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LEBANON: Record Low Economy and Loss of UN Vote Likely to Speed Up Elections

Summary: The loss in value of the Lebanese Pound, UN vote losses, and continued vacancy in the president's position may induce urgency in the Lebanese Parliament to fill a three-month presidential vacancy.

Development: On 25 January, Lebanon's economy reached a record low in counting. Lebanon lost its UN General Assembly vote on 17 January for the second time in three years due to Beirut needing to pay back UN contributions. The Lebanese presidency remains vacant, continuing its three-month trend, and Hezbollah and its allies are not allowing candidates besides its own to fill the vacancy. The Lebanese Parliament conducted 11 parliament meetings to choose a president, resulting in no quantitative change in votes since the first sessions. The Free Patriotic Movement (FPM) has not endorsed Hezbollah's top candidate Suleiman Frangieh, despite being its most prominent parliamentary ally. The FPM is endorsing only its party's candidates, splitting the Shiite-Christian parliamentary duo.

Analysis: With the loss of the UN vote and the record-low economy, the Lebanese Parliamentary members who frequently cast blank ballots will likely start shifting priorities and voting for a president due to the long vacancy and recent events. Hezbollah will likely move to a more defensive, possibly violent, stance if they feel the undecided parliament members are focusing on filling the seat over pleasing Hezbollah. If FPM's candidate is not endorsed, the FPM may not favor the relationship it has with Hezbollah and its candidate as a roadblock. This controversy may move one of the largest, most prominent parties in Parliament away from Hezbollah's reach. Hezbollah may see this blow to its influence as something threatening enough to invoke the other power methods they have, which could likely lead to domestic, sectarian violence to show force.

[Tucker Jones]

BURKINA FASO: Troop Removal Almost Certainly Increases Insurgent Violence

Summary: Ouagadougou's end to its military accord with Paris likely leaves Burkina Faso open for insurgents to cause violence and seize territory.

Development: On 21 January, Ouagadougou ended a military accord with Paris. The two governments established the accord in 2018 to allow the French troops to combat groups like al Qaeda and Islamic State that threatened Burkina Faso's territory within its borders. Paris reportedly has over 400 special forces in Burkina Faso that must leave within one month, according to Reuters. Ouagadougou ended the accord so the country could fight for itself. Bamako already took action to remove ineffective foreign troops from its borders. The violence spilling into Burkina Faso from Mali carried anti-French sentiments by Burkinabes due to ineffectiveness within Burkina Faso as well, according to Aljazeera.

Analysis: Insurgent groups will likely take advantage of decreased military resources in Burkina Faso to capture territories and gain power. Although public approval of the troops continued to fall, their presence in the area almost certainly dissuaded insurgent attacks. The removal of French forces may inspire patriotism within Burkinabes to join the Burkina Faso Armed Forces and fight against threats to their country. If French troops stay within the country longer than their deadline, public outrage will almost certainly increase, and protests will likely turn violent.

[Savannah Gallop]

CHINA: Population Decrease to Likely Cause Global Economic Decline

Summary: Recent findings show Beijing's population continues to decrease as the death rate exceeds the birth rate, most likely causing damage to the world economy.

Development: On 20 January, recent reports revealed Beijing's overall population significantly dropped for the first time in six decades. Due to multiple factors, including heavy SARS-CoV-2 restrictions, SARS-CoV-2 deaths, and weak socioeconomic statuses, individuals struggle to maintain a stable life. In response, local governments reduced taxes, offered longer maternity leave, and housing subsidies, according to *Reuters*. Chinese President Xi Jinping stated he would support such measures, however, insufficient efforts prevailed. Search engine trends regarding birth decreased while assisted living homes increased. With this trend, fewer people remain available for Beijing's workforce, slowing the economy. In return, its manufacturing force decreases, resulting in higher manufacturing costs, leading to higher prices and inflation in the West and Europe, according to *Time Magazine*. Beijing also suffered from its worst economic performance in almost half a century.

Analysis: While China continues to produce fewer children each year, it faces the issue of possibly affecting the world economy extensively. Households becoming increasingly less stable due to SARS-CoV-2 will likely enhance hesitations regarding reproduction. With little effort to support women during birth, more may decide to not have children. Citizens lacking support and stability lead to not having children, most likely causing future ailments to the Beijing economy due to lack of manpower. Thus, while China's economy falls, nations relying on its manufacturing will most likely depreciate as well.

[Tatum Leyvas]

IRAN: Purchase of Sukhoi-35 Fighters Likely to Herald More Russian Military Imports

Summary: Tehran purchased an unknown number of Sukhoi Su-35 fighter jets, alongside other military equipment from Moscow. Tehran likely plans to increase the technological prowess of its air forces (manned and unmanned) while growing stronger relations with Moscow.

Development: On 15 January, Tehran received a number of Russian Sukhoi Su-35 fighter jets by March as part of a military order that includes defense systems, missiles, and helicopters, according to *Tasnim News Agency*. The purchase package includes the JSC Sukhoi Su-35 air superiority fighter. The 4++ generation classification of the Su-35 marks it as combat effective modern warplane. The Su-35 costs an estimated price of \$85 million, comparable to the cost of the American-made F-35A of \$78 million. The Islamic Republic of Iran's Air Force consists of mostly American aircraft previously supplied in the 1970s during the rule of the Shah. Moscow and Tehran recently signed cooperative deals to boost each other's economy, militaries, and space-based industries. Tehran supplies Moscow with Shahed-136 suicide drones. These drones' attacks on civilian infrastructure caused significant civilian casualties during the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

Analysis: Tehran likely seeks to develop stronger relationships with Moscow to counter the impacts of international sanctions affecting both nations, and to increase Tehran's offensive capabilities to increase its international prestige. Tehran will likely use imports of Russian arms to increase tensions in the Middle East and globally by further developing its armed forces.

[Mason Meininger]

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



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