



# Africa Political Monitor No. 12

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## ASIAN TENSIONS A BOON FOR AFRICA

The trade war between China and Australia has been a boon for South African wineries. Exports of wine from South Africa have jumped nearly 50% after the Chinese government slapped upward of 212% in tariffs on wines coming from Australia. Prior to the move, China was the destination for nearly 40% of Australia's wine exports – a commodity that Chinese drinkers are now obtaining from other sources, Africa prominent among them.

The wine industry is just one example of expanding Chinese-South African relations amid tensions between Beijing and Canberra, however. In January of this year, *Mining Weekly* reported that South African coal mines have begun exporting hundreds of thousands of tons of coal to China to compensate for supplies that the PRC previously obtained from Australia. (Reuters, February 10, 2021; *Mining Weekly*, January 10, 2021)

## 2020: THE YEAR OF TUNISIAN IMMIGRATION

Human rights groups have reported that the number of immigrants arriving in Europe from Tunisia increased fivefold, to 13,000, in 2020. The spike in migration – driven by economic stressors like high unemployment and rising inflation, as well as by ongoing political instability – comes as European tolerance toward African arrivals wears thin, especially after a Tunisian national carried out a terrorist attack in Nice, France last year. The European Union has placed increasing pressure on the Tunisian government to curb the swell of migrants, even as a deepening economic crisis and widespread protests roil the small North African nation, threatening regional stability. (Reuters, January 12, 2021; Organized Crime and Corruption Reporting Project, February 1, 2021)

## RUSSIAN VACCINES TO THE RESCUE

Much has been made globally of China's "vaccine diplomacy" toward foreign nations, including those in Africa. But the continent is also obtaining treatment for the coronavirus from another source: Russia. Russia is now on track to fulfill 10% of the continent's vaccine needs, after the African Union recently announced that the Kremlin had offered 300 million doses of its Sputnik-V vaccine to the bloc. Those doses will be made available beginning in May 2021, and supplement supplies of the Russian vaccine that are already being used in Algeria. While it is currently unclear how the 300 million doses will be distributed once they are provided, that amount is enough to vaccinate roughly 10% of Africa's 1.3 billion people.

African Union officials have been quoted in saying that the goal is to vaccinate 60% of the continent within the next three years. While foreign pharmaceutical companies have also promised hundreds of millions of vaccines to African countries and the AU, and domestically-produced vaccines have proven effective, provision of the Sputnik vaccine represents one of the largest such instances of health diplomacy directed at the continent to date. (Reuters, February 19, 2021)

## ERITREAN TROOPS BELIEVED BEHIND MASSACRE IN AXUM

Eritrean troops were the likely perpetrators of an overnight ethnic cleansing massacre in Northern Ethiopia. A report released by Amnesty International accuses the Eritrean armed forces of crimes against humanity after between 700-800 people were killed in Axum, a city in Ethiopia's Tigray region, during a 24 hour period last November, even as the Ethiopian army launched a concurrent offensive into the region. Most observers of the civil war in Tigray, which began in early November 2020, have claimed that the Eritrean and Ethiopian governments have coordinated efforts during the conflict. Early in the conflict, the Eritrean government denied any involvement, though it has since been more forthcoming about its role. However, Eritrean officials have rejected the Amnesty report's allegations.

For their part, foreign observers have had a range of responses to the violence. President Joe Biden has reportedly spoken with his counterpart in Kenya, which has security pacts with both the U.S. and Ethiopia and currently holds a seat on the United Nations Security Council, to pressure Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed to end the conflict and provide unfettered access to aid workers. Both the United States and the European Union have threatened to suspend aid to Ethiopia if the violence continues. Meanwhile, the Prime Minister of neighboring Sudan has called for an end to the violence, even as the Sudanese military engages in a low-level conflict with the Ethiopian Armed Forces over the territorial control of the al-Fashqa region. Meanwhile, the African Union, which is headquartered in Ethiopia, has so far not taken a stance on the conflict. (*Washington Post*, February 26, 2021)