



Africa Political Monitor No. 7

September 18, 2020 **Jacob McCarty**

Related Categories: Democracy and Governance; Human Rights and Humanitarian Issues; International Economics and Trade; Resource Security; Global Health; East Africa; India; Japan; Middle East; North Africa

AN INDO-JAPANESE HUB IN DJIBOUTI

The latest iteration of Japan and India's defense ties now involves the Horn of Africa. As part of the Acquisition and Cross Servicing Agreement (ACSA) recently signed by the two countries and expected to go into effect at the end of October, the Indian military will have access to Japan's maritime base in Djibouti. This partnership will expand India's growing naval footprint in the region, which already includes a listening post in Madagascar, coastal surveillance projects in Mauritius and Seychelles, and a planned military construction project on the Mauritian archipelago of Agalega. While Djibouti is a hub for a number of foreign military bases (including French, Italian, American, and Chinese ones), India has yet to secure its own foothold in the country. In turn, the deal will likely bolster the African country's economy, which relies on activity in its ports.

India's expansion in the region by way of the ACSA also serves a concrete national security purpose, allowing the Indian military to protect against piracy in the Gulf of Aden and the Red Sea, a critical international shipping route. Simultaneously, the new base represents parts of New Delhi's expanding efforts to counter China, which has established a major political, economic (and increasingly a military) presence on the African continent in recent years. Notably, it is a goal that the Indian government shares in common with Tokyo. (*Economic Times*, August 27, 2020)

U.S. SEEKS TO EXPAND EAST AFRICAN DRONE WAR

U.S. Africa Command (AFRICOM) wants to extend its drone operations in East Africa into parts of Kenya. AFRICOM is currently waging a drone campaign against al-Shabaab targets in Somalia, a longtime refuge for the al-Qaeda-affiliated terror group. But while Shabaab's activities remain largely confined to Somalia, they have - as the National Defense University's Africa Center for Strategic Studies has noted - increased over the last decade and now threaten to spill over into adjoining regional states. If granted by the Kenyan government, the permission to operate will allow AFRICOM to follow the threat, and carry out both defensive and offensive operations within Kenyan borders. (*New York Times*, September 15, 2020)

UGANDA BOLSTERS OIL MARKET SHARE WITH TRADE DEALS

Recently announced infrastructure plans by the Ugandan government suggest that the country hopes to eventually become the center of East Africa's oil trade. On August 19th, state-owned Uganda National Oil Company (UNOC) announced that it would soon begin shipping oil to neighboring South Sudan and Rwanda. A month later, on September 13th, the presidents of Uganda and Tanzania appeared together publicly to announce that a \$3.5 billion oil pipeline linking the two countries will soon begin construction. When coupled with existing plans for the Uganda Oil Refinery, a facility in the early stages of development that could eventually extract 60,000 barrels of crude per day, these maneuvers point to Uganda's plans for energy independence, and regional leadership, in coming years. (*Daily Monitor*, August 19, 2020; *The Citizen*, September 13, 2020)

SLOW AID AND CONTINUOUS CRISIS THREATENS SUDAN'S TRANSITION

International assistance from Sudan's partners is dragging at a time when it's most needed, according to transition government officials. Steep economic inflation, country-wide floods, declining sales of crucial exports, and the ongoing COVID-19 crisis are just some of the issues facing the fledgling democracy. While analysts and government officials have highlighted how aid promised by international partners could mitigate the effects of these converging problems, benefactors are proving hesitant to follow through. The unfolding consequences could end up being devastating, ranging from growing grievances with a flailing central government to soaring commodity prices and a collapse of the Sudanese pound. (Reuters, September 15, 2020)

ETHIOPIAN MIGRANTS LANGUISH IN SAUDI PRISONS

An investigation by London's *Telegraph* newspaper has revealed a that, amid the COVID-19 pandemic, Saudi Arabia has been carrying out a mass detention of Ethiopian migrants - with "hundreds to a cell" in assorted prisons, and as many as 16,000 people per facility. These individuals, who initially traveled to the Kingdom *en masse* in search of employment and now make up 20 percent of the country's population, are kept in "heinous" conditions similar to Libyan slave camps and are subjected to physical and racial abuse by guards. The situation has so far drawn little comment from either the Saudi or the Ethiopian governments, however. The former has announced that it plans to "look into" the issue, while the latter has publicly thanked Riyadh for welcoming Ethiopians who made the trek to the Kingdom in search of work. (*Washington Post*, September 3, 2020; *Telegraph*, September 15, 2020)