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CHINESE CONSTRUCTION IN SOUTH SUDAN HITS ROADBLOCK

South Sudan is putting an important highway construction project funded by China on hold due to its poor quality. Parts of the Juba-Rumbek Highway, a nearly 250 mile long road designed to ultimately connect South Sudan to Uganda and funded by the Shandong Hi-Speed Group, a Chinese state-owned corporation, were swept away last month after heavy downpours.

The disruption is the latest example of local concerns over the shoddy quality of infrastructure development projects funded by China on the continent. Back in April 2019, the Center for Strategic and International Studies released a study entitled "The Higher Road: Forging a U.S. Strategy for the Global Infrastructure Challenge," which noted how the Communist Party of China uses infrastructure development projects as a means to gain influence in developing countries - sometimes compromising acceptable standards of safety in the process. (*The East African*, June 10, 2020)

GERMANY, MOROCCO FIND COMMON GROUND ON GREEN ENERGY

Early last month, Moroccan ambassador to Germany Zohour Alaoui and the German Development Minister, Gerd Müller, signed an agreement to enhance cooperation on the development of green hydrogen technology in Morocco. Green hydrogen, an environmentally friendly substitute for fossil fuels, is an essential component of the Moroccan Solar Energy Agency's (MASEN) "Power-to-X" project, which is developing numerous emerging technologies in the renewable energy sector. The agreement will help facilitate the "Power-to-X" project's production of green hydrogen, as well as create research platforms to assist Moroccan experts in acquiring the important technology. The agreement also has potential, as Ambassador Zohour Alaoui noted, to lead to the development of the first hydrogen plant in Africa. (*The North Africa Post*, June 11, 2020)

IRAN ILLEGALLY FISHES OFF SOMALI COAST

Iranian fishing vessels are operating illegally in Somali waters. The Somali government in Mogadishu issued a public statement last month claiming that, between January 2019 and April 2020, approximately 112 Iranian fishing vessels were active within Somalia's Exclusive Economic Zone in the Indian ocean. Somali maritime security is notoriously weak, and fishing is a profitable industry within the country's fragile economy, so Iran's represent a clear economic threat. However, politics are also at play; the timing of Mogadishu's announcement roughly coincides with Somalia's entrance into the newly formed Red Sea pact, a Saudi-led maritime security and development bloc that is oriented in part against Iran. (Radio Dalsan, June 26, 2020)

FRENCH OIL MULTINATIONAL SECURES GAS PROJECT IN MOZAMBIQUE

Total S.A. will soon expand shop in Mozambique. The French natural gas conglomerate - one of the largest oil companies in the world - recently secured \$14.9 billion in funding to begin a liquified natural gas project in the coastal Southeast African country. The project, with an expected total cost of \$23 billion, is the largest financing agreement in the history of the continent to date, and seeks to capitalize on recently discovered natural gas reserves in the country's resource-rich north. But security concerns remain; Total recently requested additional French government troops, which have been present in the region for some time, to protect projects amid a sharp rise in the number of attacks carried out by jihadist terror groups in and around Cabo Delgado province. (*Economic Times*, July 18, 2020)

EGYPTIAN HACKERS TARGET ETHIOPIAN GOVERNMENT OVER GERD

Tensions between Egypt and Ethiopia over the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) were further heightened late last month when Ethiopia's Information Network Security Agency (INSA) reported that it had successfully prevented numerous cyber attacks originating in Egypt. According to the Agency, the attacks were carried out by Egypt-based hackers "Cyber Horus Group," "AnuBis.Hacker" and "Security By Passed" between June 17-20. All three groups have claimed responsibility for the attacks, and cited the Ethiopian government's plan to begin filling the GERD in July as motivation. The attack reflects growing anxiety in Egypt over the troubled GERD negotiations, which have languished for over a year without an agreement over riparian rights between Cairo and Addis Ababa. (ENA, June 23, 2020)

SUDAN'S GOVERNMENT SECURES FOREIGN AID

Following a plea for foreign backers, the Sudanese government has received pledges of aid totaling \$1.5 billion. The commitments were made during the Sudan Donors Conference held virtually by the country's government late last month. Because many of the country's vital industries are either tied directly to military factions and their allies or were only recently untethered from them, foreign assistance is seen as a key ingredient to Sudan's further democratic development. Of particular note among those pledging assistance were Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, both of which are longtime backers of Mohamed Hamdan "Hemeti" Dagalo, head of one Sudanese military faction, and which committed to providing the country with significantly fewer funds than they had in the past. (Voice of America, June 26, 2020)