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# Issue 362

## Of Eagle Eye Intelligence

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## NORTHEAST AFRICA: Dam Construction May Shift Power in Nile River Basin

**Summary:** Ethiopia may surpass Egypt as the regional hegemon upon completion of the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD). Cairo and Khartoum will almost certainly continue to oppose the GERD because of water shortage anxieties and mounting fears of a rising Ethiopian power. Beijing's sponsorship of the GERD dam and of Ethiopia may allow it to further its control of the region's critical infrastructure and waterways, such as the Blue Nile.

**Chinese Interest:** The Chinese-sponsored GERD will increase Ethiopia's power capacity while also threatening the freshwater supply of Sudan and Egypt. The dam's potential threat to Blue Nile water supplies in Egypt and Sudan remains contentious. Beijing continues to fund a significant part of the GERD, likely to continue its economic expansion into Africa. The international community criticizes Beijing for taking a neutral stance on the diplomatic conflict between the three Nile Basin countries. Beijing refuses to interfere in the affairs of sovereign nations but will help fund water infrastructure if needed after the dam's completion.

**Rise of Ethiopia:** Ethiopia's power in the region will almost certainly expand with completion of the GERD. Addis Ababa continues to view increased infrastructure and energy capabilities as an integral part of its rising power. The growth of the Ethiopian economy will probably bolster nationalism and place further emphasis on infrastructure projects such as the GERD. Exacerbated nationalism precipitated an influx of funding for the GERD from private Ethiopian donors. Ethiopia continues to outperform traditional geopolitical rivals such as Egypt in economic growth, with the help of significant local and foreign investment. Continued funding will probably allow Addis Ababa to challenge Egyptian regional hegemony and gain control of Nile water flows along with strategic political dominance in the Nile Basin area.

**Fall of Egypt:** Cairo likely views the GERD as a challenge to the geopolitical status quo in the Nile River Basin and its regional power. Development of Ethiopia's power infrastructure and establishment of a strong economic relationship with China probably disturbs Cairo, which views itself as the dominant power in the region. Egypt relies on the Nile River for agricultural production and views the GERD as Ethiopia's claim to dominance over the Nile. Egypt will almost certainly not agree to the finalization of the GERD without concessions in the technical and legal policies of the dam and will likely stall negotiations to gain a bargaining position. Egypt probably does not fear disrupted agricultural production as much as potential shifts in northeast African geopolitics that the project may catalyze.

**Changing Sudanese Involvement:** Khartoum's indecisiveness regarding the GERD project almost certainly reflects a desire to gain favor with Beijing while maintaining the best possible bargaining position. In 2011, Sudan joined Egypt in condemning the GERD. Khartoum's initial position of resistance likely stemmed from water shortages, flooding, and dependence on the Blue Nile for agriculture. Khartoum's change in position may have resulted from Sudan's indebtedness to China. Sudan likely feels threatened by the GERD, but has little choice due to

China's economic leverage over Sudan. As such, the GERD will almost certainly lead to water shortages in Sudan, increasing Khartoum's dependence on Chinese funded water infrastructure.

**Outlook and Implications:** Chinese investment in the GERD will probably bolster Ethiopian economic power in the Nile River Basin and indicates Beijing's growing interest in developing African infrastructure. Ethiopia's already expanding economy may outpace and directly challenge Egypt for regional hegemony. The control Addis Ababa may wield over Egypt and Sudan's agricultural economies will almost certainly expedite this regional power shift. China will probably exploit Egypt and Sudan's insecurities to offer further economic aid and increase its influence in Africa. The GERD will likely place Addis Ababa in a stronger bargaining position regarding further negotiations over usage of the Blue Nile. Ethiopia may grant Egypt and Sudan limited concessions for partial control of the dam or aid, allowing both Egypt and Sudan to save face.

Cairo and Khartoum will almost certainly denounce completion of the GERD without gaining significant control over the dam's operational procedures and policies. Cairo's declining influence in the region has left it with few options to prevent the dam's completion. This demonstrates its reliance on the limited concessions from Ethiopia regarding the technical and legal policies of the dam's operation. However, Sudan's strategic change of position may allow it to gain concessions or aid, but it will probably also suffer financially from the dam's completion.

Beijing will likely take advantage of Khartoum and Cairo's growing regional weakness to gain further control of regional finances and critical infrastructure. By sponsoring an Ethiopian hegemony, China gained influence over the Blue Nile, a critical waterway of the Nile basin region. Beijing then sponsored the GERD dam to both cement Ethiopian hegemony in the region, gain direct control over the Blue Nile, and diminish Egyptian and Sudanese power. Beijing's probably seeks to foster dependence on Chinese aid and infrastructure in northeast Africa. Beijing's refusal to intervene and ease tensions between countries probably reflects an attempt to hide its long-term goals. Further diplomatic tensions will likely prompt further Chinese economic involvement in northeast Africa.

[Emma Sanders, Ethan Theobald, Max Olson]

## INDIA: Retaliation for Recent China-backed Cyber-attacks Unlikely

**Summary:** New Delhi's lack of response to Beijing-backed hacker group Transparent Tribe's cyber-attack after conflict in Ladakh may deter an all-out cyber-war and economic disruption while bolstering its cyber capabilities.

**Development:** On 28 September, the hacker group Transparent Tribe launched the cyber-attack campaign "Operation SideCopy" against New Delhi to steal critical infrastructure and strategic data. A June 2020 military clash in Ladakh had resulted in the death of 20 Indian soldiers and the western command of China's People's Liberation Army (PLA) claim of sovereignty over the Galwan River Valley. Tensions between the two countries has continued to escalate and recently developed into cyber-warfare. By exploiting social engineering and a software flaws, Transparent Tribe gained access and stole critical information from India's government.

**Analysis:** New Delhi's lack of cyber capabilities and past restraint on cyber-attacks indicate a low probability of Indian reprisal. Traditional retaliation seems unlikely due to a lack of action from New Delhi, indicating a desire to deescalate tensions and avoid economic losses from lack of Chinese imports. If cyber-attacks continue, India may seek a multinational cyber coalition to strengthen its cyber capabilities, knowledge, and resources to dissuade future cyber-attacks.

[Jesse Hix]

## SAUDI ARABIA: Alliance with Japan Might Lead to Military Influence in the Region

**Summary:** Developing bilateral diplomatic and military relations between Japan and Saudi Arabia may prompt efforts to ease tensions and bring stability to the Middle East through increased military power.

**Development:** On 3 October, Saudi Arabian Minister of Foreign Affairs Prince Faisal bin Farhan bin Abdullah discussed bilateral relations and prospects for joint cooperation with Japanese Foreign Minister Toshimitsu Motegi. Motegi stated that Tokyo's willingness to support Riyadh's public and private sectors remains unwavering. On 13 January, Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman expressed support of Japan's military within the Middle East. Riyadh and Tokyo confirmed intentions to cooperate in the region.

**Analysis:** Riyadh and Tokyo's announcement of unwavering support for each other's diplomatic influence may signal an increased Japanese military presence in the Middle East. Stability in the Middle East remains crucial to Tokyo because of its reliance on oil imports from Riyadh. The nature of military cooperation remains unclear, due to Tokyo's post war constitution prohibiting Japan from engaging in offensive actions and Japan's reliance on Riyadh for around 90% of its crude oil imports. This economic relationship may lead to Japan increasing diplomatic efforts to ease tensions in the region. Although the Japanese post war constitution prohibits it from engaging in offensive actions, its need for access to energy supplies from Riyadh may overshadow restrictions and lead to a greater presence of defensive forces. Riyadh's bilateral ties with Tokyo remain crucial to diversify its economy and could possibly help de-escalate the tension in the region. Riyadh and Tokyo's shared interest in bringing peace to the region may prompt the further development of diplomatic relations between the two countries.

[Maggie van Dyken]



## **SYRIA: Accusations Against Turkey to Increase Tensions and Military Conflict**

**Summary:** Syrian government officials accused Turkey of sponsoring terrorism and committing war crimes, potentially prompting more violent conflict in northwestern Syria.

**Development:** On 26 September, at the United Nations General Assembly, Syria's Deputy Prime Minister Walid al-Muallem accused Turkey of sponsoring terrorism and committing war crimes against Syrian citizens. Al-Muallem implied that Syria will take any needed action to remove Turkey, even if the actions break international law. Turkey rejected the allegations and accused the Syrian Regime of committing its own violations of international law. General Coordinator of the Egyptian People's Committee for Solidarity with the Syrian People Hisham Lotfi agreed that the international community must hold Turkey responsible for crimes against humanity in Syria and Libya. Following the General Assembly, Turkey increased its military presence in occupied Syrian bases, including at least 15 armed vehicles.

**Analysis:** Military conflict between Ankara and Damascus will probably increase and may result in more violent conventional ground warfare. An augmented Turkish military presence will likely prompt both sides to build up defensive capabilities in anticipation of an attack. The potential for militarization combined with Damascus' disregard for international law will almost certainly escalate tensions and military conflicts. If conflict in northern Syria escalates further, Russian forces may intervene to mitigate tensions between Turkish and Syrian forces. The international community may seek a diplomatic resolution, but its success remains doubtful as conflict grows more complex.

[Tianna Sardelli]

## **RUSSIA: Armenia and Azerbaijani Conflict May Prompt Russian Involvement**

**Summary:** Increasing tensions between Armenia and Azerbaijani may lead to Russian intervention due to the threat Azerbaijani forces pose to Russian influence and control within the region, despite currently seeking diplomatic alternatives to violence in the Caucasus Region.

**Development:** On 29 September, tensions between Ankara and Moscow escalated when Turkish forces shot down an Armenian aircraft. Moscow supports Armenia in the conflict, although it maintains economic ties with both Yerevan and Baku through arms dealings. The Russian military occupies a base in Armenia and maintains a defense agreement with Yerevan. Armenian attacks on civilian locations led to Ankara's proclamation of solidarity with Azerbaijani forces, further escalating the conflict. Representatives from nations worldwide, including Moscow, called for an end to the conflict. On 30 September, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov offered to host talks of de-escalation between Armenian and Azerbaijani ministers.

**Analysis:** The increase of conflicts between Armenian and Azerbaijani forces may prompt direct Russian military involvement. Continued escalation may also lead to foreign involvement to assist in peace pursuits. Russian troops may mobilize in Armenia to deter Turkish aggression in the Nagorno-Karabakh region and attempt to foster diplomatic solutions to prevent actions by foreign entities. If large-scale conflicts occur, Moscow may lose influence within the region due to conflicting interests over arms dealings. This will likely push Moscow to facilitate peace in the region to protect economic and territorial interests. Moscow will probably try to contain the situation quickly to avoid foreign influence in the region.

[Zachary Neal]



## CHINA: Naval Drills in Preparation for Potential Conflict May Exacerbate Tensions

**Summary:** China's naval drills demonstrate offensive preparations for conflict over resources in the South China Sea (SCS) that may escalate tensions with Taiwan

**Development:** On 28 September, China's navy conducted simultaneous drills in disputed territory near the Parcel Islands of the SCS, the East China Sea (ECS), and Bohai Sea (BS). These areas hold large oil and mineral deposits and provide important trade routes for Southeast Asian nations. This follows a number of aircraft deployment drills in the Taiwan Strait on 18 September. Taiwan condemned Beijing's increasingly hostile actions due to concern over Taiwanese sovereignty and Chinese expansionism. Tensions continue to rise in the region despite freedom of navigation exercises aimed at preventing Chinese aggression.

**Analysis:** Beijing's military operations in the SCS will almost certainly heighten tensions with Southeast Asian nations and the international community. Sustained Chinese military aggression indicates Beijing's intentions to cultivate influence and access resources in the SCS, ECS, and BS. Beijing will almost certainly maintain its naval and air operations to project power and deter opposition. Disputes of control of resources and trade routes will probably continue despite attempts to curb China's operations. Direct conflict remains unlikely, especially if the international community expresses support for Taiwan.

[Savannah Gallop and Isabella Clark]

## JAPAN: Space Development Plans May Serve as Deterrent Mechanism

**Summary:** The Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency (JAXA) announced intentions to increase its space, satellite, and scientific presence to establish dominance in the space industry. Tokyo may also seek to bolster its defense amid rising tensions with Russia, North Korea, and China.

**Development:** On 28 September, JAXA announced possible lunar exploration in the mid-2030s through the generation of fuel from water in the moon's ice deposits. Reportedly, a vehicle designed to use this fuel could transport up to four astronauts to and from a planned lunar orbit space station, Gateway, which would extend travel without needing extra fuel from Earth, thereby significantly cutting costs. Concurrently, foreign uncertainty about newly elected Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga and other uses for this technology have heightened tensions between Japan and its adversaries.

**Analysis:** Japan may be preparing to use its projects to deter against future attacks amid its growing tensions with Russia, North Korea, and China. While Tokyo maintains a peaceful role in space, rising tensions between neighboring powers may make engaging in defensive space operations necessary. If Tokyo uses JAXA's developments to prepare for a possible attack, that could indicate increasingly tumultuous East-Asian tensions.

[Hannah Barsema]

## SINGAPORE: Criticism Will Likely Jeopardize People's Action Party

**Summary:** The People's Action Party's (PAP) censorship of the South East Asian freedom advocacy group New Naratif will likely prompt opposition parties to condemn PAP and deteriorate the party's longstanding political dominance, possibly precipitating a shift in Singapore's political landscape.

**Development:** On 28 September, Paul Tambyah, Chairman of the Singapore Democratic Party (SDP), called for a change in Singapore's Elections Department (ED) due to its hostility towards New Naratif. Tambyah voiced concern about the treatment of activists and independent journalists in the country. On 21 September, the ED filed a police report resulting in the arrest of New Naratif's leader, Thumb Ping Tjin. New Naratif's platform promotes democracy, freedom of expression, and freedom of information in Southeast Asia. Goals of the SDP also include working to ensure that PAP does not use its current power to restrict the opposing parties' free speech. PAP's efforts against free speech diminished support for the party in the July election.

**Analysis:** Increased media attention and continuing accusations of PAP censorship will almost certainly result in political losses for the party in upcoming elections. Tambyah's allegations of ED's vulnerability to corruption may affect voting trends. ED's alleged ability to manipulate election results may also decrease voter turnout. Continued public dissatisfaction with the PAP will probably result in a rise in popularity and votes for the SDP, indicating a large shift in political dominance. The PAP's success in the upcoming elections hinges on its ability to further suppress opposition platforms/organizations.

[Madison Jackson]

## About GSIS

Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University's (ERAU) Bachelor of Science in Global Security & Intelligence Studies (GSIS) degree program at our Prescott Campus blends both academic and professional studies to equip students with the knowledge and skills necessary to become future leaders in intelligence, security, and law enforcement. The program provides students with a sound foundation in the liberal arts, including international relations, foreign languages and cultures, international law, foreign policy, political and military history, and other essential topics.

## About EE

Eagle Eye Intelligence (EE) is an intelligence and research organization led by the students of the GSIS program at ERAU in Prescott, Arizona.

Dr. Philip E. Jones founded EE and Embry-Riddle's GSIS program in 2002, following a career with the Central Intelligence Agency and consulting work in international development and global security. Professor Dale R. Avery, a former career intelligence analyst at the Central Intelligence Agency and Office of the Director of National Intelligence, serves as EE's faculty advisor.

EE strives to provide actionable intelligence and analysis to its customers during the academic year. We are driven by a number of goals – continuous development, nonpartisanship, interdisciplinary studies, global awareness, and professionalism.

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Riley Coder, a senior in the GSIS program, currently serves as EE's Editor in Chief. For questions or comments, contact the team at [editorsee@gmail.com](mailto:editorsee@gmail.com) or Professor Avery at 928.777.4708.

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