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# Issue 369

## Of Eagle Eye Intelligence

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## MOZAMBIQUE: Escalating Insurgency Poses Threat to Long-Term Security and Stability

**Summary:** The Ahlu-Sunnah wa-Jama (ASWJ) will almost certainly continue to escalate its insurgency as it gains legitimacy through a nominal partnership with the Islamic State affiliates, destabilizing the northern provinces of Mozambique. Government security forces will probably maintain the current military-focused counterinsurgency strategy, which enables ASWJ's recruitment and alienates local populations. Foreign assistance may help to mitigate the insurgent threat, but success remains unlikely unless Maputo adopts non-military counterinsurgency tactics to cultivate support and reduce the social grievances that drive the insurgency.

**Expanding Insurgency:** In November, Maputo announced intentions to launch joint counterinsurgency operations with Tanzanian forces against ASWJ. ASWJ maintained a low-level insurgency since 2017 but escalated its strategy in 2020, doubling the number of attacks from the previous year and forcing government security forces out of Mocímboa da Praia in August. Impoverished youth formed the organization in 2015 with the goal of altering economic and social structures to benefit the Mwani, a Muslim ethnic minority group with grievances against the mostly Catholic majority and Maputo due to perceived inequities in the natural gas and ruby trade. The Islamic State Central Africa Province (IS-CAP) officially adopted ASWJ as its Mozambican-wing in June 2019, although its ties remain blurred by divergent strategic goals. IS-CAP pledged to support ASWJ against foreign intervention from both South Africa and Tanzania.

**Governance Failures:** Neglect of Mozambicans through human rights abuses, economic stagnation, and inaction almost certainly has inspired deep public resentment towards the government and provides a fragile situation for insurgents to exploit. The FRELIMO party led by President Filipe Nyusi has consolidated power since Mozambique gained independence from Portugal in 1975. Since its inception, the FRELIMO party of Mozambique remains plagued with corruption and neglect for most of its civilians. The party continues to oversee several large economic ventures such as the lucrative natural gas deposits discovered in 2009 in the northern Cabo Delgado province. However, the administration severely mismanaged the allocation of the acquired oil wealth, thus instigating conflict with the opposition group, RENAMO, while Islamic insurgents quickly exploited the aftermath of fighting.

**Environmental Factors:** A neglect of the environment by the government has probably fostered severe resentment and a desire by the people to look for a new form of leadership to guide them out of corruption and poverty. Coupled with preceding factors, the environmental threats to Mozambique inflate the exploitability of the fragile country. In recent decades, Mozambique suffered several floods and several devastating cyclones including Cyclone Idai in Spring of 2019 which killed over 1,000 people. The surge in storm frequency and power comes from the slight warming of the Indian Ocean. Despite several clear indicators and known flood risks, the FRELIMO administration has failed repeatedly in protecting the lives and security of its citizens.

Coupled with devastating floods, food insecurity runs rampant through most of middle and northern Mozambique allowing many Islamic insurgents to gain popularity by providing food to the impoverished of Mozambique.

**Strategic Decision-making:** ASWJ's use of strategic violence and minimal occupation has almost certainly restricted Mozambican security forces' ability to combat the expanding insurgency. Limited control of territory allows the organization to expand at a sustainable rate while fortifying its structure and reducing vulnerabilities. The group's leadership has exploited the weaknesses of conventional military forces, infiltrating its ranks and prompting overreactions that fuel social grievances and drive ASWJ recruitment. ASWJ leveraged control of Mocímboa da Praia's ports to expand its maritime presence, increase attacks against northern district capitals, and foster material and popular support from locals.

**Outlook and Implications:** The escalating insurgency in Mozambique will almost certainly destabilize the northern provinces as government security forces struggle to quell violence. Maputo's harsh counterinsurgency strategy will probably serve to exacerbate the conflict as harming the civilian population indirectly promotes ASWJ's recruitment efforts. IS-CAP will likely continue to support and enable the growth of ASWJ as it seeks to expand its presence across Africa despite each organization's disparate long-term goals. ASWJ will almost certainly remain focused on local issues while IS-CAP expands its transnational operations in Central Africa. The leadership of ASWJ will probably maintain the group's strategy of limited violence and conservative territory control. However, if the group overreaches in its occupation, ASWJ may prove vulnerable to the government's military-focused counterinsurgency strategy.

The FRELIMO administration will likely intervene in the insurgency's territorial claim of the resource-rich Cabo Delgado province as it poses a heightened threat to natural gas deposits and ruby mines. With such a large time gap between the initial insurgence and the current situation, the government may continue biding its time until it gains foreign aid. This waning morale mixed with conflicting views between top government officials including President Nyusi and Defense Minister Jaime Neto may result in the failure of any government intervention. While Mozambican security forces would likely not succeed in driving out ASWJ on their own, Maputo will likely seek foreign assistance through neighboring African countries and other global powers to successfully reclaim the vital province.

Although long-term foreign intervention remains unlikely, Tanzania will probably assist Mozambican counterinsurgency operations in the short-term to mitigate the risks of a high-intensity conflict proximate to its southern border. Additionally, South Africa may seek to broker peace as the insurgency strains regional trade and diplomatic relations. However, Pretoria will probably remain hesitant to intervene unless the insurgency poses a direct threat to its interests in the broader Central or South African regions.

[Riley Coder and Tim Fergus]

## CHINA: Military Advancements Display Readiness for Territorial Aggression

**Summary:** Beijing continues to display aggression towards India and Taiwan to exercise control over land under the One China Policy. While this may represent an ultimate motivating factor, Beijing seems willing to negotiate in some circumstances, including with India in the conflict over the Line of Actual Control (LAC). However, Taiwan receives more threatening treatment, which will likely result in direct military conflict.

**Chinese Unification:** Beijing's insistence on fulfilling its One China Policy continues to spur its conflicts with India and Taiwan. China's goals of reunification with Taiwan and the reclamation of any disputed territories with other countries, including parts of the South China Sea (SCS) and territory near the LAC remain. In Beijing's interaction with New Delhi, Beijing has strategically taken small actions with moderate significance that build up over time into a higher importance string of events that have the potential for conflict. Beijing has continually performed drills in the SCS near Taiwan. Trade routes run through the SCS, making it a point of interest for most countries especially China. Trade routes for oil run directly through the disputed territory in the SCS that China claims as its own. Gaining control of these trade routes would give Beijing direct control Taiwan's imports and exports.

**Increasing Conflict with India:** Beijing will likely continue to pursue conflict with India until it has the disputed territory under its control. The conflict stems from an ill-defined line between China and India drawn six decades ago. Both Beijing and New Delhi are competing to develop roads and infrastructure to gain control of the disputed land. In August, New Delhi claimed that Beijing tried to provoke conflict, and in September Beijing claimed that New Delhi fired at China's People's Liberation Army (PLA) troops.

**Rising Tensions with Taiwan:** China's attempts to provoke Taiwan to the point of conflict will almost certainly continue despite disapproval from the international community. President Xi Jinping stated his wish for "the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation" by reclaiming Taiwan. Xi will almost certainly continue his pursuit of Taiwan throughout his presidency to solidify his legacy through the successful reunification of China. To achieve this, Beijing conducted several drills in the SCS over the course of several months. The most notable drill occurred on Taiwan's Double Tenth Day, a celebration of the region's foundations. The celebration potentially served to bolster support of independence among Taiwan's citizens. Beijing described the drill as a Taiwan invasion drill where it used drones, special forces, and airborne troops. While these tactics seem aggressive, the probability of Beijing making the first overtly offensive move remains low. If Beijing starts the conflict, it would cause backlash from the international community. To avoid making such a move while still prioritizing preparation for a SCS conflict, Beijing has promoted the creation of artificial intelligence (AI) Taiwan invasion simulations and is encouraging the youth to get involved. In addition to promoting China's strength against Taiwan, this activity also encourages the support from China's citizens by allowing them to interact in the conflict. This strategic move almost certainly continues to intimidate Taiwan and

help Beijing prepare for conflict while managing to keep actions civil enough to avoid repercussions.

**Increased Military Power:** While the probability of conflict increases with both Taiwan and India through militarization, Beijing will almost certainly continue to strengthen its military. In September, Xi outlined the imminent importance of preparing for war when he visited the Chinese Marines. On 29 October, Beijing released its plan for full modernization of its military by 2027. This likely indicates Beijing's intent to continue the LAC and SCS conflicts. Beijing recently turned to private manufacturers to provide PLA troops with upgraded military equipment and drones in order to increase the number of strikes and improve reconnaissance, and transport capabilities. Further, Moscow displayed support for Beijing when it offered a military alliance. The two countries held successful military drills in the past and display a strong ability to work together. However, Beijing remains silent on whether it accepts Moscow's proposal.

**Outlook and Implications:** Beijing will likely continue its efforts towards increasing military innovations to provide more security for itself if an increase in conflict occurs. The additional occurrence of drills in the SCS remains high especially if tensions with India and Taiwan continue to rise. Currently, the LAC disengagement talks seem to have placed a hold on violence, but the longevity of that remains questionable. Although disengagement talks detail a plan for removal of both China and India from the disputed region. However, Beijing will not likely let the disputed territory go even if it results in a buffer zone due to its historic and cultural significance. In the short-term, Beijing will probably continue its provocation of Taiwan. However, the immediate threat to Taiwan remains low unless it starts official conflict.. If Beijing joins in any additional conflict or if its current conflicts intensify, Beijing will probably accept Russia's alliance proposal.

[Savannah Gallop]

## **SYRIA: Assad's Near Victory Will Likely Prompt Economic Reform**

**Summary:** President Bashar al-Assad, will likely prioritize economic reform as the Syrian economy declines during the Syrian Civil War. Regaining control of certain regions, removing Turkish forces, and retaining constant Russian support may embolden Assad with the power to end the war. However, ending the war may only lead to increased public recognition of the worsening economic state in Syria, likely prompting a need for reform.

**Civil War:** In March 2011, Damascus erupted into an ongoing civil war. Assad's alleged war crimes and poor economic control prompted counteraction while he fights to sustain his family's 50-year reign. The domestic parties engaged in the war include Assad's Regime, Syrian rebels, and the Islamic State (IS). The rebels claim to fight for political freedom and governmental reform, as accusations of war crimes against Syrian citizens by Assad create constant unrest. Other countries involved themselves in the conflict, with Russia and Iran supporting Damascus and the US, Turkey, and Saudi Arabia backing the rebels.

**Controlled States:** In September 2019, Assad's forces controlled the majority of Syria. However, Damascus' control did not include critical regions such as Tanf and the northwest corner of Syria controlled by rebels, the Doubayat Gas Field controlled by the IS, and Al Kara'a, Al Safa and the northwest region of Syria controlled by other groups. By July 2020, Assad regained control of these missing places. Damascus overtook Al Kara'a and Al Safa completely and most of the region around the Doubayat Gas Field. Assad closed in around the northeastern Syria, now completely controlling the city of Aleppo and more of the region around Idlib.

**Foreign Intervention:** The decrease of Turkey's military presence in Northwest may allow Assad to regain control lost territory and thus gaining more power. On 19 October, Turkish forces from the northwest region of Syria withdrew while consolidating in another area within the same region. Assad's soldiers surrounded Turkish troops, thus evacuating their observation post in a retreat to other areas. On 10 November, more Turkish military withdrew from a post near the M5 highway and began leaving a post in the city of Aleppo, only to arrive in Idlib. Increasing Russian support will likely boost Assad's strength and control over the northwest corner of Syria. Moscow led many airstrikes on the province of Idlib, violating a ceasefire placed in March. Russian support for Damascus continues to grow and materialize in the military action by Moscow in the northwest region of Syria. Russia's superior military likely provided for much of Assad's success in regaining control over Syria and constantly aids Damascus in the war to gain support for Moscow.

**Economic Crisis:** The Syrian economy will likely undergo reform in order to stabilize the country and civilian happiness. Overall, the civil war diminished the size of the Syrian economy to about one-third of its size before fighting broke out. The decrease largely comes from inflation and increased prices for consumer goods. Before the war, one US dollar equaled about 50 Syrian pounds, but now a dollar values at 3,500 Syrian pounds. Because of this, consumer good prices doubled and even tripled in some places. Basic food staples like sugar, coffee, flour, and rice cost

more than 1,500 Syrian pounds. Inflation also caused a large rift between classes in Syria and put over 80% of the population in poverty. Many civilians wait in lines for hours for foodstuffs while grain shortages arise across Syria making bread even more valuable. The grain shortages come from recent fires that spread across Syria. The current Bread Crisis portrays the deteriorating economy as shortages and inflation combine to push more citizens into poverty. The continuing deterioration of the Syrian economy may arise as an even more important crisis than the civil war, especially as Assad gains more control. If he does not plan to resolve the crisis, more uprisings could occur.

**Outlook and Implications:** With the power and strength gained from controlling more geographical area, Damascus will likely win the civil war against the rebels while possibly suppressing them for good or more likely suppressing them for a short amount of time as the economic crisis likely takes precedence. Foreign intervention will likely hold a significant impact on the end of the war. Ankara likely withdrew forces due to a desire to keep tensions low with Moscow, and it will likely continue to disengage. Russian support for Damascus will likely provide more aid to Assad in defeating the opposition, especially without Ankara backing the rebels in the areas they previously occupied. Foreign interactions between Ankara and Moscow will likely lead to a victory for Damascus over the opposition, leaving Assad in power. The combination of Ankara pulling out and increased Russian support may lead to a victory for Assad in Idlib which proves crucial in defeating the opposition overall.

The deterioration of the Syrian economy will likely take the spotlight and prompt reform after the predicted war ending. Although Assad will likely regain control over the entirety of Syria, many of those loyal to Assad might feel exasperated over the deterioration of the economy in Syria. Assad's focus on the civil war may have caused a more rapid decay of the economy as he directed funds toward foreign and domestic military support. As the war winds down, it will likely prove more evident to Syrian civilians and officials that economic changes need to occur. The continuation of Assad's rule will likely bring attention to the constant economic strife as he has focused mainly on the war in the past. Once the war ends, Assad will likely start tackling the economic issues within Syria, and if he does not, the idea of a power change may manifest like it did at the beginning of the civil war. If Assad identifies new goals and priorities, he could completely regain the support of loyalists and perhaps some of the opposition. Assad's near victory will likely prompt economic reform as the rest of the Syrian population recognizes the diminishing economy.

[Tianna Sardelli]



## **RUSSIA: New Naval Base in Sudan Likely Signals Continuation of Africa Policy**

**Summary:** The announcement of the creation of a Russian naval base in Sudan likely signals the success of Moscow's policy in Africa and that Russia wants to continue its efforts. The announcement follows a series of arms exports, military training, and the deployment of Private Military Companies (PMCs) to various war-torn African nations likely aimed to acquire political leverage for Russia to gain access to Africa's resources and strategic locations. The new naval base in Sudan will likely act as a logistical hub for Russian operations in Africa and neighboring bodies of water.

**Increased Involvement:** On 16 November, Russian President Vladimir Putin approved the creation of a naval facility in Sudan. This comes after a history of arms sales, training, and the deployment of Moscow Associated PMCs to Sudan and several other African nations. According to Second Line of Defense, Moscow's exportation of arms to Africa totaled \$15 billion USD and 13% of Russia's total arms exports. Additionally, Moscow has provided military training to African nations and augmented those nations' militaries through the use of the PMC Wagner Group. In early 2018, Moscow installed a former Russian intelligence official as the national security adviser in the Central African Republic (CAR) and installed officials in other African nations. In April 2018, Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania, and Niger sought aid from Russia to fight Islamic terrorism. Moscow sought energy resources in African nations including Senegal, Uganda, and Nigeria, according to the New York Times. Bangui sold mining rights at a loss to Moscow in exchange for military training, according to the New York Times.

**Increased Port Access:** Russia has sought warm water ports for hundreds of years and the construction of the first permanent Russian foothold in Africa since the end of the Cold War, a port in Sudan, likely signals a continuation of that trend. Through the port in Sudan, Russia will gain access to a logistical hub that it will likely use for further operations in Africa, the Red and Arabian Seas, and the Indian Ocean. Moscow likely hopes that the expansion of its sphere of influence will re-solidify its reputation as a global power. The success of Moscow's expansion in Sudan will likely prompt it to increase its efforts in other African nations.

**Natural Resource Driven Involvement:** Moscow's interest in Africa likely includes Africa's resources. Through continued investment in various African nations' militaries and infrastructure, Moscow secured numerous mining contracts and access to other resources. Russian arms sales, training, and PMCs gave Moscow political leverage over the poorer African nations likely due to the numerous conflicts in Africa. This remains evident in Sudan and the CAR where Wagner Group has conducts operations and receives payment in gold and diamonds which Moscow likely benefits from. Moscow increased its political control of African nations through the placement of current and former Russian officials as key members of those nations' governments and as advisors to their leaders. This likely further aided Russia's efforts to secure rights to financially lucrative and strategically important resources found in Africa.

**Economic Incentives:** With Russia's economy stagnating, Moscow likely hopes to boost its economy through the supply of arms, equipment, and training to the many African nations engaged in conflict. Moscow likely hopes to gain political leverage to achieve its goals in Africa while boosting its own economy through the establishment of these diplomatic ties. African nations subject to Russia's arms exports have sold resource extraction rights to Moscow at a loss, likely fearing that Moscow could cut off such sales. The African nations likely fear that a loss of weaponry imports, training, and interest would lead to destabilization of countries. Moscow may play into these fears in order to ensure the continuation of sales and creation of a large profit.

**Outlook and Implications:** Due to the success of its efforts in Sudan, Moscow will likely continue its policies in other parts of Africa. Moscow will likely display this in the form of arms and equipment exports, military and industrial training, PMC deployments, and strategic placement of officials in African governments. Additionally, Moscow will likely seek to acquire an airbase in Africa to enhance its expeditionary capability, and further cement its influence on strategically important nations identifiable by a waning western influence, internal conflicts, and abundant resources.

African nations will likely grow more enticed to seek aide from Russia in effort to create more political and civil stability. Moscow's lack of concern over human rights abuses will likely negatively affect Africa as Moscow seeks to achieve its goals by any means necessary. Finally, while Russia's economy will likely benefit from the influx of African resources and increased exports, it will unlikely prove enough to solve Russia's economic problems. Russia's economic exploitation of Africa will probably provide a temporary fix to give Moscow the time and resources to find a more permanent solution to its economic troubles.

[Rhett Caron]

## 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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