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Related Categories: Democracy and Governance; Human Rights and Humanitarian Issues; International Economics and Trade; Public Diplomacy and Information Operations; Warfare; Corruption; Africa; East Africa; West Africa

KENYA TURNS THE PAGE

After a close and contested race, William Ruto was sworn in as Kenya's fifth President last month. After some initial resistance, Ruto's opponent, Raila Odinga, dropped his claims of electoral fraud and accepted the election results after the country's Supreme Court weighed in to affirm the integrity of the political contest. The peaceful transition of power is a positive change for the nation, which has a long history of violence that has plagued previous elections. In his inaugural speech, Ruto mentioned his plan to address the frustrations of many Kenyans, such as the government's inability to address rampant poverty and corruption. Ruto promised "to make police financially independent from the president's office," signaling plans to rid the state of corruption. He also mapped out plans to address the food shortages, resulting from drought and economic crisis plaguing East Africa, which have caused food and fuel prices to surge and unemployment and public debt to rise. One of Ruto's first acts, he pledged, will be to "make 40 million half-price bags of fertilizer available next week" to farmers. (Reuters, September, 13, 2022)

TENSIONS BETWEEN MALI, IVORY COAST ON THE RISE

Mali has detained 46 troops from Ivory Coast since their arrival at Bamako's airport in July, causing a diplomatic crisis between Mali and its West African neighbor. Ivory Coast claims those troops are being held hostage, as they were originally sent to Mali for a routine United Nations peacekeeping mission (MINUSMA), although the UN has been unclear about the actual role of these troops in the mission. Mali's military-led government, by contrast, claims it saw no supporting documents for MINUSMA among the soldiers, and so is accusing them of being mercenaries and charging them with conspiracy to harm state security. A source close to the Ivorian presidency has told the Agence France-Presse that while "Ivory Coast will continue to seek a solution through 'diplomatic channels,'" the situation "will not remain without consequences." Mali, too is making demands; Bamako is insisting that Ivory Coast express its regret for the deployment of the soldiers – a stipulation the Ivorian government rejects. (*AfricaNews*, September 12, 2022)

MOVEMENT TOWARD COMPROMISE IN ETHIOPIA'S CIVIL WAR?

After nearly two years of incessant violence, Tigrayan forces have said they will agree to a ceasefire and accept an African Union (AU)-led negotiation to bring an end to their long-running fight against Ethiopia's central government. Tigrayan forces released a statement signalling that their negotiating team is ready "without delay."

Despite these hopeful signals, there is still a long way to go before discussions can begin. The Tigray People's Liberation Front has demanded "free access for humanitarian aid and services such as banking and telephone links restored" – suggesting that negotiations (and compromises) take place before any ceasefire is reached. The Ethiopian government, however, has signaled that there can be no preconditions before the AU enters negotiations. A formal response on the matter, however, is still forthcoming from Addis Ababa. (Reuters, September 12, 2022)

LANDLOCKED NATIONS EYE NIGERIA'S NEW PORT

Nigeria's Lekki deep seaport is set to start dry runs and testing this Fall, and as it ramps up operations, the continent's landlocked nations are turning their attention to the commercial opportunities it could provide. Mali, Chad, and Niger have all expressed interest in routing their cargoes through the Lekki facility, which boasts a ship-to-shore crane and an updated IT system requiring minimal human interaction. Officials in Lagos are looking at the facility as a potential game changer in the country's economic outlook, because the facility will allow the country to receive bigger vessels and expand its share of continental shipping trade. (*The Sun News*, September 13, 2022)

WHAT AFRICAN PUBLICS REALLY THINK ABOUT CHINA

While views of China in the West are trending in a negative direction, views of the PRC throughout the developing world paint a very different picture. Africa is a case in point. In a poll of nearly 50,000 respondents throughout the continent conducted in 2021 by Afrobarometer, the majority said that they viewed China's economic and political influence in their country as "somewhat positive" or "very positive." These results were confirmed by a more recent survey, carried out this summer by the Ichikowitz Family Foundation, which found that positive views of China continue to predominate throughout the continent, especially among Africa's youth. (*Quartz Africa*, November 17, 2021; Ichikowitz Family Foundation, July 2022)

[EDITORS' NOTE: The subject of China's popularity in the developing world was the topic of a recent episode of AFPC's DISINFORMATION WARS podcast. In it, host Ilan Berman speaks with Eric Olander of the China-Global South Project about Chinese activities throughout Africa, and the disparity between the largely negative perceptions of the PRC which predominate in the developed West and the more complex, yet favorable, view of Beijing that exists in places like Africa. To listen to the episode, [click here](#).]