden among normal network traffic and transmit vital information from infected systems. Moreover, once a computer becomes infected with the malware, a hacker can perform attacks from anywhere in the world. Officials noted that Daxin’s main targets of interest included high-level government agencies located in Asia and Africa, such as Ministries of Justice and key/critical infrastructure. The Chinese-linked malware saw numerous successful attacks since its creation with the most recent attacks occurring in November 2021, according to Symantec. Many international governments frequently identify Chinese actors as the source behind major security breaches. In southeast Asia, top targets include top targets like Vietnam, Malaysia, Indonesia, and others (as well as Taiwan due to its political significance to Beijing). Reports state that Beijing regularly uses non-state sponsored groups to avoid the blame for conducting cyber-attacks. Beijing refuses to comment on the Daxin’s discovery and does not claim any responsibility for its creation.

Analysis: The discovery of the Daxin malware could present very serious implications for the security of numerous Southeast Asian governments. Since the malware took years to detect, Chinese actors could have already stolen vast amounts of confidential data from these countries, heavily undermining critical infrastructure. Considering the malware’s ability to stay undetected, the possibility remains that other malware with similar capabilities could exist. This means Chinese actors may continue obtaining sensitive government data in secret, which can include the military capabilities of countries such as Taiwan (having many key targets such as their missile defense system). This could then give an edge to Beijing both economically and militarily, expanding its influence within the region.

[Noah Steele]

RUSSIA: Hactivist Activity Likely to Reduce Capabilities of Moscow

Summary: Anonymous hactivist group sent DDoS attacks to shut down communication of Moscow and State-run media of the public will likely deny the ability to control media access in Russia and their allied countries.

Development: On 24 February, the Anonymous Twitter account announced that the group declared cyber-war against Moscow. Anonymous committed DDoS attacks on Russian media outlets and government websites, shutting them down intermittently over the next week, according to Euro News. The DDoS attacks attempts to breach and leak Moscow's military secrets proved successful, according to Cyber News. Anonymous claimed responsibility for over 300 incidents.

Analysis: The actions of Anonymous will likely diminish the communication abilities of Moscow and the state-run media outlets as well as disclose its most closely guarded secrets. These attacks probably intend to force Moscow to end its invasion of Ukraine. Attacks of this nature seem likely to escalate as the war continues.

[Stephen Levy]

NORTH KOREA: Western Powers' Threats Likely Strengthen Alliance

Summary: Supreme Leader Kim Jong Un congratulated President Xi Jinping on the success of the 2022 Beijing Olympics and will likely pledge to strengthen ties with Beijing to face the “hostile policies” and “threats” from other countries.

Development: On 20 February, after the 2022 Winter Olympics officially ended, Kim wrote a letter to President Xi commending him on his leadership, emphasizing Beijing’s resiliency throughout the “unprecedentedly severe health crisis and the hostile forces’ maneuvers” and saying that Xi’s leadership will make history. Xi wrote back affirming friendship and alliance with Pyongyang under a “new situation.” Beijing and Pyongyang forged the Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation and Mutual Assistance on 11 July 1961, and renewed it on 11 July 2021.

Analysis: Pyongyang’s strengthened alliance with Beijing could insinuate joint military-technology developments to neutralize western threats and policies. Amidst the Kyiv and Moscow conflict, Pyongyang could use this opportunity to resume long-range missile testing with Beijing’s aid.

[Sydney Brooks]

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.

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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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 402, a publication created by students at Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University in Prescott, Arizona.



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