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CHINA: Election Results Could Escalate Tensions in the South China Sea

Summary: China's President Xi Jinping's third term could lead to economic coercions with territories in the South China Sea (SCS).

Development: On 23 October, Xi secured a third term in office. Xi announced six loyalists to join the Politburo Standing Committee who will support him in his decision-making, according to *CNN*. Beijing continues to assert its maritime strength in 90 percent of its territory in the SCS. Beijing could use economic coercion or military force to influence smaller states in the sea, according to *Radio Free Asia*. In the past decade, Beijing has deployed anti-ship cruise missiles to protect its territories in the area, according to *Channel News Asia*. The waters contain fishing, oil, and natural gas reserves and account for approximately one-third of the global maritime trade, according to *Anadolu Agency*.

Analysis: Xi's re-election will probably allow him to expand his industrial interests in the SCS by influencing weaker territories. If Beijing develops influential power over smaller states in the area, Beijing could further dominate the sea's transport. Beijing controlling much of the sea may cause instability for the countries that rely on maritime commerce. Shifting maritime routes will most likely cause trade costs to rise and may damage the economy of the countries relying on the SCS.

[Lauren Estrada]

MOROCCO: Belgian Support Will Likely Bring Credibility to Autonomy Plan

Summary: The recently established energy-neutral Belgian Embassy in Rabat will likely add credibility to Rabat's Autonomy Plan for Western Sahara.

Development: On 20 October, Belgium's Minister of Foreign Affairs Hadja Lahbib officially opened the new Belgian Embassy in Rabat. The embassy recently completed construction that began in 2018. Entirely energy-neutral, the embassy generates its electricity completely off-grid. The structure reflects Brussels' and Rabat's shared vision for a more energy-sustainable world. During Lahbib's visit, Brussels established its support for Rabat's Autonomy Plan for Western Sahara. The Autonomy Plan, presented in 2007, proposes that Western Sahara will run its government under Moroccan sovereignty. Rabat will control Western Sahara's defenses and foreign affairs, but Western Sahara will retain control of other government affairs. Several countries like Germany, Spain, and France have declared their support for the Autonomy Plan in the past decade. The Autonomy Plan caused a significant dispute between Morocco's neighboring country Algeria. Algiers directly calls for the disputed territory of Western Sahara to have its independence in its entirety, contrary to Rabat.

Analysis: Although Belgium remains only one of many countries to support Rabat's Autonomy Plan for Western Sahara, its official statement of support could play a critical role in establishing the Autonomy Plan. Influenced by the announcement, Algiers may reconsider its position on the Autonomy Plan and may discuss the plan openly with Rabat at the upcoming Arab League Summit. Algiers will likely not entirely give up its stance on the long-term issue, but it may give the Plan more consideration than before with Brussel's newly established support.

[Rion Stevens]

UKRAINE: Major Counter-offensive Likely to Cripple Russian Forces

Summary: Ukrainian Armed Forces gathering around Kherson likely signals Kyiv's plan to reclaim the city. Russian Armed Forces continue moving personnel out of the city probably in preparation for the overwhelming Ukrainian strength.

Development: On 20 October, the Russian Armed Forces started moving military equipment from the west to east bank of the Dnipro River, anticipating a major buildup of Ukrainian forces. Russian intelligence shows Ukrainian forces outnumbering Russian forces four to one. Overwhelming firepower from the West includes HIMARS, M777 Howitzers, AN/TRQ-37 counter artillery, and training from the West. To stabilize the front, Moscow sent approximately 2,000 mobilized troops. The accuracy of attack ordinances on bridges across the Dnipro River continues to knock out supply in and out of the Kherson region.

Analysis: The Ukrainian forces gathering around Kherson likely indicate an imminent offensive. Ukrainian forces may push through Russian lines swiftly with the help of western technology. The Russian Armed Forces will likely remove military and occupation elements from the west bank to the east bank in anticipation of the counter-offensive. Russian forces most likely learned from their failures during its northern retreat and the lack of bridges in the region probably forced them to retreat sooner.

[Darren Gray]

LEBANON: Presidential Election Likely Crucial to Beirut's Stability

Summary: The current Lebanese president's term ends on 31 October. Should parliament not fill the position, it will likely further destabilize the country.

Development: On 20 October, the Lebanese Parliament failed for the second time to elect a new president. The presidency term for Michel Aoun ends on 31 October. After the May elections, the parliament voted equally in three ways, showing no political alliance from the required two to three quorums, the 86 votes needed to fill the presidency. Parliament plans to meet for a third time on 24 October to vote on the current candidates. If the first session fails to elect a president, the following session only requires a majority of 65 votes. Michel Mouawad, an anti-Hezbollah candidate, currently holds the most votes at 42. This makes Mouawad the closest candidate with the next contender at one vote compared to the others holding none. Hezbollah has spoken out and claimed they "will not allow and will not accept" a candidate that trusts in America.

Analysis: Lebanon will likely fall into a deeper crisis if parliament does not fill the president's seat. As Mouawad remains the only candidate to receive real votes, this will likely lead to parliament not filling the seat due to Hezbollah intimidation. Should these 20 ministers vacate their positions, Lebanon would likely fail as a state because the president fills these positions.

[Tucker Jones]

[SYRIA: Moscow's Military Power Shift May Raise Defense Concerns](#)

Summary: Moscow's movement of troops and equipment out of Damascus may leave Syrian President Bashar al-Assad with limited options in the campaign trail to deny Jerusalem's influence along the border.

Development: On 19 October, Moscow pulled back 1,200 troops and its Air Defense Artillery Battery of S-300 missiles from Damascus to reportedly shift combat power towards its efforts in Kyiv, according to *The Times of Israel*. Israeli firm ImageSat International confirmed the movement by showing satellite images of the S-300s leaving a port in Tartus and arriving in a Russian port in Crimea. The equipment consistently denied Israeli freedom of maneuver in airspace along the Syrian-Israeli border since it arrived in 2018. On 20 October in Damascus, Assad concluded a multi-day military conference on the ongoing refugee crisis with Moscow r, according to *Syrian Times*. An unknown number of Russian commanders transferred from Damascus to Moscow, according to *i24 News*.

Analysis: Damascus may undergo a severe defense crisis in the air with the loss of Russian equipment to deter Jerusalem. The military conference in Damascus likely involved a discussion of the removal of troops and equipment in lieu of refugees. Assad likely petitioned against the move, invoking the implications on the border. Damascus will likely attempt to bolster its border ground positions to compensate for the loss of the S-300s. Jerusalem probably will use the new capability gap to increase air power along the border to deter Damascus from reinforcing its ground positions with light anti-aircraft weapons. Jerusalem may also conduct a preemptive offensive attack on key military positions.

[Tim Sharpe]

NORTH KOREA: Use of Nuclear Arsenal Likely to Pressure UN for Recognition

Summary: Pyongyang's ongoing escalation of military training drills, in violation of the United Nations Security Council's (UNSC) resolutions, may serve as a tactic to gain recognition from the UN as a legitimate nuclear state and manipulate it to lift economic sanctions.

Development: On 19 October, Pyongyang fired 100 more missiles into the ocean in response to Seoul's military drills. This comes after further escalation in Pyongyang's ongoing military training initiatives throughout 2022. The UNSC forbids Pyongyang from conducting nuclear and ballistic missile testing. Pyongyang already violated the resolution earlier this month when it chose to conduct testing over Japanese airspace.

Analysis: Pyongyang most likely wants the UN to reduce the resolutions and sanctions and may use these violent methods to that end. Supreme Leader Kim Jong Un may also use these aggressive, nonverbal tactics to create fear. Kim likely thinks fear of retaliation would reduce the risk of Seoul attacking and may provide Pyongyang recognition as a legitimate nuclear state. Pyongyang might then use this recognition as a bargaining tool for reduced or lifted economic sanctions from Seoul and the UN.

[Abby Slease]

YEMEN: Creation of New Negotiating Team Likely to Shift Public Opinion

Summary: The Republic of Yemen revealed a new group of negotiators to aid in peace talks with the Ansar Allah movement. The positive step towards an agreement may shift public opinion to favor the government, potentially angering the insurrectionist group.

Development: On 19 October, the Saudi Arabian-backed Republic of Yemen announced the creation of a new negotiating team tasked with beginning discussions of peace with the Ansar Allah movement (Houthis). The expiration of the past peace treaty led to the need for a new assembly. The team includes many negotiators who participated in previous meetings with the Houthis, according to *Arab News*. The revelation of the group by the Yemeni government follows an escalation of attacks leading to a worsening humanitarian crisis.

Analysis: The Yemeni government's disclosure of the new negotiating team will likely shift public opinion to greater favor of the government opposed to the Houthis. The government is offering a solution which means civilians may more willingly resist the Houthi advances. The increasing number of deaths in Yemen's growing humanitarian crisis may push this to happen as the public longs for peace. The Republic likely needs the people's support to continue preventing the insurrection, and the attempts of negotiation could aid in gaining the people's trust. The shift may anger the Houthis to continue to ignore attempted deals made by the government, which could continue to build tensions.

[Abigail Best]

RUSSIA: Martial Law and Economic Mobilization Decree May Cause Economic Harm

Summary: Moscow introduced martial law and economic mobilization of several territories. The decree will likely result in regional leaders seizing local business operations and relocating citizens, likely further damaging the economy.

Development: On 19 October, Moscow signed a decree introducing martial law in Kherson, Zaporizhzhia, Donetsk, and Luhansk as well as economic mobilization in Crimea, Krasnodar Krai, Belgorod, Bryansk, Voronezh, Kursk, Rostov, and Sevastopol. Depending on local interpretations by regional leaders, Moscow's decree introduces martial law across the whole of Russia, according to Russian expert Mark Galeotti in *The Spectator*. Moscow wants to restrict the flow of traffic and movement into and inside the eight regions as well as secure transportation, communication, and energy facilities while converting printing centers, computing centers, and automated systems into facilities capable of aiding the war effort.

Analysis: By introducing economic mobilization and martial law, Moscow may see regional leaders using the clauses within the decree to arrest business owners or seize control of business operations, which potentially could harm the economy. This could act as an attempt to control subversive printing and news organizations. Moscow's decree will most likely lead to further economic downfall as leaders relocate citizens and seize business operations to convert them into war-aiding operations.

[Katie Larson]

CHINA: State Hackers Target Organizations in Hong Kong and Sri Lanka

Summary: The Chinese hacker group Winnti, which often works on behalf of Beijing, likely spies on organizations in Hong Kong and now Sri Lanka to steal technological secrets.

Development: On 18 October, global news sources reported on a group of hackers called Winnti spying on Hong Kong and Sri Lanka in an ongoing campaign called Operation CuckooBees. In the past, Winnti employed various methods to attack businesses and government organizations in Hong Kong on behalf of Beijing, and it continues such attacks. Winnti often uses a backdoor or some other entry point to gain access to commit command and control attacks on computers in its target organizations. Winnti typically uses phishing and spear-phishing attacks to install Spyder Loader, the current malware used by Winnti to gain access to computers in organizations in Hong Kong, onto targeted computers. Spyder Loader creates file mapping and copies records into that the files and decrypts them. Winnti then shares these files with Beijing for use however it sees fit. Formerly, Winnti mainly stuck to targeting Hong Kong, but recent reports state that it targeted government entities in Sri Lanka using a new backdoor called DBoxAgent. These new reports claim Winnti uses DBoxAgent to gather information on Colombo for Beijing by committing command and control attacks and stealing information in a similar fashion to its attacks on Hong Kong.

Analysis: The Chinese state-sponsored hacker group Winnti likely steals information from Hong Kong and Sri Lanka on behalf of Beijing so it can use the information to create new technology using stolen intellectual property. Beijing most likely sponsors Winnti to commit these attacks due to the high potential gain on for Beijing's technological advancement. The targeted countries will most likely increase their cyber security and train employees better on avoiding social engineering attacks. Winnti will probably continue to spy on other countries for Beijing.

[Brandon Hammer]

NETHERLANDS: Refugee Surge Likely to Reverse Schengen Veto

Summary: The increase in refugees resulting from the Russian war in Ukraine will likely pressure Amsterdam to allow Bucharest and Sofia into the Schengen Area.

Development: On 18 October, the European Parliament adopted a resolution calling for the admittance of Bucharest and Sofia into the Schengen Area, consisting of 26 countries with no border restrictions. Amsterdam opposes bringing Bucharest and Sofia into Schengen due to rampant, internal political corruption. Despite the corruption, Bucharest and Sofia possess all the technical requirements to join Schengen and gained the support of other Schengen countries like Berlin, Prague, and Paris. As it stands, Ukrainian and Russian refugees are fleeing from the conflict. On 16 October, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees Filippo Grandi reported 6,947,301 refugees crossed the border from Ukraine to Poland, 1,589,558 refugees crossed the border from Ukraine to Hungary, and 1,391,826 refugees crossed the border from Ukraine to Romania.

Analysis: The influx of refugees will most likely pressure Amsterdam to allow Bucharest and Sofia into the Schengen Area, allowing easier migration and transportation of refugees. The competitive seaports and Bucharest's corruption likely acts as the primary reason for Amsterdam's constant vetoes of Bucharest and Sofia's integration.

[Jake S. Solomovici]

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



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