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Authors

Savannah Gallop
Austin Perez
Michael Tokos
Sebastien Bragg
Damon Reyes
Amalie Hansen
Tim Fergus



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RUSSIA: Military Drills with Beijing Likely to Strengthen Ties and Intimidation

Summary: Moscow almost certainly intends its week-long military exercises to bolster relations with Beijing and display military capabilities.

Development: On 2 September, reports stated that Russian President Vladimir Putin will attend the week-long military exercises in Vostok. The drills involve 50,000 weapons units, 140 aircraft, and 60 warships in Russia's Far East and the Sea of Japan. While participants also include several countries such as Mongolia, Laos, India, Nicaragua, and Syria, analysts highlight the importance of Beijing's presence to bolster the strategic partnership between Moscow and Beijing. Moscow and Beijing plan to hold joint operation exercises in the Sea of Japan to protect sea communications. Beijing officials stated Beijing intends to bolster strategic cooperation with participating nations and improve threat response time with its involvement.

Analysis: Moscow and Beijing's involvement in the Vostok military drills will almost certainly result in strengthened military ties and intimidation towards countries siding with Ukraine and Taiwan. Moscow is almost certainly displaying Russian weaponry in these exercises to damage Ukrainian morale and flaunt military prowess to opposing nations. Moscow's joint operations with Beijing in the Sea of Japan will likely resemble Beijing's Taiwan invasion drills and will likely take place again in the South China Sea in future drills. New Delhi's representation in Vostok could indicate resolving tensions with Beijing over the disputed territory at the Line of Actual Control.

[Savannah Gallop]

RUSSIA: Nord Stream 1 Gas Pipeline Shutdown Likely Strains Fuel Supply

Summary: Russia's largest natural gas provider, Gazprom, maintains its refusal to reopen the Nord Stream 1 pipeline after authorities reportedly found a gas leak. European nations will likely continue to experience insufficient amounts of fuel supply as an act of retaliation from Moscow for sanctions.

Development: On 2 September, Gazprom failed to meet the deadline for gas to resume flowing through the Nord Stream 1 pipeline into Lubmin, Germany, following a three-day halt brought on by maintenance. The state-controlled firm stated that due to safety restraints regarding a possible leak and pending repairs in one of the pipe's turbines, Gazprom would not reactivate the pipeline. No new timeline exists for fuel to resume flowing. Following the invasion of Ukraine by the Russian Federation, the European Union, and many other nations quickly placed retaliatory sanctions on Moscow. Moscow claims that its refusal to continue delivery of fuel does not indicate any attempts to use natural gas as an economic weapon or to create scarcity in the market.

Analysis: Moscow probably did intend to cut off natural gas to Europe likely as a reprisal move. Considering the recent increase of natural gas purchasing by Beijing and New Delhi, the Russian economic strategy likely aims to pressure the European Union, specifically Germany, to restrict natural gas due to alleged mechanical failures. This will likely continue on and off until European and Western nations lift sanctions against Moscow.

[Austin Perez]

BRAZIL: Escalation of Fires in Amazon Rainforest Likely Incentivizes Candidates

Summary: The continued droughts and recent growth of wildfires in Brazil's Amazon rainforest will most likely act as a major point of contention among political candidates with differing views on environmental protection.

Development: On 31 August, government data revealed the recent fires in the Amazon surpassed the previous record highs for August since 2010, according to Reuters. This data gathered by the Brazilian National Institute for Space Research displayed 31,513 fire alerts in the Amazon via satellite. This recent surge remains a point of contention among leading candidates in the October election. Since entering office in 2019, Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro focused on scaling back environmental laws in favor of loggers and ranchers clearing more of the Amazon. Shortly after taking office, Bolsonaro signed an executive order transferring the regulation and creation of new indigenous reserves to the agriculture ministry. Indigenous leaders disapproved of this motion, claiming Bolsonaro focused on farming while deforestation increased. Current frontrunner, leftist former President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva pledged tougher protection of the Amazon, while critiquing incumbent Bolsonaro. Lula remains ahead of Bolsonaro in the polls with 45 percent of voter support compared to only 32 percent in favor of Bolsonaro.

Analysis: With rising deforestation and the election growing closer, both candidates will most likely announce plans for environmental protection in an effort to win voters. Although Bolsonaro previously scaled back environmental protections to focus more on farming and ranching, he will most likely change policy to help promote his reelection campaign and compete with Lula's proposed environmental action. With added environmental pressure from the current fires and deforestation, voters will likely expect proper environmental action from both candidates.

[Michael Tokos]

JAPAN: Tourists Unlikely to Return to Previous Heights with Eased Travel Restrictions

Summary: Tokyo's new, softened border restrictions seem unlikely to attract tourists to visit the country at levels seen in 2019, further debilitating the weakened tourism industry.

Development: On 31 August, Prime Minister Fumio Kishida announced an initiative to eliminate the pre-entry vaccine tests for triple-vaccinated tourists and raise the daily limit of foreign travelers entering the country to 50,000 while Tokyo experiences its seventh COVID-19 wave. These new guidelines will start on 7 September, replacing the current 20,000 limits on foreigners entering the country on state-organized tours. The 32 million international visitors entering the nation in 2019 dropped to a quarter million in 2021. Tokyo placed an outright ban on inbound tourists in April 2020 that remained unchanged until restrictions eased starting in January 2022. Tourism spending within this period fell 85% in 2021 from the \$36 billion spent in 2019.

Analysis: International travel remains highly unlikely to return to pre-COVID levels within the next few years despite Kishida's policies easing travel restrictions. Tokyo's strict travel policies almost certainly deter international and domestic travel, with tourists unable to experience anything outside the guidelines of its specifically selected tours. Travel restrictions most likely will continue to lessen even if Tokyo experiences another COVID-19 outbreak. Domestic travel restrictions will probably remain stricter in comparison to incoming international travel.

[Sebastien Bragg]

IRAQ: Sadrist Political Leader Withdrawing Likely to Increase Political Turmoil

Summary: The resignation of a major political leader sparked huge political unrest as dozens of protesters stormed the presidential palace. This will almost certainly increase violence and political turmoil.

Development: On 29 August, influential political party leader Muqtada al-Sadr resigned from office. The announcement came amid Iraqi's 10-month political crisis with supporters from each party calling for a new government or re-election. Al-Sadr announced his resignation along with his own political party members within parliament, stating that all parties and the parliament must give up their positions to resolve the ongoing political crisis without Iran-backed Shia groups. After his resignation, dozens of al-Sadr's supporters stormed Iraq's presidential palace, pulling down cement barriers and gates in protest. Al-Sadr's supporters faced heavy resistance from rival political supporters and security forces. Over 30 people died in the violence with another 700 wounded within the Green Zone with the use of live ammunition and tear gas. The day after, al-Sadr ordered his supporters to stop the protest, quickly ending the fighting. Moreover, Bagdad reports clashes between al-Sadr's supporters and the Hashd al-Shaabi, former Tehran-backed paramilitaries exchanging machine gun fire.

Analysis: As a result of the resignation within parliament, al-Sadr's strong influence will likely increase further political turmoil. Violence on 29 August likely foreshadows future conflicts to occur if al-Sadr's movement does not secure a new government. With the fighting escalating between Tehran-backed paramilitaries, al-Sadr likely aims to fight against foreign influences within Iraq. Without a proper government in place, other political movements will likely follow al-Sadr's statement of resigning. However, other al-Sadr's rivals most certainly will attempt to control the government. Since the political crisis concurred over 10 months, Al-Sadr's influence could certainly spark tensions in a violent civil war.

[Damon Reyes]

PORTUGAL: Ransomware Leak Likely to Cause a Decrease in Airline Customer Base

Summary: Air Portugal suffered a Ragnar Locker ransomware cyber-attack, leading to a possible decrease in customer base as the airline failed to protect customer data with the needed security measures.

Development: On 25 August, the Ragnar Locker ransomware group claimed airline Air Portugal as their newest victim. No personal data appear compromised, according to officials. On 31 August, Ragnar Locker counteracted this statement with an upload of a shared document containing names, dates of birth, emails, and addresses. Air Portugal is still experiencing some instability with their airline app, website, and miles program as an aftermath of the attack. Ragnar Locker first appeared in December 2019 and have since contributed to multiple cyber-attacks across the globe.

Analysis: As a result of the cyber-attack, Air Portugal will likely see a decrease in their loyal customers as anxieties around personal security seem likely to surface. Many customers may feel unnerved by the leakage of their private information, making it more likely for them to use a different airline for their future travels. Since Ragnar has attacked two different global companies in the past, it remains likely it will continue to target other global companies.

[Amalie Hansen]

ETHIOPIA: War and Humanitarian Crisis Unlikely to Spur International Pressure

Summary: Renewed fighting in Ethiopia's Tigray region shattered hopes of resolution and aid in the ongoing humanitarian crisis since the start of the conflict in November 2020. Appropriate international pressure to resolve the crisis seems unlikely.

Development: On 24 August, fighting resumed in Ethiopia's Tigray region, breaking a five-month ceasefire, according to Reuters. The country and its neighbors remain locked in a conflict started in November 2020, when Tigray People's Liberation Front seized military bases across the region. Due to the prolonged struggle, the resulting humanitarian crisis continues to act as leverage for Addis Ababa to pressure the region into negotiations by cutting off basic services such as banking and telecommunication. The conflict remains one of the worst humanitarian crises on Earth due to the fighting, intense drought choking the region, and the global food supply chain crisis with a large stake in the Ukraine-Russia conflict. The conflict prompts the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) to take action, yet many still anticipate a response. In the Tigray region alone, food insecurity affects 2.4 million people and 29% of children remain malnourished with numbers rising, according to the Associated Press.

Analysis: International pressure from the UNSC and the African Union will unlikely present itself with the necessary force to pressure Addis Ababa into lifting the restrictions blocking humanitarian aid for the region. Pressure to reinstate basic services such as telecommunication would likely improve the flow of humanitarian supplies, though the wider supply chain crisis will probably stall any significant improvement to the situation. The world will unlikely turn its attention to the crisis until the wider issues surrounding the global food supply chain resolve. The lack of attention from elected members in the African Union probably represents the grim reality for the future of Ethiopia's crisis.

[Tim Fergus]

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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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 Business, Security, and Intelligence.

Savannah Gallop, 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. If you use material from this publication, you should attribute: Eagle Eye Intelligence Edition 409, a publication created by students at Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University in Prescott, Arizona.



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Eagle Eye Intelligence
3700 Willow Creek Rd.
Prescott, AZ 86301
eagleeyeintel.com