



WEST AFRICA

Nigeria – The Boko Haram issue has become such a problem that it is overshadowing the 2 February 2015 Presidential Election. President Goodluck Jonathan has the support of the Christian population, the middle and upper class, and Lagos. His opponent, Muhammadu Buhari, has the support of the Muslim north and the southwest of the country. In other words, Nigeria will be deciding another election based upon tribal affiliation and religion. Buhari, who was not expected to keep the election close, has surprised many, and two weeks before the election date, it appears a toss-up. *The TFG does not foresee a scenario in which President Goodluck Jonathan loses his bid for re-election*, although with the absolutely incompetent way the campaign against Boko Haram has been handled, one would have expected a bit of voter backlash. But Jonathan's voters are about as guaranteed as guaranteed can be. The business class, the educated and academia, the military, and the Christian population are all quite worried about the intentions of a Muslim administration. Buhari has done his best to compare his campaign to that of Cote d'Ivoire President Alassane Ouattara, who is a Muslim but

pro-business, reform-oriented agenda. As for Boko Haram, they appear to move and kill with impunity, and as of late, instead of targeting the south, are threatening to widen the conflict to Niger, Cote d'Ivoire and Chad. The complete inability of the Nigerian Army to draw up and conduct a full-scale offensive operation against Boko Haram is truly an embarrassment for Nigeria. Having to rely upon the African Union and/or the militaries of its neighbors, will only increase that embarrassment.

Sierra Leone/Liberia/Guinea – On 22 January 2015, at the World Economic Forum Annual Meeting in Davos, Switzerland, Stephen D'Esposito, President and CEO of RESOLVE, and Chair of the World Economic Forum Council on the Future of Mining and Metals, announced the beginning of an effort to "catalyze sustainable economic recovery in the three West African countries most affected by Ebola." This effort, titled "Regrow West Africa", will work to rally investors behind a portfolio of implementation-ready economic development projects. This initiative is being designed and executed by RESOLVE in partnership with Cordaid, a Dutch NGO, and the general membership of the Ebola Private Sector Mobilization Group, which includes more than one-



hundred private companies operating in the region (including TFG). Peace Diamonds, a mining company with interests in West Africa, also announced an initiative that typifies the ReGrow West Africa development model. Sierra Leone's Ministry of Mines and Minerals has long made a priority of building a locally-run diamond cutting and polishing factory. Peace Diamonds has spearheaded efforts to bring together private and public sector partners to achieve this goal.

Persian Gulf Region

IRAQ / UNITED ARAB EMIRATES

The UAE is looking to unload 10 upgraded Mirage 2000-9's to the Iraqi Air Force. The 10 Mirage fighters will undoubtedly be welcome, as Iraq has been unable to establish any consistent offensive air operations against the Islamic State forces (ISIL). The UAE has been vocal in expressing concerns over its investments in the oil operations north of Baghdad and up to Erbil. Currently, the UAE is engaged, alongside the United States, Qatar and Kuwait, in an air campaign to disrupt ISIL efforts to re-supply its forces in both Iraq and Syria.

IRAN

The Government of Iran is anxiously awaiting the result of the current U.S. political disagreement regarding sanctions against the Islamic Republic.

U.S. President Barack Obama appears determined to craft a treaty with Iran that would result in the lifting of sanctions. Unfortunately, President Obama is fighting against the clock, so to speak. Most experts, including many who have been quoted by President Obama when it suited his argument, believe that Iran is within roughly three months from having the ability to create a nuclear weapon. The discussions that Obama wishes to begin with the Iranians are expected to take six to seven months. Unless the Iranians agree to stop all research (and allow verification), then they will achieve their goal while this new treaty is being hammered-out. Only the Iranians know for certain just how close they are to reaching a particular goal, and TFG believes that the time has passed during which anyone but Iran could impact that eventuality. In this diplomatic quagmire that has had very few certainties, we can all be sure of one fact: the Israeli government will have a military response to a nuclear Iran.

TURKEY

Turkey - The comments of Turkish President Recep Erdogan continue to drive a wedge between Turkey and the west. During a period when the world was expressing great sorrow and sympathy to the people of France for the recent terrorist attacks in Paris, Erdogan quite clearly accused the



French people and the French unwillingness to dedicate itself to assimilation of immigrants, as being responsible for the violence. His comments came during a week in which leaked information including a video clip, appears to implicate the Turkish Military Intelligence in an effort to provide military equipment and supplies to Al-Qaida in Syria through a Turkish border post. Erdogan continues to demand the removal of de facto Syrian President Bashir al-Assad, to anyone who will listen. Maybe Erdogan needs to express his feelings about Assad to his new friend-of-the-moment, Russian President Vladimir Putin. TFG is aware that Putin is eyeing a Naval Base in Syria, which is best accomplished with Russian ally Assad in power. But Putin just recently announced that Turkey would be the location for any natural gas pipelines coming from Russia. So maybe while Erdogan and Putin are playing nice, they can resolve their obvious disagreement over the future of Assad.

Russia - The Russian government was obliged to cut spending in every department except one: defense. In fact, Russian defense spending has increased twenty percent, which coincides with Russia's latest focus, the Arctic. Russia has always been a bit paranoid regarding the Arctic

Council, and probably with good reason. Five members of the Arctic Council are also members of NATO. Recent estimates that thirty percent of the world's undiscovered natural gas and thirteen percent of its undiscovered oil reserves, should draw the attention of all the member states of the Arctic Council. The Russians are certainly paying attention. The Russian navy is ideally suited for operating in Arctic waters, being the only nation in the world to operate nuclear-powered ice breakers. The airport on Novaya Zemlya has been modernized and restriped, to accommodate the latest in military and cargo aircraft; the Russians have also garrisoned numerous isolated, inhospitable outposts that were shut after the end of the Cold War. These actions have not gone unnoticed, especially in Oslo. The Norwegians have gamely attempted to build-up their military resources north of the Arctic Circle, and they have been conducting military exercises on the border with Finland, but it is nothing compared to Russian operations. Russia is attempting to reach a particular goal in the manner which it believes will be quickest, and that is through military intimidation and occupation. Who besides the Russians have the backbone to colonize the Arctic, and therefore "earn" access to the natural gas and oil deposits?



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