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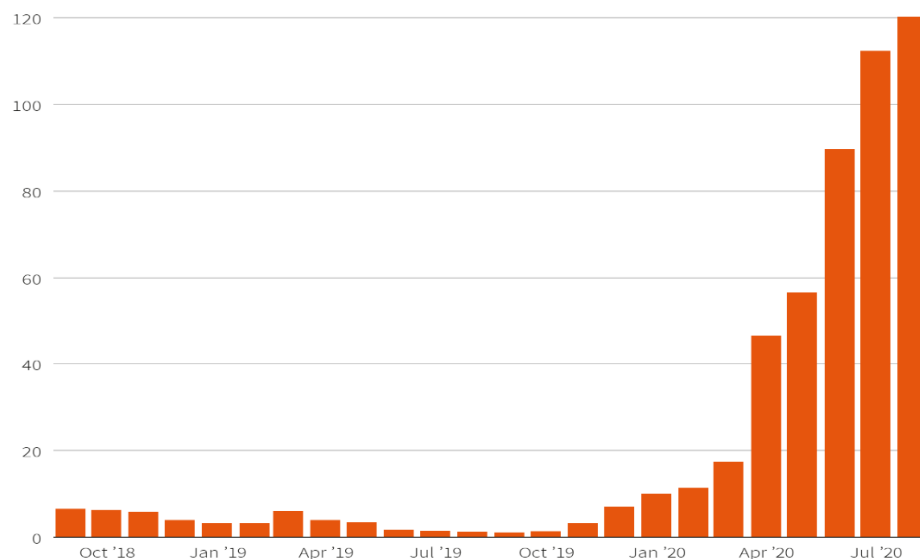
LEBANON: Compounding Crises Likely an Opportunity for Foreign Influence

Summary: Lebanon remains locked in one of the worst economic crises in history as the country grapples with a severe fuel crisis, widespread mistrust of the government, and crippling healthcare and food shortages. The dire state of the economy will likely open doors for foreign actors to cement their influence within the country as the country may not pull itself out of the crisis on its own. The long-term regional and international implications of accepting various aid packages may outweigh needed short-term benefits, however dire the situation.

Background: Since 2011, the Syrian Civil war along with other political tensions in the Middle East hindered Beirut's ability to secure investments. The growing influence of Hezbollah, labeled as a terrorist organization by Western actors, also steered foreign investors from Lebanon making it difficult for the country to raise capital. The banks resorted to conducting a sort of Ponzi scheme to keep an inflow of money, but by 2019 people caught on and could no longer pull money out of the banks, sending the country into a severe financial crisis as the Lebanese pound lost about 90% of its value to the US Dollar. The COVID-19 pandemic coupled with the deadly Beirut port blast in August 2020 sparked grave humanitarian crises atop an already broken financial system. Beirut remained without a government for over a year until new Prime Minister Najib Mikati formed a cabinet hoping to lead the desperate people of Lebanon out of despair.

Lebanon's runaway inflation

Inflation has soared since the Lebanese pound started to fall against the dollar in October 2019



Note:
Source:: Central Administration of Statistics

Crippling Fuel Crisis: The fuel crisis will likely act as a way for regional actors to seize influence within Lebanon as the government continues to struggle to secure a steady fuel supply. With the lifting of fuel subsidies last month in an effort to eliminate the black market that had formed since the start of the fuel crisis, fuel prices reached unattainable amounts for the majority of Lebanese citizens. High fuel prices have severely raised the price of food, health care, and

other daily essentials making the majority of citizens unable to afford necessities of life. One in four people rely on food aid as more than three-quarters of the population has dipped below the poverty line. The fuel crisis has resulted in sweeping power outages, severely limiting the ability of hospitals to aid the public. As a result, Beirut has begun negotiating fuel deals with many foreign actors such as Tehran, Baghdad, Cairo and Amman.

Systemic Political Corruption: The public sentiment regarding widespread systemic corruption probably will seriously impede the government's ability to garner support for the reforms it desperately needs to secure International Monetary Fund (IMF) aid. The systemic corruption of the Lebanese banking system thrust the economy into the crisis it has been dealing with for the past two years. Yet, the banks are refusing to finance the economy or do anything to bring the nation out of its current state. Concurrently, the Beirut port blast probe scandal of the past few weeks caused even more public chaos. Judge Tarek Bitar is going after the politicians believed to hold responsibility for the gross negligence and port mismanagement which caused the 2020 blast, killing 200 people, injuring 6,500, and wiping out several thriving neighborhoods. However, several attempts by indicted officials and Hezbollah representatives to block the investigation have incited violence in the streets. On 14 October, six citizens died as a result of Hezbollah supporters protesting Bitar's investigation. The probe has created a split in the country as many are calling for justice for those responsible, though some rely on the aid Hezbollah has delivered in recent months and are blindly throwing their support behind the group.

Growing Iranian Influence: Hezbollah and Tehran's support role in recent weeks may serve Beirut in the short term but will likely indebt Beirut to its regional agendas for the long term. In September, Hezbollah, backed by Tehran, used its regional influence to secure much needed fuel for several provinces within Lebanon. Hezbollah circumvented restrictions on importing Iranian fuel by routing the fuel through Syria. While the fuel eased the suffering of many, some feared the international implications of accepting such aid as Beirut struggles to receive IMF funding. On 7 October, Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian vowed Tehran would work to rebuild the destroyed Beirut port while also constructing two electric power plants, according to Aljazeera. Several protests have ensued as many fear the expanding Iranian influence within Lebanon as Beirut seems to be leaning towards Tehran and Beijing as Western relations and other regional relations dwindle.

Outlook and Implications: Lebanon's mounting crises will likely open doors for foreign influence power grabs as regional powers pledge to offer aid in bringing the country out of one of the worst economic crises in history. The fuel crisis may serve as the most efficient ways for foreign actors such as Tehran, Baghdad, Amman, and Cairo to secure political influence. Beirut will likely not get a hold of the nation's several crises until the fuel crisis subsides. However, with most of the nation living under the poverty line, international aid like that of the IMF will most likely hold the only key to recovery though the new administration continues to struggle to agree on reforms required to secure the funding. The deep-rooted systemic corruption amongst the banking system and political system likely remains responsible as the two systems debate over who should burden the responsibility of the financial crisis. The inefficiencies created by the prolonged corruption will likely prevent any international aid from coming in the short-term.

This desperation will likely further prompt Beirut to accept aid from Tehran brokered by Hezbollah. While this aid will probably work to the benefit of Beirut in the short-term, it may ostracize the nation from international and regional actors like Riyadh who rely mostly on Western actors for their support.

The economic crisis will likely set the stage for shifting international alliances within the middle east as Tehran and Beijing seem more willing to come to Beirut's aid than other western actors. Though the IMF continues to negotiate aid packages, Beirut will unlikely solve its systemic corruption impeding the reform process in time and may default to the readily available aid from Tehran and Beijing. This aid may ease the suffering of Lebanon's people in the short term, but the international and regional implications may not prove worth it in the end.

[Tim Fergus]

SOUTH KOREA: Increased Talks with Japan Unlikely to Resolve Historical Issues

Summary: The talks between South Korea and Japan will probably not resolve the rising tensions caused by conflicts about compensation for Korean wartime victims.

Development: On 15 October, South Korean President Moon Jae-in held a video conference with the new Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida over historical issues between the two nations. Kishida urged Moon to find an appropriate response to wartime issues, referring to the forced-labor conscription and other atrocities committed by the Japanese Army during the Second World War. Tokyo firmly states that all wartime issues settled in the 1965 treaty normalized relations between the two countries, however, Seoul delegitimized this treaty and the following 2015 treaty. When the South Korean Supreme Court ruled in late 2018 to sell seized Mitsubishi Heavy and Nippon Steel assets for compensation to forced labor victims, Tokyo responded with sanctions against sections of Seoul's semiconductor industry.

Analysis: The talks between South Korea and Japan will probably not resolve the historical issues between the two countries, most likely leading to more economic and legal clashes. The battle over wartime compensation remains primarily an ideological fight between both nations, almost certainly hurting both nations economically. Tokyo may continue to ignore its past wartime crimes. South Korean courts will likely keep ruling in favor of Korean victims, perpetuating the conflict as Tokyo retaliates against such rulings.

[Sebastien Bragg]

UKRAINE: Recent Discussions with EU Likely to Escalate Russian Aggression

Summary: The new discussion between the European Union (EU) and Ukraine will likely incite further Russian aggression towards the nation, including a potential increase in cyber-attacks, due to the threat of a stronger Ukraine.

Development: On 11 October, the EU and Ukraine announced intentions to hold a discussion regarding military training and cybersecurity, in response to the continuing conflict between Ukraine and Russia. The two nations are currently experiencing conflict over Ukraine's territory as Moscow wishes to annex parts of Ukraine, like the Crimean Peninsula. Russian President Vladimir Putin made it public that he wishes Ukraine was a part of Russia. Moscow continues to engage in disinformation campaigns and other cyber-attacks to gain support for annexation or to weaken Ukraine.

Analysis: The increase in cooperation between the EU and Ukraine will likely increase Russian aggression towards Ukraine to counter any new technology or advantages Ukraine may gain. The new discussion and cooperation may have the potential to increase Kyiv's ability to push back against Moscow. Russia will likely seek to gain any advantage before Ukraine grows stronger in its defense, particularly regarding cybersecurity. Moscow may increase its use of disinformation campaigns to gather support before Kyiv becomes better prepared to prevent such campaigns.

[Carson Ramocinski]

COLOMBIA: Unit Likely to Regulate Border and Increase Tensions with Venezuela

Summary: Bogotá's creation of the CENOR Unit and deployment of 14,000 military personnel to the Venezuelan border will likely increase tensions between the countries while reducing criminal presence and exploitation of migrants by regulating a formal border crossing.

Development: On 6 October, Bogotá deployed 14,000 military personnel from the newly created CENOR Unit to the Colombia-Venezuela border to reduce criminal presence and drug trafficking in the area and formally regulate border crossing for migrants as the countries work to officially reopen the border. Bogotá created the CENOR Unit to control conflict between criminal organizations in the province of Norte de Santander, located near the Venezuelan border. Colombian President Iván Duque Márquez announced that CENOR encourages anti-organized crime efforts, with funding from Bogotá, and combat armed criminal groups competing to control cocaine production in the region. Tensions arose between the countries after Márquez accused disputed Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro Moros of supporting drug trafficking across the border and protecting illegally armed militant groups, which Moros denies. Bogotá's military deployment comes a day after the border reopened after a three-year shutdown due to Venezuela's humanitarian crisis and Colombian upset regarding migrant influx, escalating tensions.

Analysis: Bogotá's creation of the CENOR Unit and deployment of troops to the Venezuelan border amid efforts to reopen the border will almost certainly escalate tensions between the countries by highlighting the distrust between governments and lack of cooperation to disarm criminal organizations. The lack of cooperation and trust between governments likely encourages criminal organizations to operate on both sides of the border, fostering more distrust between governments and avoiding disarmament and prosecution by respective countries of origin. Despite Caracas's distrust of Colombian troops at the border, increased military presence from CENOR likely reduces the ability of criminal organizations to operate between borders. Formally regulating border crossing will likely reduce both criminal presence into Colombia via migration, and exploitation and violence against lawful migrants.

[Emma Sanders]

CHINA: DNA and Organ Harvesting Could Become International Security Issue

Summary: Beijing's decision to collect mass amounts of genetic information and physical organ transplants may raise possible security concerns for countries around the globe.

Development: On 8 October, scientists and medical personnel associated with the International Forum for Rights and Security (IFFRAS), expressed grave concerns over Beijing's unethical medical and lab practices. Officials discovered Beijing cultivates gene banks through mass genetic testing and forced organ harvesting. The IFFRAS claims some genetic information comes from companies overseas sharing their data with Beijing administrators. Beijing also exploits the human rights of its citizens to obtain organs and DNA. Common subjects for harvesting include individuals in detention, concentration camps, through arbitrary arrests, and trafficking. Beijing declared it wanted the data to prevent birth defects and improve population quality to positively affect future manpower.

Analysis: The continued method of DNA and organ collection will almost certainly prompt various countries to further examine the issue, and most countries will likely take advanced security measures to counteract Beijing. Beijing and its progressive biotechnology may provide critical information about other countries. With more genetic information from nations, Beijing may have the ability to create an expansive genetic bank filled with data.

[Tatum Leyvas]

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 Security and Intelligence.

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

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