

## Africa Briefs

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### Africa's Reckoning in Wake of U.S. Afghan Pullout

While the withdrawal of American troops from Afghanistan has opened the door to potential regional development and the destruction of the Helmand province poppy fields, it has also thrown a chill into African governments, which continue to face a well-financed and disciplined jihadist enemy, one they fear will be emboldened by the U.S. departure from Afghanistan.

Indicative is an event in Abuja, Nigeria, Aug. 8, for the induction of 12 A-29 Super Tucano aircraft into the Nigerian Air Force. With only six of the contracted 12 aircraft delivered, the premature induction ceremony points to an intent to reassure. Present were U.S. Air Forces in Europe and Air Forces Africa commander Gen. Jeffrey Harrigian and U.S. ambassador Mary Beth Leonard.

The press release of the U.S. embassy in Abuja indicated that the short presentations of both U.S. officials were about the value of the aircraft in fighting terror, and details of pilot training and support—standard fare. From the coverage of the post-ceremony press conference, however, a different picture emerges. The questions from the press indicated that African governments facing Daesh/ISIS-type terror—or very real threats of such terror—are worried by the U.S. Afghan pull-out and what it might mean for them.

In Nigeria itself, according to *Punch Nigeria*, former presidential aide Reno Omokri “prayed to God not to allow Boko Haram to achieve in Nigeria what Taliban achieved in Afghan-

istan.” He then posted on Instagram, “May what befell Afghanistan not befall Nigeria. Because what is happening in Nigeria today first happened in Afghanistan.”

Ambassador Leonard was at pains to distinguish between the two situations, saying, “I hear people making the analogy with Afghanistan a lot, it does not match up ... That is a different construct. The sovereign nations who have had strong bilateral relations. I don’t actually think the two match up.”

But two fellows of the Atlantic Council’s Europe Center—after a study trip to Mali this summer—[wrote](#) Aug. 27 of the risk that European and Anglo-American forces could also one day be expelled from Mali, “if the proper lessons aren’t learned.”

They appear to share the concern of Nicolas Tenzer, writing in *euronews* June 7, on “the need to counter Russia’s creeping influence in the Sahel.”

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### Economies of South Africa and Nigeria in Deepening Crisis

According to a *Bloomberg* charting of global unemployment for July, unemployment in South Africa is the worst on the continent, officially running over 30%, but unofficially closer to 50%. Namibia is number two, followed by Nigeria, the country with the continent’s largest population, two-thirds that of the U.S.

At immediate issue for South Africa is the collapse of its state-owned enterprises (SOEs), the core building blocks of the national economy, including defense manufacturing, electricity, transportation, and air travel.

Just as Eskom’s newly completed coal plant—the giant 4.7 GW six-unit Medupi plant—was finally about to

come fully on line after years of delay, an explosion took out an entire generating unit on Aug. 8. Without explanation, Eskom CEO André de Ruyter immediately ruled out sabotage.

In June, South Africa was forced to sell 51% of its flagship airline, South African Airways, to private interests, now only holding a 49% share in the company.

Transnet, which operates the nation’s ports and rail lines, is in similar straits, and is now taking bids on privatizing some of its valued port operations.

Denel, another SOE, the nation’s primary military supplier and generator of advanced-technology domestic manufacturing, is about to go under, having not paid its employees for most of the year.

According to a report from the Nigerian Budget Office, in the last six months Nigeria spent 2.02 trillion naira (\$5 billion), about 90.5% of national revenue, on debt service.

A new report shows that 10 of the 11 deregulated electricity distribution companies—called “DisCos”—have suffered a total of \$ billion in losses in the six years (2013–2019) of deregulation. The electric grid went down completely Aug. 23 the second time in a month.

Nigeria has not been paying its doctors—in the middle of a pandemic. They have now gone on strike.

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### South Africa’s Electricity Regulator Approves Proposal for More Nuclear

The National Energy Regulator of South Africa (NERSA) approved Aug. 26 a proposal by Energy Minister Gwede Mantashe that South Africa acquire 2500 MW of additional nuclear

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power. While the proposal does not specify the size or sizes of the constituent reactors, Mantashe is especially interested in acquiring small modular nuclear reactors (SMRs). The 2500 MW could be achieved with 10 SMRs of 250 MW each. Another proposal is for two reactors of 1200 MW each, and one SMR of 100 MW. The National Treasury has not yet approved the project.

Mantashe strongly defends a nuclear future for South Africa, and is also adamant that the continuing use of coal is indispensable for adequate baseload electricity in the near term—claims of the Great Green Reset notwithstanding.

An Aug. 8 article reporting the NERSA approval in the *Independent On Line*, titled “Africa Waiting on SA’s Nuclear Technology,” [quotes](#) South African nuclear physicist Dr. Kemm: “A lot of African countries are looking to get these small nuclear reactors. South Africa has the resources and personnel to build up this industry. South Africa is a world leader.... We should not think of ourselves as nuclear importers, as we have so much capacity to export.... We can start as early as in the next few months, not two years. We have developed the cheaper HTMR-100 technology [100 MW reactor that does not require water for cooling] and we can export that all over Africa.”

Earlier, on Aug. 25, Dr. Kemm had given a 45-minute tutorial on nuclear power on Ethiopian television, as a guest on the “Future Africa” show of the Oromio Broadcasting Network (OBN). The video is now [posted](#) on AfricanAgenda.net.

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## Green Strategists Target Pension Funds in Sub-Saharan Africa

Signaling a new phase in “climate change” finance—UN advisor Mark Carney’s drive to suck increasing vol-

umes of cash into the City of London’s green bubble—the U.S.-based *Rocky Mountain Institute* [published](#) “How Pension Funds Can Help Electrify Africa” on its website Aug. 16, which argues the benefits of getting in on the ground floor of the next big thing, as the denizens of Wall Street might put it.

The Rocky Mountain Institute (annual budget well above \$ million) was founded by multi-millionaire green freak Amory Lovins and his wife, and is dedicated to deindustrialization through extreme environmentalist policies.

While the report tabulates some funds that have experienced high growth rates in recent years, the disconnect is that *African* pension funds are a drop in the global financial bucket, likely making this a trial balloon for cracking the larger pension funds of the U.S., Europe, Japan and South Korea. Pension fund managers are very conservative by nature, and bound by restrictions on what they can and cannot do with “other people’s money.” Many no doubt remember getting burned by the “dot-com” bubble of 1999-2000 and the housing collapse of 2007-2008.

“If these pension funds invest in clean energy projects,” the author says, “they can trigger a *positive economic-growth feedback loop*,” a phrase often used by Carney, adding that “African pension funds can play a bigger catalytic role for the sector beyond niche projects.”

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## Ethiopia-Turkey Pacts Strengthen Addis in Its Internal-External Conflicts

Ethiopian President Abiy Ahmed, in Ankara on Aug. 18, signed agreements for military cooperation and for water management financing and skill-sharing. Thembisa Fakude, in the *Middle East Monitor* Aug. 25, writes

that the agreements “are likely to tilt the balance of power in the ongoing negotiations about the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) and the conflict in Tigray region.” Turkey is the largest investor in Ethiopia after China. China has a longstanding military agreement with Ethiopia.

A week after the signing, more than 50 African intellectuals issued an [open call](#) on Aug. 26 for a political, not a military, solution to the ugly war in Ethiopia. Their statement, highly critical of all protagonists, states in part, “The AU ... must not allow Ethiopia to dictate the terms of their engagement in seeking a resolution.” The first three signers teach at Columbia University in New York, and the majority teach at British and American universities.

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## British Human Rights Network in New Attack on China’s Worldwide BRI

A new report, produced by the London-based Business & Human Rights Resource Centre, purports to show an excess of “allegations” of labor abuse against Chinese operatives on projects of China’s Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), a charge likely to have less shelf-life than the now discredited “debt trap” accusation. The report is properly seen as the continuation of the “labor abuse in Xinjiang” charge in “defense” of the Uyghur minority, in which the BHR Centre was centrally involved.

The [report](#), “‘Going Out’ Responsibly, The Human Rights Impact of China’s Global Investments,” is a 30-page distillation of allegations—not even described, only tabulated in data charts—of abuse by Chinese employers, with highest numbers supposedly coming from the mining and construction areas of Myanmar and Peru, but with serious implications for Africa.