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AFTER THE UAE DEAL, CLOSER ISRAELI TIES WITH SUDAN?

In the wake of the landmark peace deal between Israel and the United Arab Emirates announced on August 13th, the Sudanese government has also signaled its interest in a similar arrangement with Jerusalem... sort of. Khartoum has provided mixed messages regarding the possibility of an upgrade in its ties to Israel. When asked for comments about the recent Israel-UAE agreement, Sudanese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Haidar Badawi al-Sadiq stated publicly that "Sudan looks forward to a peace agreement with Israel." However, this was quickly walked back by the country's Foreign Minister, Omer Gamur Eddin, who declared that the ministry had not in fact discussed the topic.

Whatever the level of readiness in Khartoum for more formal ties, the basis for an expanded bilateral relationship is undoubtedly present. The two countries have engaged in quiet dialogue since the ouster of Omar al-Bashir from power last year, and contacts have warmed considerably. This dynamic was on display earlier this summer, when Khartoum announced that planes leaving Israel bound for South America were authorized to traverse Sudanese airspace. Sudan's openness to expanded dialogue reflects a desire to rehabilitate itself internationally and move beyond the Bashir era, including the possibility of being removed from the U.S. government's list of State Sponsors of Terror. (*Jerusalem Post*, August 19, 2020)

LIBYAN REBELS WOO RABAT

Aguila Saleh Issa, president of Libya's exiled House of Representatives, led a delegation to Morocco in August to discuss the ongoing Libyan civil war and make the case for Rabat's support of his faction's cause. While Morocco has officially opted for neutrality in the conflict, it has also played a significant role as one of several diplomatic mediators of the long-running tensions. Morocco's position, however, has put it on the opposite side of Issa's faction, which has for years supported Khalifa Haftar's Libyan National Army (LNA) in its war against the internationally recognized Government of National Accords (GNA). Rabat, for its part, has long championed the "Skhirat Agreement" that formed the GNA and delegitimized Issa's House of Representatives. Issa's very-public visit to Morocco, therefore, reflected an attempt by his faction to alter the political *status quo* in its favor. (*Morocco World News*, July 26, 2020)

AFRICOM TO BE MOVED AS PART OF US TROOP DRAWDOWN

United States Africa Command (AFRICOM), the U.S. military command responsible for the African continent, is leaving Stuttgart, Germany. AFRICOM has been tapped as one of the institutions to leave Germany as part of the Trump administration's planned European troop deployment drawdown. According to AFRICOM Commander General Stephen Townsend, the combatant command will begin searching for basing locations - with other sites in Europe to receive top consideration. AFRICOM has been situated in Stuttgart since its establishment back in 2008, although that location was long viewed as a temporary one. However, the Pentagon has sought to avoid basing AFRICOM in continental Africa out of local concerns regarding an expanded U.S. military presence in the region. (*The Hill*, July 31, 2020)

INDIA'S ANSWER TO THE BRI INVOLVES AFRICA

As it seeks to compete globally with China, India is building upon its energy investments in Africa. India's International Solar Alliance (ISA), a solar energy project designed to involve African states, is seeking to engage new regional partners (including Mozambique, Uganda, Rwanda, Egypt and Niger) to develop projects like solar parks throughout the continent. A number of regional nations, such as Gambia and Malawi, are already formally part of the ISA, and the conglomerate is now involved in building projects in Mali and Togo. Increasingly, however, the Indian government is attempting to expand this activity in Africa as an alternative to China's expansive Belt and Road Initiative, or BRI. (*China-Lusophone Brief*, July 16, 2020)

RUSSIA EXPANDS CONTINENTAL MILITARY FOOTPRINT

The Kremlin is seeking to expand its strategic presence in East and Central Africa. Recently leaked German foreign ministry documents reveal that the Russian government has now signed agreements with six Central and East African governments - the Central African Republic, Egypt, Eritrea, Madagascar, Mozambique, and Sudan - to build military bases within their borders. These deals add to the Russian government's growing dealings on the continent of recent years; even before this latest tranche of agreements, the Kremlin had already signed over 20 bilateral military cooperatives with various African countries in just the past half-decade. However, the new accords, the leaked report points out, suggest that the Russian government's official footprint on the continent is expanding, and becoming more formalized. (*Business Insider*, August 11, 2020)