



# MIDDLE EAST STUDIES

AT THE MARINE CORPS UNIVERSITY

*MES Insights - Volume 12, Issue 5 - October 2021*

## **Specters of the Past, Prospects for the Future? Russian Engagement in the Horn of Africa**

Dr. Stig Jarle Hansen

Russia's interest in Africa has increased in recent years as it seeks to present itself as an alternative to U.S. power or, based on the core of the so-called Primakov Doctrine, to "position itself as an independent center of power on the world stage, contributing to the development of a multipolar world as an alternative to the U.S.-led unipolar order." (1)

However, Russia is no China, United States, or even the old Soviet Union. Russia's resources are limited by the size of its national economy, limiting its ability to strategically use economic investment, market access, and foreign aid in the same way or at the same level as the U.S. and China.

Russia also has armed forces with limited capacity for engaging in military interventions in Africa or elsewhere abroad. Unlike China, Russia is not currently capable of implementing large-scale infrastructure programs and providing extensive economic support to other countries, nor will it be able or willing to come to the military rescue of an ally in Africa or conduct larger scale military operations, as the U.S. and France were capable and willing to do in the recent past. Russia also lacks stable allies with influence in the region and its cooperation with China, although picking up, is still very limited outside East Asia and remains plagued with distrust.

Yet, despite these challenges and limitations, Russia does have some advantages as well. President Vladimir Putin has a record of punching above his weight militarily, as demonstrated by Russian-sponsored strategic victories in Syria and Ukraine. These strategic successes were partly the result of inaction and a hesitancy to engage by Western governments as well as the latter's isolation of regimes violating human rights. However, Russia also has several advantages. Russia can also draw upon former Soviet-era connections in East Africa in the areas of education, technology, and arms exports. Many of the countries in the Horn of Africa have weapons systems and military equipment of Soviet origin, and the national militaries of many East African countries also have older officers who were trained at the Soviet Union's Frunze Military Academy as well as engineers and researchers trained at Soviet-era Russian universities. Russia also has relatively efficient technology for mineral and natural resource extraction as well as energy production, which can be used to attract regional allies. The Russian arms sector is still large, producing comparatively cheap weapons and munitions, and it still carries some weight at the global level, with Russia being the second largest arms exporter in the world and the biggest arms supplier in Africa. (2)

### **MES at MCU DISCLAIMER**

The opinions and conclusions expressed herein are those of the individual author and do not necessarily represent the views of either the Marine Corps University or any other governmental agency. Any references to this newsletter should include the foregoing statement.

**This article is the second in a two-part series on great power competition in Africa. See Vol. 12, Issue 3 for the first on China.**

The fragmented nature of Russian governance has resulted in a foreign policy that is formed less by a central doctrine and, as expressed by Kirsti Stuvøy, more by political entrepreneurs such as businessmen, diplomats, journalists, athletes, artists, and, in some cases, even organized criminal groups who attempt to influence foreign powers to achieve what they think are the Kremlin's goals in order to gain favor from Putin and his government. (3) Mark Galotti refers to this as an "ad hococracy" where what matters most is not a stated formal position in the Russian bureaucracy or in a Russian political party, but a person's usefulness to the Kremlin. This somewhat anarchic approach to foreign policymaking means that Russian influence is hard to predict and estimate as well as counter. Russia has also gained experience in using private military groups with possible ties to the Kremlin, such as the Wagner Group, to promote Russian interests abroad, allowing both deniability and the illusion of non-interference. Russia also has refined techniques for influencing foreign public opinion and political campaigns through online propaganda and information operations efforts, which are often conducted by semi-private actors and so-called troll factories allegedly backed by the Russian state.

Russia uses all of these advantages in the Horn of Africa and the Red Sea zone with some success, though it has also faced problems in generating sustained desired results. For example, Russia faces problems in securing a Red Sea naval base, attempting to sway Somaliland, Eritrea, Djibouti, and Sudan, but thus far seemingly always being outbid by the U.S. Yet, Russia's toolkit may open up some opportunities in the Horn of Africa, and it presents outsiders with an opportunity to study Russian politics outside of the frequently studied Ukrainian, Georgian, Syrian and Western European and North American cases.

### **The Pariah Strategy and Its Limitations**

In Sudan, South Sudan, and Ethiopia, Russia has attempted to actively replace Western influence at times when Western governments have criticized and attempted to isolate the Sudanese and Ethiopian governments in response to the respective government's engagement and conduct of armed conflict, for example in Darfur and Tigray. In the case of South Sudan, Russia actively tried to block the UN from targeting individuals involved in the former's civil war by refusing to sign off on or otherwise delaying UN action. In the case of Sudan and South Sudan, these attempts have had limited effects, and Russia's objectives are further complicated by the instability of their allies and the constantly changing nature of regional conflicts. On the other hand, Russian regional efforts are enhanced by the country's robust arms exports, old Soviet-era ties, Russian private sector engagement, and even Russian troll factories. Russia also utilizes its role as a strong advocate of a non-intervention and sovereignty principle at the UN to protect its regional allies from negative action by the world body. In fact, the cases of Sudan and Ethiopia may be the first cases where Russian troll factories were first applied to support Russian allies in Africa.

In Sudan, Russia exploited the pariah status of the regime of President Omar al-Bashir (in office: 1993-2019). Al-Bashir's Sudan had long-running ties with Russia and was one of the three largest purchasers of Russian military hardware in Africa. Most of Sudan's military aircraft and main battle tanks (MBTs) are of Russian or Soviet origin, and Russia could potentially both maintain and upgrade these systems. The Wagner Group was also deployed in support of al-Bashir and the Sudanese army and could still be operating. (4) In return, al-Bashir opened up for M-Invest, a St. Petersburg-based company, to exploit Sudan's gold mining sector. The company is owned by Andrei Mandel, a longtime associate and partner of Yevgeny Prigozhin, the now infamous alleged owner of the Wagner Group who is close to Putin. Several companies registered in Thailand were and are functioning as fronts for these companies to hide the links to Russian businessmen and the Russian government. (5) Al-Bashir also rewarded the Wagner Group with the use of Sudan as a logistical hub for their operations in the Central African Republic (CAR). (6) Russia remained loyal to al-Bashir and Russian troll factories actively attempted to create support for the embattled Sudanese president online. (7)

The removal of al-Bashir in 2019 was a blow to Russian influence in Sudan, but the Sudanese army, the institution that ousted the president, maintained its ties to Russia and Russia has actively sought to gain the sympathy of the Sudanese opposition. Prigozhin still sends aid to Sudan and his supporters are active online to promote and garner support for the idea of a Russian base in Sudan. Meroe Gold, a company tied to Prigozhin, is still active in the country, having been allowed to remain by the post-al-Bashir Sudanese elite. (8) The end of Western sanctions on Sudan following al-Bashir's ouster has had a significant negative impact on Russian influence-seeking operations in the country because it has enabled the Sudanese interim government to move closer to the U.S. and play the U.S. and Russia against each other in order to gain from the latter two countries' strategic competition. This can be seen in the history of Russian attempts to gain a small naval base in Sudan. (9) Sudan has on several occasions backed away from the agreement and tried to re-negotiate it in order to both extract more money from the Russians while also limiting the lease of a naval base on its territory to five years and also reducing the size of such a base. The U.S., for its part, is attempting to woo Sudan away from signing a base agreement with Russia by offering a multimillion-dollar aid package to Khartoum in exchange for its cancelling of the base, which has made the process of finalizing a deal much more difficult for the Russians. (10) At the time of this writing, the exact status of the base deal is unclear, but it seems that it may have been canceled. (11) Nevertheless, it looks as if Sudan may turn into a pariah state once again after the General Abdel Fattah al-Burhan's military coup in late October 2021, and Russia will stand in line to exploit it.

Russia does still cooperate extensively with Sudan, but it is only one out of many partners engaged with Sudan. Moreover, Russia's increasingly close relationship with Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed creates clouds on the horizon for the Russian-Sudanese relationship. Sudan currently has a troubled relationship with Ethiopia, caused both by outstanding border issues between the two countries, and Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) construction which is hampering Sudanese water supplies through the Nile River. The future relationship with Ethiopia will define the Russian-Sudanese relationship. If Russia clearly goes with Ethiopia, Sudan will go team America. Ethiopia is nevertheless another example of Russia's pariah strategy. The key to such a strategy continuing to bear fruit for Russia is the increasing estrangement between Ethiopia and the U.S. due to Ethiopia's ongoing war in its own Tigray region, which has been raging since early November 2020. The Ethiopian government denied access to Tigray to humanitarian workers, a move that was criticized by the U.S. and other Western states. Ethiopia also lost the propaganda battle in the West, arguably in part because several of U.S.-based analysts of East African affairs have past ties to Tigray, which perhaps created some bias in analyses against the Ethiopian government. Importantly, the human rights transgressions of the Ahmed government are very real and it is clearly suppressive, but it is also true that Tigrayan regional forces do not control substantial amounts of territory outside of Tigray and this is one reason why Tigrayan government militias, which have a similarly checkered record on human rights, have not had been able to engage in similar abuses. Reports of human rights violations committed by Tigrayan forces have increased after they expanded territorial control into the Amhara region of Ethiopia as well as in the ethnically heterogeneous western part of Tigray. (12)

The U.S. has now developed a sanctions regime against both the Ethiopian central government as well as Tigrayan forces, but the move was not well received by the Ethiopian regime. Lack of U.S. support for the GERD, a dam that Sudan and Egypt claim will limit their water supply, also angered Ethiopia and Addis Ababa has seen anti-American demonstrations where Russia has been promoted as an alternative to the U.S. (13) This comes at a time when the Ethiopian National Defense Force (ENDF), which in the past was one of the best in sub-Saharan Africa, essentially collapsed following defeats in Tigray during the summer of 2021, leading the Ahmed regime to increasingly rely on ethnic militias. The ENDF's poor performance was partly the result of a purge of many of its most experienced officers, who were Tigrayan, with many being arrested and removed from their posts with others fleeing to join Tigrayan regional government forces. Today, the Ethiopian army is an empty shell of its former self and, though it

may be rebuilt using resources available to the prime minister from other Ethiopian regions, it will still be much weaker. Russian military and logistical competence and capabilities are thus badly needed by the ENDF, especially because so much of the latter's remaining military equipment and weaponry is of Soviet or Russian origin.

Russia is moving in to build up its strategic relationship with Ethiopia. Russian diplomats signed a military cooperation agreement with the Ahmed regime in July 2021. A Russian military partnership offers Ethiopia tempting opportunities to ensure maintenance of military equipment and weaponry, upgrade packages, and spare parts. Compared to Russia, China has less competence in maintaining these systems and the U.S. and other Western governments are increasingly unwilling to provide support to the Ethiopian government. However, Russia also faces problems with its pariah strategy and outreach to Ethiopia because it still wants to maintain a good relationship with, first, Sudan in order to gain a potential naval base on the Red Sea and, second, with Egypt. Russia publicly downplays the cooperation agreement with Ethiopia, stressing that the Kremlin has similar agreements with Egypt and Sudan. (14) Indeed, Russia also has twenty-one such agreements with various African countries. (15) Despite this, the cooperation agreement, symbolically signed in July 2021 parallel to the ENDF's collapse in Tigray, is far from unimportant. Moreover, Russia has diplomatically supported Ethiopia, backing non-interference in Tigray in the UN Security Council, and their position was generally viewed with favor by the Ahmed regime. The newfound friendship between Russia and Ethiopia is fragile, Prime Minister Ahmed might be weakened by a long war in Tigray and the end of his regime will hurt the Russian engagement strategy, as happened when President al-Bashir was removed in Sudan. The pariah strategy Russia is pursuing is far from ensuring victory and Russia lacks the military and economic strength to launch and maintain a similar intervention like the one to prop up Bashar al-Assad in Syria, the prime example of its pariah strategy in action. Russia today is simply not strong enough to be a game changer on the battlefields of Tigray.

Due to Russia's support for Sudan's al-Bashir, the Russian-South Sudanese relationship has been tense in the past. However, South Sudan also saw Russian engagement taking the form of protecting it as an international pariah. In 2016, the two countries signed the Intergovernmental Agreement on Military Technical Cooperation, which is still valid despite an UN arms embargo directed at South Sudan from 2018 and onwards. South Sudan's foreign minister visited Russia in 2020 to discuss economic cooperation. (16) Russia played an odd role, signing a military agreement with a country under arms embargo and at the same time arguing against embargos on individuals involved in South Sudan's civil war, including rebel leaders, and sparring with the U.S. over the South Sudan ceasefire and a power-sharing agreement signed in 2018. (17) Until the recent 2018 peace agreement, Russia also supported several leaders from South Sudan against UN sanctions, for example Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) chief Paul Malong and rebel militia general Johnson Uliny (Olony). (18) Russia was thus actively protecting individuals from UN sanctions. (19) Russia additionally blocked U.S. moves to facilitate a UN arms embargo in 2016, although this effort failed and an embargo came into effect in 2018. After this, Russia regularly protested the composition of the UN expert committee on South Sudan because of its mostly Western-based membership, which was perhaps a move to control the narrative of the expert group's final report. It also seems that Russia has tried to take advantage of Western governments' and Western NGOs' reluctance to continue operating alongside the corruption and cronyism of the South Sudan's president, Salva Kiir, and his government. (20) However, the Kremlin's influence became less important after the peace agreement stabilized and other actors reentered the scene and began dealing again with the South Sudanese political leadership. Today, Russia is trying to enter into South Sudan's energy market, but its influence has been somewhat weakened because of its loss of the clout it enjoyed during the period of Western de- and dis-engagement.

## **Military and Technical Support for Basing Rights: A Failing Strategy**

Eritrea and Russia have historical ties, including Russia's selling of arms to Eritrea in the 2000s, and Russian interaction with Eritrea scaled up after 2018, when the UN embargo on the East African country ended. Eritrea is negotiating the delivery of two Russian-made Kazan Ansat helicopters. (21) Russia is also currently in discussions to create a logistics center in the Eritrean port city of Assab, a resupply base for the Russian navy. (22) It is unclear, however, whether Russia will continue to pursue the Assab base if it succeeds in inking a deal with Sudan. For its part, the Eritrean government as recently as February of this year viewed the possibility of a base deal with Russia positively. (23) The Eritreans, however, do enjoy a strategic relationship with Saudi Arabia that could block such a deal. (24) Russia has tried to woo Eritrean support by shielding the Eritrean and Ethiopian governments from UN Security Council action in response to the latter two countries' ongoing war and human rights abuses in Tigray. (25) While Russia may hold some leverage with Eritrea, it is far from certain that it's great enough to finalize a base deal with the latter.

Russia also sought to establish a naval base in Djibouti, but was thwarted by a combination of American pressure and a promised leasing payment increase. The U.S. accomplished this through a combination of promising to increase the payment for the Camp Lemonnier base from \$30 million a year to \$63 million a year and pressure on the Djiboutian government to not accept Russian overtures. (26)

Though at first glance one would assume that Djibouti's Russian-made Infantry Fighting Vehicles (IFVs), armored personnel carriers (APCs), and two Hind helicopter gunships should make expanding cooperation with Russia tempting to the Djiboutian government because this would ensure access to Russian-provided upgrades and spare parts, this was not enough to secure a Russian base in the country. Djibouti has, however, been eager to strengthen bilateral ties in areas outside of military affairs. Its Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, Mahamoud Ali Youssouf, visited Moscow in early June 2021 and Djibouti and Russia have agreed to cooperate in the fields of diplomatic education and to create a Russian-Djiboutian business club. (27) Despite these agreements, the Djiboutian case shows the limitations of Russia's attempts to expand its influence in the Horn of Africa. While cordial, Djiboutian-Russian relations are so far limited because of U.S. countermoves, including increasing its leasing payments to Djibouti and exerting diplomatic pressure to convince the Djiboutians not to expand military cooperation with the Kremlin.

Somaliland presents a similar story. According to anonymous sources cited by *The New York Times*, Russia also recently approached Somaliland to secure a deal to construct a naval base in the self-declared independent republic. (28) The desired base location was alleged to be close to the Somaliland/northern Somali port town of Zeylac (Zayla; Zeila) located close to the Djiboutian border, but once again the Russian attempt failed and the Kremlin later denied ever having made such a move. (29) The Russian "carrot" might have been a promise of its recognition of the self-declared Somaliland republic, which would have been the first official recognition of Somaliland's independence since it broke away from Somalia in 1991.

Negotiations between Somaliland and Russia appear to have failed and, even if they had succeeded, they would have alienated Somalia's government, and this may have been a factor in the breakdown in negotiations. Somalia's federal government has increased its engagement with Russian diplomats. In January 2018, Deputy Russian Prime Minister Arkady Dvorkovich met with then-Somali Prime Minister Hassan Ali Khaire within the framework of the Davos Economic Forum. Despite these recent meetings, trade between the two countries remains limited and the Somali National Army has only a few Soviet or Russian-made weapons systems. Ironically, Somaliland's military has BM-25 multiple rocket launchers and T-55 main battle tanks in operation, despite the lack of a Somaliland-Russia deal.

Interestingly, several of the older generations of Somali and Somalilander leaders were educated in Russia, including the current president of Somaliland, Muse Bihi Abdi. Indeed, more than 20,000 Somalis were educated in Soviet schools and universities during the time period when Somalia's government was a Soviet client and ally in the 1960s up to the first half of the 1970s. Despite these historic ties with Somalia and Somali and Somalilander officials in power today, Russia has been unable to take advantage of these older links and no Russian base has been secured in either Somalia or Somaliland.

### **An Uphill Battle for Influence in Kenya**

Kenya is perhaps the hardest nut to crack for Russia as it attempts to spread its influence and outreach in East Africa and the Red Sea zone. With a mainly Western-equipped military and a relatively friendly relationship historically and currently with the U.S., Kenya remains less interested than other Horn states in expanding its ties with the Kremlin. However, Kenya's more developed economy, compared to other regional states in the Horn, opens the possibility for an expansion of Russian influence through the Kenyan private sector. In 2019, Kenya exported goods worth \$75.25 million to Russia, a decline from previous years, while Russia exported goods worth \$159.96 million to Kenya, with both numbers marking a decline from previous years. (30) Despite this decline, these trading figures are much larger than the economic links between Russia and other regional countries in the Horn, with the exception of Russian exports to Sudan, and they reflect the competitiveness of the Kenyan market, arguably the most advanced in East Africa. (31)

Russian financial institutions seem to have recently been planning to expand into the Kenyan financial sector, yet the status of these projects is currently unknown. (32) After the Russia-Africa Summit held in Sochi in October 2019, a business council was set up between Kenya and Russia. (33) Russia also stepped up its efforts during the COVID-19 pandemic by pledging approximately \$3.6 million to the UN to assist Kenya in addressing both food security issues and the challenge of ongoing locust infestations. (34) Russian tourism also contributed to one of Kenya's most important economic sectors, the tourist industry, with 10,000 Russians visiting Kenya annually before the outbreak of the global COVID-19 pandemic in early 2020. We have also seen Russian-Kenyan discussions about possibly expanding their cooperation in space, with Kenya pushing the agenda to acquire Russian technology and expertise. (35)

Despite these potential openings for the expansion of Kenyan-Russian cooperation, the two countries' relationship has also encountered problems, such as Russia's sale of its Sputnik COVID vaccines to Aurugulf, an Arab Gulf-based medical company with ties to the Al Nahyan ruling family of the Emirate of Abu Dhabi in the United Arab Emirates (UAE), which then attempted to sell Kenya overpriced and old vaccines. (36) In April 2021, the Kenyan government halted private sales of Russia's Sputnik V vaccine. (37) Additionally, Russia is completely outmatched by the U.S.'s annual \$544 million in aid to Kenya during 2020 alone coupled with a \$400 million military training aid over the past decade. (38)

The Russian quest for influence in Kenya has created opportunities for the Kremlin, though it remains unclear if Russian businesses will be capable of landing additional influence inside Kenya and it is likely that the East African nation will maintain its own agency and cooperate with Russia only when the benefits are clear and the political cost limited. This follows the Kenyan government's practice of being pragmatic, but also relatively friendly and open, in its approach to international relations. The window of business opportunity is open to Russia, but it is also open at the same time, from the Kenyan state's perspective, to the European Union (EU), China, and the U.S. In the arena of military cooperation, Kenya remains today largely open mainly to the U.S. and the United Kingdom exclusively, which does not bode well for Russian success in its attempts to expand its military influence and footprint in the country.

## Conclusion

In recent years, Russia has clearly demonstrated a desire to expand its influence and activities in the Horn of Africa, mainly through attempts to set up naval bases on or close to the Red Sea to complement its Mediterranean power, by promoting the Kremlin as a viable alternative to the U.S. economically and diplomatically, and by creating openings for state-connected Russian businesses, trade, and markets. Russia's main tools remain military support and arms exports as well as offers to maintain, refurbish, and modernize or replace Soviet-era weapons systems. We also see the Kremlin using tactics similar to those it has deployed in Europe, North America, and the Middle East, namely utilizing troll factories to spread pro-Kremlin propaganda and promoting public-private partnerships. These are tactics Russia deploys when it sees local actors it believes can potentially be turned into allies. These strategies are not stable or maintainable over the longer-term, however, because they are vulnerable to changes in regional Horn governments, a problem which plagued Soviet and Russian efforts in the past. Ethiopia is, in many ways, the new test of Russia's pariah strategy, which sees the increasing criticism and pressure on the Ahmed regime from Western governments due to human rights abuses in Tigray as a potential opening for the Kremlin. Active U.S. engagement has thus far largely succeeded in thwarting Russian attempts to expand the Kremlin's influence in East Africa and the Red Sea zone, but American efforts will be further enhanced if an alliance can be forged with France, Turkey, and Saudi Arabia, three allies who are also heavily engaged regionally and are wary of the expansion of Russian influence.

*Dr. Stig Jarle Hansen is the director of the master's program in international affairs at the Norwegian University of Life Sciences (NMBU). He's advised and presented to CENTCOM, AFRICOM, USSOCOM, NATO, and the UK government.*

## References

- <sup>1</sup> Julia Gurganus and Eugene Rumer, "Russia's Global Ambitions in Perspective", Carnegie Working Paper, February 2019, <https://carnegieendowment.org/2019/02/20/russia-s-global-ambitions-in-perspective-pub-78067>.
- <sup>2</sup> Mark Galeotti, "Crimintern: How the Kremlin uses Russia's criminal networks in Europe" European Council on Foreign Relations Policy Brief, April 18, 2017. <https://advokati-juristi.temida.lv/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/How-Kremlin-uses-Russian-criminal-networks-in-Europe.pdf>.
- <sup>3</sup> Interview by the author with Kirsti Stuvøy, associate professor at Norwegian University of Life Sciences, conducted on October 12, 2021
- <sup>4</sup> Kimberly Marten, "Russia's use of semi-state security forces: the case of the Wagner Group," *Post-Soviet Affairs*, vol. 35, no. (3), pp. 181-204.
- <sup>5</sup> The entities in question were the Shine Dragon Group Limited, Shen Yang Jing Cheng Machinery Imp. & Exp. Co., and the Zhe Jiang Jiayi Small Commodities Trade Company Limited. See U.S. Department of the Treasury, "Treasury Targets Financier's Illicit Sanctions Evasion Activity," press release, July 15, 2020
- <sup>6</sup> Mathieu Olivier, "Russia/Africa: Wagner, an investigation into Putin's mercenaries," *The Africa Report*, July 28, 2021. <https://www.theafricareport.com/112649/russia-africa-wagner-an-investigation-into-putins-mercenaries/>
- <sup>7</sup> Luke Harding and Jason Burke, "Leaked documents reveal Russian effort to exert influence in Africa," *The Guardian*, June 11, 2019. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/jun/11/leaked-documents-reveal-russian-effort-to-exert-influence-in-africa>.

- 8 *Daily Sabah*, “Russia’s Wagner Group’s presence in Africa goes beyond Libya,” March 4, 2021.  
<https://www.dailysabah.com/world/africa/russias-wagner-groups-presence-in-africa-goes-beyond-libya>
- 9 Nikola Mikovic, “Sudan tries to strongarm Russia. It may backfire,” *The Arab Weekly*, September 16, 2021.  
<https://thearabweekly.com/sudan-tries-strongarm-russia-it-may-backfire>
- 10 *Rédaction Africanews*, “Sudan reportedly suspends planned Russian naval base,” *Africa News*, April 29, 2021.  
<https://www.africanews.com/2021/04/29/sudan-reportedly-suspends-planned-russian-naval-base/>.
- 11 Ibid.
- 12 Amnesty International, “Ethiopia: Eritrean troops’ massacre of hundreds of Axum civilians may amount to crime against humanity,” press release, February 26, 2021, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/press-release/2021/02/ethiopia-eritrean-troops-massacre-of-hundreds-of-axum-civilians-may-amount-to-crime-against-humanity/>; *BBC News*, “Ethiopia’s Tigray crisis: ‘Civilians massacred’, says Amnesty International,” November 12, 2020.  
<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-54922971.amp>.
- 13 *Reuters*, “Ethiopians criticise United States at pro-government rally,” May 30, 2021.  
<https://www.reuters.com/world/africa/ethiopians-criticise-united-states-pro-government-rally-2021-05-30/>
- 14 Samuel Ramani, “Russia and the GERD: An uneasy balancing act,” Middle East Institute Policy Analysis, August 16, 2021, <https://www.mei.edu/publications/russia-and-gerd-uneasy-balancing-act>
- 15 Steve Balestrieri, “Russian military expands in Africa by building bases in six countries,” *SOFREP*, August 10, 2020.,  
<https://sofrep.com/news/russian-military-expands-in-africa-by-building-bases-in-six-countries/>.
- 16 Sergey Lavrov, “Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov’s remarks and answers to media questions at a news conference following talks with Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of South Sudan Awut Deng Acuil, Moscow, January 28, 2020,” Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, January 28, 2020.  
[https://www.mid.ru/en/foreign\\_policy/news/-/asset\\_publisher/cKNonkJE02Bw/content/id/4006404](https://www.mid.ru/en/foreign_policy/news/-/asset_publisher/cKNonkJE02Bw/content/id/4006404).
- 17 Edith M. Lederer, “Russia and US spar over South Sudan peace agreement,” *Associated Press*, March 15, 2019.  
<https://abcnews.go.com/US/wireStory/russia-us-spar-south-sudan-peace-agreement-61719248>.
- 18 *AFP*, “Russia at UN raps US over South Sudan peace deal,” March 15, 2019. <https://www.france24.com/en/20190315-russia-un-raps-us-over-south-sudan-peace-deal>.
- 19 *BBC News*, “South Sudan sanctions ‘blocked by Russia and Angola,” September 16, 2015.  
<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-34267405>.
- 20 Simon Tisdall, “The light that failed: South Sudan’s ‘new dawn’ turns to utter nightmare,” *The Guardian*, July 11, 2021.  
<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/jul/11/the-light-that-failed-south-sudans-new-dawn-turns-to-utter-nightmare>.
- 21 Martin Plaut, “Eritrea’s growing military ties with Russia,” *Eritrea Hub*, January 21, 2020.  
<https://eritreahub.org/eritreas-growing-military-ties-with-russia>.



- <sup>22</sup> Samuel Ramani, "Russia's Port Sudan Naval Base: A Power Play on the Red Sea," Royal United Services Institute (RUSI) Rusi Commentary , December 7, 2020, <https://rusi.org/explore-our-research/publications/commentary/russias-port-sudan-naval-base-power-play-red-sea>.
- <sup>23</sup> *ERI 21*, "Eritrea's Ambassador to Moscow: We are not opposed to the construction of a Russian logistics center in our country," February 16, 2021. <https://www.eri21.com/eritreas-ambassador-to-moscow-we-are-not-opposed-to-the-construction-of-a-russian-logistics-center-in-our-country/>.
- <sup>24</sup> *Africa News*, "Eritrea president receives commander of Saudi war in Yemen," August 8, 2020. [africanews.com/2019/08/08/eritrea-absent-at-riyadh-meeting-as-saudi-seeks-red-sea-alliance/](https://africanews.com/2019/08/08/eritrea-absent-at-riyadh-meeting-as-saudi-seeks-red-sea-alliance/).
- <sup>25</sup> *AFP*, "UN alleges war crimes in Ethiopia's Tigray, urges Eritrea pullout," March 4, 2021. <https://www.france24.com/en/live-news/20210304-un-alleges-war-crimes-in-ethiopia-s-tigray-urges-eritrea-pullout>.
- <sup>26</sup> Ivan Ulises Kentros Klyszcz, "Russia's Thwarted Return to the Red Sea," *ORIENTXXI* , November 19, 2020, <https://orientxxi.info/magazine/russia-s-thwarted-return-to-the-red-sea,4283>; Zach Vertin "Great Power Rivalry in the Red Sea: China's Experiment in Djibouti and Implications for the United States," Brookings Institution working paper, June 2020, [https://www.brookings.edu/wpcontent/uploads/2020/06/FP\\_20200615\\_china\\_djibouti\\_vertin.pdf](https://www.brookings.edu/wpcontent/uploads/2020/06/FP_20200615_china_djibouti_vertin.pdf).
- <sup>27</sup> Kester Kenn Klomegah, "Russia's Economic Interest In Djibouti," *Eurasia Review*, June 11, 2021. <https://www.eurasiareview.com/11062021-russias-economic-interest-in-djibouti-oped/>.
- <sup>28</sup> *Radio Dalsan*, "Africa: Russia to Construct Military Base in Somaliland As Scramble for the Horn of Africa Continues," January 31, 2021. <https://allafrica.com/stories/202001310645.html>.
- <sup>29</sup> Godfrey Ivudria, "Russia Digs Into Somaliland-Somalia Feud As Envoy Calls For Resumption Of Talks," *EABWNews*, December 4, 2020. <https://www.busiweek.com/russia-digs-into-somaliland-somalia-feud-as-envoy-calls-for-resumption-of-talks/>.
- <sup>30</sup> *Trading Economics*, "Kenya exports to Russia," <https://tradingeconomics.com/kenya/exports/russia> and *Trading Economics*, "Russia exports to Kenya," <https://tradingeconomics.com/russia/exports/kenya>.
- <sup>31</sup> Sudan's exports to Russia amounted to \$829,940 in 2018, in 2019 while Russia's exports to Sudan were valued at \$274.4 million in 2019 and Russian exports to South Sudan were valued at just over \$3 million during the same year with South Sudan exporting almost nothing to Russia. Russian exports to Ethiopia were valued at \$41.6 million in 2019 and Ethiopian exports to Russia were \$20 Million in 2017. Russian exports to Eritrea were \$12 million in 2018 and it seems Eritrean exports to Russia the same year were very low. Russia's exports to Djibouti were \$25 million in 2019 and Djibouti's exports to Russia were negligible according to the UN COMTRADE database on international trade. Figures taken from the TradingExport Generator 2021.
- <sup>32</sup> Brian Ngugi, "Kenya: Russia's Vladimir Putin Woos Kenya With Military Kit and Energy," *Daily Nation*, October 26, 2019. <https://allafrica.com/stories/201910280493.html>.
- <sup>33</sup> Office of the President of Kenya, "Kenya And Russia Agree To Form Business Council As Presidents Kenyatta And Putin Meet In Sochi," October 25, 2019. <https://www.president.go.ke/2019/10/25/kenya-and-russia-agree-to-form-business-council-as-presidents-kenyatta-and-putin-meet-in-sochi/>.

- <sup>34</sup> Russian Ambassador to Kenya Dmitry Maksimychev, “Rekindling Russia-Kenya friendship,” *The Star*, October 28, 2019. <https://www.the-star.co.ke/opinion/2020-06-12-rekindling-russia-kenya-friendship/>.
- <sup>35</sup> *Africa News*, “Kenya Space Agency Hosts Russian Ambassador,” November 15, 2020. <https://africanews.space/kenya-space-agency-hosts-russian-ambassador/>.
- <sup>36</sup> Jake Cordell and Pjotr Sauer, “Kenya’s Failed Sputnik V Deal Used Emirati Resale Scheme,” *The Moscow Times*, July 19, 2021. <https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2021/07/19/kenyas-failed-sputnik-v-deal-used-emirati-resale-scheme-a74554>.
- <sup>37</sup> David Herbling, “Kenya Halts Private Sales of Russia’s Sputnik V Vaccine,” *Bloomberg*, April 6, 2021. <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2021-04-06/kenya-halts-private-sales-of-russia-s-sputnik-v-vaccine>
- <sup>38</sup> Colm Quinn, “Biden Welcomes Kenya’s Kenyatta to the White House,” *Foreign Policy*, October 14, 2021. <https://foreignpolicy.com/2021/10/14/uhuru-kenyatta-kenya-white-house-biden/>.



**Middle East Studies at Marine Corps University**

Dr. Amin Tarzi • Director, MES • amin.tarzi@usmcu.edu

Dr. Christopher Anzalone • christopher.anzalone@usmcu.edu

