

THE GLOBAL INTELLIGENCE MONITORING CENTER



*AN ANALYTICAL INTELLIGENCE WIRE PREPARED BY THE STUDENTS OF EMBRY-RIDDLE AERONAUTICAL UNIVERSITY IN PRESCOTT, ARIZONA.*

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NUMBER (299)  
2 February 2018

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## ARTICLES

### CAMEROON: Anglophone Crisis May Spread Further into Nigeria

**Summary:** Within a few months, Anglophones will likely launch a deadly, organized attack on Cameroonian forces, possibly driving the Cameroonian military to move into Nigeria and aggress Anglophone refugees and forces in the area. While the Anglophone conflict in Cameroon has persisted for decades, it heightened when Anglophones declared independence on 1 October 2017. This declaration resulted in the Cameroonian government shutting down the internet and increasing military action in the region. With Anglophones and secessionist leaders in Cameroon fleeing to Nigeria, Cameroon will likely soon engage in violent action in Nigeria to quell opportunities for Anglophones to coordinate a revolution.

**Analysis:** Cameroon's conflict between its majority French-speakers and minority English-speakers began in 1961, when a French and a British colony unified to establish Cameroon. Since its founding, citizens in the formerly British colony, known as the Anglophone region, felt marginalized by the Cameroonian government, which is dominated by Francophones. Anglophones claim this marginalization sparks from underrepresentation in politics and discrimination resulting in poor education and economic subjugation. Following the government's French educational curriculum, posed such a challenge to Anglophone educators and students that many Anglophones protested in January 2017. The government responded with an internet shutdown in the Anglophone region, only returning internet access 93 days later as a result of pressure from international institutions.

Anglophones intensified protests and declared independence from Cameroon on 1 October 2017, calling the new region the Federal Republic of Ambazonia. The government deployed forces and again targeted the internet by blocking social networking sites to quash coordination of armed revolts. Such silencing attempts, if employed again, will most likely cause further retaliation of Anglophones as they will consider the ongoing shut down as a reminder of the marginalization and the discrimination facing them. The recent violent protests which were met with military presence in 'Ambazonia' forced over 43,000 Anglophones to flee to Nigeria. Such violence has further removed the Anglophones from the Cameroonian identity and will likely provoke more Anglophone retaliation.

Additionally, Nigeria's accommodation for Anglophone refugees has strained its fragile relationship with Cameroon. In the 1980s and 90s, Nigeria and Cameroon disputed over the Bakassi Peninsula until the United Nations ruled in Cameroon's favor in 2002. The countries rekindled ties when they began working together to fight Boko Haram, which operates along the Nigerian-Cameroonian border. Nigeria has criticized Cameroon for not taking harsh enough action against the terror group. Improvements in the Nigerian-Cameroonian relationship, however were short lived as Cameroon insists Nigeria is responsible for the 26 January attack on Cameroonian security forces along the border; Nigeria denies the allegations

On 29 January, Nigeria extradited multiple secessionists to Cameroon, possibly another attempt to improve relations between the two nations. Among those extradited was Ayuk Tabe Julius, the leader of the Anglophone movement. This extradition follows the initial detention of Anglophone leaders on 5 January. While many Anglophone leaders have been detained, many more will likely rise among the ranks and take the place of those in custody. While the extradition indicates a Nigerian initiative to cooperate with Cameroon, it has not completely restored relations between the two nations. Unless Nigeria expels all Anglophone refugees from the country, Cameroon will likely still view Nigeria as harboring criminals. Nigeria almost certainly will not act against the refugees, however, because such action would go against the requests of the UN and many other major international players. Maintaining a positive relationship with the UN is likely a higher priority for Nigeria than appeasing Cameroon.

Tensions are already at an all-time high between Anglophones and the Cameroonian government, so any upcoming conflicts may provoke an organized attack. Conditions in refugee quarters in Nigeria have already sparked continued unrest and frustrations among Anglophones. The lack of schooling for refugee children may remind Anglophones of their educational discrimination in Cameroon, adding to the tension. Additionally, many refugee areas are on the verge of an epidemic with cramped living quarters and little to no medical operations to treat those afflicted with illness. Because of the risk of an epidemic, Anglophones may take more aggressive action against Cameroon in hopes of driving forces out of 'Ambazonia' so that Anglophones can return to the medicine and clinics in 'Ambazonia.'

With poor refugee accommodations, continued internet blockages, and military action in 'Ambazonia,' Anglophones will likely wage a deadly incursion against Cameroonian forces. Moreover, the strained relations with Nigeria will likely push Cameroon on the offensive against Anglophones in Nigeria.

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**BRIEFS**

## **BREXIT: EU Sets Strict Guidelines for Transition Period**

**Summary:** The EU voted to set requirements for the transition period following Brexit, requirements that will likely be unpopular among British Brexit proponents.

**Development:** On 29 January, the EU voted unanimously to set their stance on policies for the transition period following Brexit. According to the EU, the transition period will last from the official Brexit date in March 2019 until December 2020 and is designed to provide time for the UK and EU to negotiate trade deals and limit confusion following Brexit. The EU's requirements during the transition period include free immigration to and from Britain and the implementation of all EU laws including those passed during the transition period. Additionally, Britain will have no voting power in the EU during the transition.

**Analysis:** Britain will likely attempt to push back against the EU's strict new requirements. It is unlikely Britain will support enforcing new EU laws in Britain without having a say in those laws. However, Britain will not have much leverage to change the EU's stance. The EU council adopted these guidelines unanimously in a meeting that lasted under two minutes, likely showing the EU is clearly committed to make Brexit as hard as possible on Britain, to set an example for other European nationalist groups. Britain now will be under even more pressure to agree on Brexit policy before the EU can unilaterally impose their rules on Britain.

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## **CHINA: Xi's CCP Amends Constitution Foreshadowing Third Term**

**Summary:** The CCP's decision to add President Xi Jinping's doctrine to the Chinese constitution hints at the possibility of future proposals to extend Xi's presidential term limit.

**Development:** On 19 January, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) Central Committee approved a proposal at the second plenary session of the 19<sup>th</sup> CCP Central Committee to amend the Constitution of China. The amendments will incorporate Chinese President Xi Jinping's doctrine and the National Supervision System into China's constitution. The doctrine, known as "Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era", includes Xi's major theoretical ideas, principles, and policies for China to become globally and economically dominant by 2050. The National Supervision System, under the CCP's leadership, will oversee the use of public power and strengthen self-supervision of China's political system.

**Analysis:** The addition of Xi Jinping's doctrine to the country's constitution may indicate that Xi will pursue an extended presidential term. Although the term limit for the Chinese presidency is two five-year terms, the CCP's ability to amend the Chinese Constitution shows that the CCP can

also amend the constitution to extend presidential term limits to keep Xi in power. The official enshrinement of Xi's philosophy into China's constitution shows that his power can be equated to that of Mao Zedong, as the hegemon of the CCP. Given Xi's top position as General Secretary of the CCP, he can easily make another proposal to modify his current term limit, which will likely happen if he aims to stay in office beyond 2022 when his second term will end.

[Bea Francia]

### **PHILIPPINES: Mayon Volcano Threatens Thousands**

**Summary:** Overcrowded evacuation shelters lack supplies as the Mayon Volcano threatens to erupt, potentially putting thousands of evacuees in danger.

**Development:** As of 31 January, 81,000 people have fled to evacuation shelters due to the increased activity of the Mayon Volcano in the Philippines. Shelters, however, are struggling to accommodate the influx of people, with 70,000 people in evacuation shelters lacking necessary supplies. In response, President Duterte increased funding and ordered more supplies to avoid further health and sanitation concerns. Additionally, large amounts of ash spewing from the volcano can disrupt flights and ruin air quality.

**Analysis:** The evacuees will likely be held at the established approximately five-mile perimeter for weeks as a catastrophic eruption is possible within days or weeks. With the high demand for supplies and no evacuation timeline it will likely be difficult for the Philippines to manage such a large evacuation. Food rations are currently at a quarter of what is required and the situation in the camps, while not currently dire, could quickly descend into a crisis. The debris continually ejected from the volcano poses a serious danger not only to the surrounding area but also to the evacuees as a particularly volatile eruption could easily extend past the five-mile perimeter.

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### **RUSSIA: Syria Peace Talks End Early with Opposition Boycotts**

**Summary:** Russia's Syrian peace conference may be an attempt to portray Moscow as a new mediator in the Middle East while also demonstrating its allegiance to its allies.

**Development:** On 30 January, the Russian-hosted Syrian peace conference ended after Russian officials faced a backlash for failing to provide a neutral platform for discussion. The peace talks, officially called the "Syrian Congress of National Dialogue", took place in Sochi, Russia and faced boycotts by almost all major opposition groups in Syria. One armed group flown in from Turkey refused to leave the Sochi airport after seeing Syrian government flags and emblems displayed at the conference and stating that their guarantees were not met. Other opposition groups, including the Syrian Negotiations Commission also boycotted the peace talks, claiming

they are an attempt to undermine current UN efforts to broker a peace deal. The Sochi conference is reportedly only the first round of negotiations expected to take place in Russia.

**Analysis:** Russia's attempt to mediate Syrian peace talks prompted harsh reaction from major Western players such as the US, France, and the UK in addition to the major opposition groups in Syria. All parties opposing the Sochi conference said they believe the commission primarily focused on representing the interests of Moscow and Damascus, which could damage Russia's credibility in hosting future peace talks. What likely began as an attempt to posture as a Middle East peace broker ultimately resulted in Russia angering most of the parties involved while simultaneously demonstrating its allegiance to the Assad regime. After the harsh response the Sochi conference sparked across the globe, Russia will likely need to start addressing the demands of the opposition groups before it can expect any level of successful negotiations to occur. However, Moscow shows no sign of abandoning the peace talks despite immense criticism and is probably using the situation to demonstrate allegiance to its allies, rather than a serious commitment to helping the Syrian people find peace.

[Jordan Long]

### [Turkey: Military to Expand Offensive in Northern Syria](#)

**Summary:** The Turkish President announced the intent to clear the entire Syrian border with Turkey, possibly causing conflict with US forces.

**Development:** On 28 January, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan announced that the Turkish military will clear the entire southern border with Syria to drive out the Kurdish People's Protection Units (YPG). Turkey also urged the US to withdraw its military forces from the area surrounding the city of Manbij. Turkey began its attack on the YPG in Syria on 19 January to clear out what it viewed as a terror threat along its border. The US worked with the YPG in the fight against the Islamic State and has protested Turkish actions against the YPG.

**Analysis:** The US has stopped supplying the YPG with weapons to maintain good relations with Turkey but will not likely respond to Turkey's demand to withdraw troops from Manbij. It is also highly unlikely that Turkey will risk open confrontation with US troops, meaning Turkey probably will not expand its military campaign east of Manbij. The YPG reinforced its lines in the Afrin region with the aim of stopping Turkey's military in the mountainous terrain, but will not likely be able to fend off the better equipped Turkish military without support from the US.

[Robert B. Lundgren]

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