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Related Categories: Arms Control and Proliferation; Human Rights and Humanitarian Issues; Public Diplomacy and Information Operations; Terrorism; Warfare; East Africa; North Africa; West Africa

ETHIOPIAN PEACE REMAINS ELUSIVE

Ethiopia's civil war, now over a year old, shows no signs of abating. Since the Fall, when Ethiopian forces launched a counteroffensive against the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) in the country's north, government forces appear to have gained the upper hand. However, the conflict continues to fester, with charges of atrocities and human rights abuses being leveled at both sides. The conflict has already cost thousands of lives, while hundreds of thousands more have been displaced by the fighting. More than one million Ethiopians are currently estimated to be in need of critical care and aid. (*Bloomberg*, November 30, 2021; *Reuters*, December 28, 2021)

TURKEY'S GROWING AFRICAN FOOTPRINT

The government of Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan is becoming a significant player in Africa. Economic and diplomatic ties between Ankara and African capitals have grown exponentially since the early 2000s, and Turkey currently employs some 25,000 people on the continent and has increased its embassies in Africa to 42 from 12 in 2005. Last year, Turkey's trade volume with the continent surpassed \$30 billion, and Ankara has expanded its humanitarian assistance to a number of African nations.

Turkey's defense trade with Africa is growing, too. The *Bayraktar TB2*, a Turkish drone manufactured by a company owned by the family of Erdogan's son-in-law, Selcuk Bayraktar, has played a conspicuous role in recent conflicts in Syria, Libya and Nagorno-Karabakh. It is also making its mark on the continent, with local newspapers commenting that Turkish drones "have tipped the scale in favor of the [Ethiopian] government forces, proving instrumental in stopping the advance of the Tigray rebels." And regional governments are taking notice; Algeria, Morocco, Niger, Rwanda and Tunisia are all said to have expressed an interest in the unmanned platforms. The growing African appetite for Turkish weaponry, in turn, fits neatly into Erdogan's plans; the Turkish head of state has staked out a goal of \$75 billion in annual trade volume between Turkey and the countries of the region – something which Turkish defense exports to the continent will help to achieve. (*Al-Monitor*, December 21, 2021)

ISLAMISM PLAGUES THE SAHEL

Africa's lawless Sahel region has long been a trouble-spot for transnational crime and trafficking, as well as Islamist activity. That last feature is worsening, according to a new study by the National Defense University's Africa Center for Strategic Studies. The Sahel, the Center lays out in a new report, is now experiencing a "surge" of extremist activity which has become the defining feature of the continent's fight with terrorism. Last year, it notes, there was a "near doubling in violence linked to Islamist militant groups," with the number of violent incidents rising from 1,180 to 2,005. "This spike," the study notes, "was the most significant change in any of the theaters of militant Islamist group violence in Africa and overshadowed a 30-percent average decline of violent activity in the Lake Chad Basin, northern Mozambique, and North Africa regions."

More broadly, the study notes, Islamism in Africa is generally concentrated in five trouble spots, each of which are made up of "distinct locally based actors and context-specific challenges." Those areas are the Sahel, where two groups – the Macina Liberation Front and the Islamic State of the Greater Sahara – dominate; Somalia, which is threatened by the militant al-Shabaab movement; the Lake Chad Basin, which is defined by the militancy of Boko Haram and its offshoot, the Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP); Mozambique, which is home to sporadic militancy by various groups; and North Africa, where the Islamic State remains active and where most militancy is concentrated around Egypt. (Africa Center for Strategic Studies, January 24, 2022)

U.S. PAUSES SUDAN AID AFTER RECENT VIOLENCE

The United States has announced that it is withholding aid from Sudan until the country's military rulers halt all killings of anti-coup protesters and hand over power to a civilian-led government. The decision comes after two American diplomats visited the country and met with pro-democracy civilians and military leaders. What they found left them contemplating punitive measures as well; the diplomats emphasized to the current military leadership that the U.S. "will consider measures to hold accountable those responsible for failure to move forward." In recent weeks, security forces have stepped up their crackdown on protestors and civil unrest stemming from the country's ongoing political instability (which saw Prime Minister Abdalla Hamdok removed from power, reinstated, and then subsequently leave office). (*VOA News*, January 20, 2022)

