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DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO: Cobalt Export Quotas Unlikely to Succeed

Summary: While Kinshasa’s opening of cobalt exports will likely result in a slight short-term increase in the economy, the cobalt quota system will almost certainly have a negligible overall impact.

Background: On 21 September, Kinshasa stated that it would raise the current cobalt export ban and replace it with an export quota system limiting the amount of cobalt the nation can export in the coming years, according to Reuters. Kinshasa hopes this quota system will raise the price of cobalt and improve the economic value of one of its largest exports. The Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) exports 72.1 percent of global unrefined cobalt, according to OurWorldInData. M23, a rebel group that controls the Rubaya area in Eastern DRC, currently facilitates roughly half of the total cobalt exports from the nation, according to *The Africa Report*. “The export ban has failed to curb supplies and correct prices,” said Silverado Policy Accelerator, a U.S.-based non-profit, according to Reuters. The DRC has no mining standards regarding licensing, environmental compliance, or refining responsibilities, according to *African Security Analysis*.

Analysis: The DRC export quota system will likely prove ineffective at addressing the problems facing the nation. This policy likely reflects an attempt to correct the previous failure of the export ban and raise the price of cobalt. While an increase in cobalt prices will likely occur, the poor regulatory environment and sudden banning of cobalt exports will likely drive many consumers to find other sources of the material such as M23. These consumers are likely to continue receiving cobalt from alternative sources, even after the DRC lifts the ban and begins officially exporting again.

[Hunter Flanagan]

RUSSIA: Surging Cellphone Pre-Orders Likely Presage an Economic Decline

Summary: A 66% surge in iPhone 17 pre-orders in Russia, despite high interest rates and a growing budget deficit, likely signals unsustainable consumer behavior and economic deterioration.

Development: On 20 September, Russian resellers unveiled Apple's newest iPhone, beginning preorder purchases. Moscow recently restricted WhatsApp and Telegram call services. Russian citizens preordered 66% more iPhone's than in 2024. The Russian economy is experiencing a 20-year-high in interest rates and a budget deficit of approximately \$48 billion this year. Falling exports, rising imports, and additional logistical costs of parallel imports contributed to the current economic state and rising shelf prices for iPhone 17's, according to Reuters. The basic 256 GB iPhone 17 markets at \$1,437, about 57% more than the U.S. retail price, according to Reuters.

Analysis: This scarcity-driven spike in demand for high cost imported goods almost certainly reflects a disconnect between consumer spending and macroeconomic realities. Recent Russian policy limits domestic alternatives for FaceTime technology, which likely led to a switch toward iPhone FaceTime technologies. If this trend continues, consumer purchasing will likely increase inflationary pressures, widen the trade imbalance, and deepen Moscow's fiscal vulnerabilities. The prioritization of luxury technology purchases, despite rising interest rates and shrinking disposable income, likely suggests a fragile consumer psyche, which will almost certainly mask deeper economic instability. Over time, this behavior will likely erode citizens' household savings, strain financial institutions, and accelerate the pace of economic decline.

[Sam Hurley]

RUSSIA: Massive Aerial Attack Will Likely Renew Discussions on Peace Solutions

Summary: Moscow's recent aerial strike will likely push the North Atlantic Trade Organization (NATO) to impose heavier sanctions and search for acceptable peace deals between Kyiv and Moscow

Development: On 19 September, Russian President Vladimir Putin launched a full-scale aerial attack across nine Ukrainian regions, targeting infrastructure, residential areas, and civilian enterprises. President Volodymyr Zelensky called the attack a "deliberate strategy" to "intimidate civilians and destroy our infrastructure," according to BBC News. Prior to this attack, Moscow primarily launched attacks near the front lines. Meanwhile, Kyiv continues to target key oil infrastructure with drone strikes to deplete Moscow's oil supply and cut oil-based military funding, according to ABC.

Analysis: Moscow's attack on multiple Ukrainian regions will likely urge Ukraine to further their sanctions on Russian oil. Moscow is changing its tactics by unloading swaths of drones closer to neighboring countries, like NATO member Poland. Moscow will almost certainly continue launching aerial strikes to intimidate NATO countries. Specifically, this attack reveals that Moscow is not willing to back down, unless Kyiv can make agreements that Moscow will accept regarding peace deals to end the conflict. Moscow would almost certainly not accept a peace agreement involving Kyiv's inclusion into NATO. Kyiv should expect Moscow's tactics to ebb and flow based on Kyiv's response to such attacks and thus should prepare themselves for random and seemingly pointless attacks. Kyiv will almost certainly ask for NATO's continued aid, especially regarding heavy sanctions on oil imports.

[Skylar Phillips]

RUSSIA: NATO Likely to Alter Rules of Engagement After Recent Airspace Incursion

Summary: Moscow's continued demonstrations of aggression through airspace incursions will likely be met with greater force by the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). NATO will almost certainly prioritize limiting tensions by demonstrating strength without inciting conflict.

Development: On 19 September, Estonian officials announced that three Russian MiG-31 jets entered Estonian airspace for 12 minutes, the fifth violation of the year, according to BBC. The Russian Defense Ministry claimed that the "flight was carried out in strict conformity with international rules governing airspace." Estonian Foreign Minister Margus Tsahkna called the event an "unprecedentedly brazen" incursion, according to Reuters. Two weeks ago, 20 Russian drones entered Polish airspace, revealing a recent pattern of aggression by President Vladimir Putin, according to the BBC. The intrusion prompted NATO to begin Operation Eastern Sentry (OES) to increase air defense resources in eastern member-states, according to *The Times*.

NATO members requested an Article Four consultation to discuss the major implications of these recent airspace violations, according to Reuters. Officials worry that exerting too much pressure on Russia may result in heightened tensions, leading to unwanted conflict, according to *The Moscow Times*.

Analysis: Moscow's continued trend of flaunting aggression towards NATO will likely lead to escalated conflict between the ally territories and Russia if NATO cannot assert its strength. Putin may just be testing NATO's air defense, so the implementation of the OES will likely deter future Russian aggression/test tactics. However, if NATO allows Putin to continue airspace incursions without presenting a strong strategic response, Moscow will likely be more effective in a future attack. NATO will probably place heavier sanctions on Russia or demonstrate zero tolerance towards any future airspace incursions, such as shooting down such aircraft. Depending on how the Article 4 consultation ends, the rules of engagement will almost certainly change, creating a new regulatory environment that will either deter Russian aggression or increase the risk of greater conflict.

[Lauren Phillips]

ALBANIA: Artificial Intelligence Unlikely to Significantly Address Corruption

Summary: Tirana’s new Artificial Intelligence (AI) Minister of State will likely not significantly reduce corruption in public procurement due to a lack of transparency in its operations and oversight.

Development: On 18 September, Albanian Prime Minister Edi Rama presented an AI cabinet minister, called Diella, to the Albanian parliament. In the AI’s announcement on 11 September, Rama stated that Diella will replace human staffers in awarding government contracts to reduce corruption, according to *The Guardian*. The Albanian Council of Ministers’ official website lists Diella as the Minister of State for Artificial Intelligence. The Albanian opposition has opposed the AI’s appointment, boycotting the vote on the new council of ministers and its program. Opposition leader Gazment Bardhi called Diella a “virtual facade to hide this government’s gigantic daily thefts” rather than a legitimate anticorruption tool, according to CNN and *BalkanInsight*. Tirana has not disclosed how Diella functions or what human oversight will exist.

Analysis: Diella’s appointment will likely not eradicate corruption in public contracting without high levels of oversight and transparency, which do not currently exist. If given biased source code or information, Diella would almost certainly make contracting decisions reflecting the creator or controllers’ biases. If this occurs, it will likely become harder to investigate and prove conflicts of interest and intentional malpractice, hindering anticorruption efforts. Greater information about Diella’s instructions and more transparent human oversight of its activities would likely address the opposition’s criticisms of the program. While other governments will almost certainly not grant AI programs high-level positions without human oversight, other governments will likely expand the use of AI in their activities to increase accessibility for citizens. If Tirana successfully implements the program and it significantly reduces perceived corruption, other democracies with persistent corruption problems will likely adopt similar programs.

[Christina Muchow]

ISRAEL: Jerusalem Set to Lead Global Cybersecurity Innovation

Summary: Jerusalem will likely become a major cyber power in the world due to its latest investments into AI Cybersecurity startups. These startups will likely allow Jerusalem to dominate in the field of cybersecurity.

Development: On 17 September, Gillot Capital, Israel's leading venture capital, raised \$500 million for 12 startups in AI Cybersecurity, as reported by Reuters. Kobi Sambourski, the co-founder and a managing partner, stated that this AI will show both offensive and defensive capabilities according to Reuters. On 22 September, Gillot Capital closed the investment round that was backed by other European institutional investors, according to Reuters and *FinTech Global*. Sambourski and Arik Kleinstein founded Gallot Capital in 2011, and Gallot Capital has made 22 exits since, according to *Fin Tech Global*. This new investment pushed Gallot Capital over \$1 billion in total assets, according to *Security Week*. Unit 8200, Jerusalem's elite agency focused on offensive and defensive cyber operations, has played a pivotal role in Israel's rise in cyber capabilities, according to *The Times of Israel*.

Analysis: The latest \$500 million investment by Gillott Capital will likely further strengthen Jerusalem's cyber ecosystem, reinforcing its strength both regionally and globally. By funding AI Cybersecurity startups, innovation of advanced cyber technologies will almost certainly accelerate. Coupled with Jerusalem's strong track record of successful startups, exits, and an army of highly trained cyber talent, Jerusalem will almost certainly grow to compete with other global powers.

[Philipp Shchetinin]

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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Christina Muchow, 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 477, a publication created by students at Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University in Prescott, Arizona.



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