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Related Categories: Democracy and Governance; Energy Security; Science and Technology; Warfare; Corruption; Africa; Central Africa; East Africa; North Africa; South Africa; Southern Africa; West Africa

NIGERIA'S ELECTION IGNITES FURTHER DIVIDE AND DOUBT

Nigeria's recently elected president, Bola Tinubu, faces challenges to his legitimacy, having won less than fifty percent of the vote - the first time a president has ever done so in Nigeria's political history. This outcome was due, in part, to the country's lowest voter turnout since 1999. Moreover, the newly elected president's faith could also be the source of tension; Tinubu, a Muslim, succeeds another Muslim, thereby breaking the "power rotation among different regions and ethno-religious groups" that has traditionally held sway in the country. Adding to Tinubu's problems are interconnected domestic issues such as poverty, violent crime, and religious extremism. Despite Nigeria being a top global oil supplier, many Nigerians continue to face rampant poverty – a state of affairs that has given greater salience to Islamic extremists. (Associated Press, March 1, 2023)

FRANCE RETHINKS AFRICA

France's recent decision to pull back from West Africa came on the heels of growing anti-French sentiment, particularly in the Sahel. But French officials are not giving up on the continent. French President Emmanuel Macron, for instance, recently visited a number of African nations in an attempt to burnish his country's image. Macron's revamped Africa policy emphasizes that France seeks to be "long-term partners" on an equal footing with African nations. As proof, France has made concrete overtures such as dispatching humanitarian aid to eastern Congo. But the French government's outreach has met with a frosty welcome, with regional officials disparaging Macron's shuttle diplomacy. (Reuters, March 4, 2023)

UGANDA SEEKS NUCLEAR STATUS

In response to climate change, the African nation of Uganda is looking to transition to nuclear power as its principal energy source by 2031. To do so, Kampala has signed a "national nuclear corporation" deal with China, which is designed to assist the country's infrastructure and industries "use atomic energy for peace purposes." Uganda is expecting rising energy needs in the coming years, and has hit upon nuclear energy as the optimal means to meet them.

The news reflects the growing acceptance of nuclear capabilities by African governments. South Africa currently possesses the only operational nuclear power plant on the continent, although Russia is now helping the government of Egyptian president Abdel Fatah al-Sisi to establish a nuclear program in his country. (Reuters, March 9, 2023)

MALI'S REFERENDUM DELAYED ONCE MORE

Mali's democratic transition was set to take place in February 2024, but the country's ruling junta has delayed a planned referendum setting the stage for political change. Military authorities in Bamako say that the postponement is only temporary, and designed to get the electoral management authority up and running in all of the country's administrative regions. The West African state has undergone two military coups since 2020, and international pressure and sanctions eventually forced the current junta in power to restore a constitutional referendum. However, military leaders have stalled previous elections, citing a fraught security situation that has made the poll unfeasible. (Reuters, March 10, 2023)

DRC VIOLENCE PROMPTS AN EXODUS

Renewed clashes between local armed groups and the government forced 300,000 people to flee the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) in February alone. Moreover, according to the UN, tens of thousands of Congolese citizens continue to flee every week. Military groups, including the M23 militia, operate on the border of the DRC and Rwanda, making it more difficult for refugees to find safety and for international monitors to operate safely. Despite a putative ceasefire between M23 and the DRC government, instability has continued. (UN News, March 10, 2023)