

Competition of Foreign Military Bases and the Survival Strategies of Djibouti*

Kanako Masuda[†]

Abstract

Djibouti is a small country that sits on the west coast of the Bab El Mandeb Strait, in East Africa. Due to its geostrategic value, five countries, including the United States and China, have military bases in the country. This paper examines whether attracting military bases is a rational choice for the current administration and the general public of Djibouti. First the paper reviews the intentions of the client countries to develop naval bases. It then discusses Djibouti's diplomatic strategy, before finally analyzing the factors that are seen as advantageous/disadvantageous to the survival of the nation. Through the analyses, the paper argues that attracting military bases accelerates the economic development of the nation, but distribution mechanisms need to be considered separately. While the power of the current administration in Djibouti has been strengthened by the presence of military bases, the benefits felt by the people, especially the poor, have been small.

Around the Red Sea, the competition over military port development is booming, and coastal nations are eager to grant naval access to the best offer. In that sense, Djibouti is a precedent case having already attracted military bases and pulled in funds and investments to develop the country. Thus, the analysis within this paper can be used as an important reference point for neighboring countries.

Keywords: naval competition, Red Sea, foreign military bases, survival strategies, small state diplomacy, neo-patrimonial states, Djibouti

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[†]Project Formulation Officer, Djibouti Office, Japan International Cooperation Agency. From August 2021 to July 2023. (kanakoumasuda@gmail.com)

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Introduction

Until 2002, when the United States (US) set up a military base in Djibouti to fight the war on terror, France, a former colonial power, had been the only foreign military presence in the country. From the late 2000s until the late 2010s, Japan, Italy, and China also opened bases in the country in order to combat piracy (at least ostensibly). During this period, Djibouti's geopolitical value skyrocketed, which it saw as an opportunity to negotiate with large powers while earning a stable income from their bases.

Countries and regions around Djibouti have followed suit; Eritrea and Somaliland allow the United Arab Emirates (UAE) navy to use Assab and Berbera respectively, and receive financial support for port development. It is occasionally reported that Sudan, Kenya and a number of other countries have negotiated hosting a naval base while receiving investments on their ports and infrastructures. Based on these developments, the following questions arise here; what is the overall effect of hosting military bases upon the governing regime and the local society? Is hosting a rational choice for their survival? The aim of this paper is to uncover the answers to these questions by using the precedent case of Djibouti, by reviewing academic literature, official reports, and media coverage.

Over the past 20 years there have been three major shifts in the broader regions of the Middle East and the Horn of Africa, centered on the Red Sea. The first major shift was the reduction of US troops in this area. There are various reasons why the US has been gradually withdrawing its troops since the late 2000s, but it can be understood as a process of optimizing the military configuration amid the rapidly changing world power relationships. Through tense domestic discussions, the Americans are shifting away from endless and costly military interventions, and opting more for political, economic, and social exchanges to protect peace and

stability, and ultimately, US interests (Katulis and Juul 2021). The second major shift is the emergence of China, which was not present in this region until the early 2000s. In particular, since the announcement of the Belt and Road Initiative in 2013, the scale and speed of Chinese investment in transportation infrastructure has overtaken other investors. The third shift is the change in the regional balance of power. Since the Arab Spring uprising in 2010, disputes have arisen between countries that view the movement relatively favorably, such as Qatar and Turkey, and countries that see it as a threat, such as Saudi Arabia and the UAE. In June 2017, countries centered on the four Arab countries—Saudi Arabia, UAE, Bahrain, and Egypt—, abruptly declared that they would cut diplomatic relations with Qatar. This split in the Gulf region has spread to the Horn of Africa, forcing each regime to choose sides and further complicating local rivalry.

The effects of these shifts are also reflected in port development along the Red Sea coast. The UAE stands out in the field of port development. Since the start of the civil war in Yemen, it has been developing military ports in various places on the coast of Yemen, including Aden and Socotra Island. On the other side of the Red Sea, the UAE has been developing maritime bases in several countries and regions, such as commercial ports in Berbera in Somaliland and Bossaso in Puntland and a military port in Assab, Eritrea as a base for combat in Yemen. Turkey has acquired the rights to the redevelopment of Suakin in Sudan and Mogadishu in Somalia. France, the US, Japan, Italy, and China all have naval bases in Djibouti, and India and Russia have also expressed their interest in establishing bases in the country. Djibouti's commercial port was being developed by the UAE's DP World¹, but due to a disagreement with the Djibouti government, the contract with DP World was suspended in 2018; a Chinese company was subsequently awarded

¹ DP World is a Dubai-based, ports and terminals managing, logistics and maritime services' company.

operational control (Z. Vertin 2019). In November 2021, the Wall Street Journal reported that China was secretly developing a military base in the UAE but the construction was stopped by an objection from the US (Lubold and Strobel 2021).

In a region such as this, where competition around military bases and commercial port development is active, Djibouti is the only country that hosts five foreign military bases. After the establishment of a Chinese military base in 2017, it became a place where the world's superpowers' rivalry spark fire, competing for better conditions for their military in Djibouti. However, Djibouti is not unique in its intentions; Berbera in Somaliland, for example, allows naval usage and receives financial support from the UAE. Sudan was close to granting Russia access to Port Sudan but were stopped by the lifting of sanctions against Sudan by the US. Thus, Djibouti is an interesting case that goes one step ahead in terms of hosting military bases for development. The discussions in this paper will not only benefit Djibouti, but also be a useful reference point to analyze the implications of foreign military presence in other places. In Section 2, below, gives an overview of the reasons and strategies adopted by various countries who develop naval bases along the coast of the Red Sea. Section 3 then discusses Djibouti's diplomatic strategy, and section 4 provides an analysis of the factors that are advantageous/disadvantageous to Djibouti's survival. Through these discussions, the author aims to clarify whether the strategy of attracting foreign military bases is in the national interest.

2. Competition for naval bases in Djibouti and the Red Sea

The Red Sea is one of the world's most important maritime routes, through which more than ten percent of the world's trade passes. In the 2000s, the severity of piracy at the southern tip of the Red Sea triggered European and Asian countries to dispatch naval forces to protect their commercial vessels. In recent years, although the number of pirates has diminished, world naval

forces have continued to rise. The motives for countries wishing to gain a foothold along the Red Sea have changed in three ways; first, since the proxy-war erupted in Yemen in 2015, both the Iranian and Saudi camps have been keen to secure strongholds; second, since the Gulf states cut ties with Qatar in 2017, Gulf states and Qatar have been eager to reassure their allies in the Horn of Africa region; finally, rivalry between China and the US has intensified in the area, following the boom in Chinese investment.

Currently, eleven countries, including the US, France, Japan, China, the UAE, and Turkey, have naval bases on the coast of the Red Sea, but the reasons for this presence vary from country to country (Dune 2021). The background and intentions of each country are described below.

2.1 France and the European Union (EU) Countries

For a significant period of time, France was the colonial power in Djibouti; it leased the port of Obock in 1859 and continued its colonial rule until 1977. The French army maintains, to this day, all land, sea and air units in Djibouti. Additionally, in terms of economy, France was the largest donor country until China began investing heavily in the 2010s. However, the relationship between Djibouti and France began to cool off after the Borrel case² in 1995.

According to Sonia le Gouriellec, the handover of Bouffard Hospital, which was mainly treating the French and Djibouti forces, to the Djibouti authorities, the absence of French presidential visits, and the termination of housing leases from the city of Djibouti for French forces, are all seen as a symbol of French disengagement (le Gouriellec 2020). In addition, the French army scaled down from 4,000 troops in 1977 to 1,450 in 2021. With these overlapping events, the Djibouti government recognized the risks of depending on France alone and has subsequently

² The Borrel case is an incident where the partially burnt corpse of the French magistrate Bernard Borrel was found in a ravine. The bereaved family sued the Djibouti authorities, including the current Djiboutian president Ismaïl Omar Guelleh (IOG), in a French court for assassination and destruction of evidence.

sought to divert their resources.

As for the EU countries, in 2018, the Council of the European Union concluded that there was “renewed geopolitical competition on both shores of the Red Sea” (Tassinari and Taddele 2021). The EU said it needs to protect and secure merchant ships sailing through the Bab El Mandeb Strait, control the movement of migrants, reduce the threat of terrorism, and prevent destabilization. France, Italy, Germany, and Spain all have a military presence in Djibouti for reasons of fighting terrorism.

2.2 The United States of America (US)

The US opened a military base in Djibouti in 2002 as part of the war on terror. The country invests approximately 4.5 billion dollars annually in the Horn of Africa including in peacebuilding activities in Somalia (United States Institute of Peace 2018). Despite this significant investment, the US strategy for Africa other than in relation to their security concerns, has not been very clear. In 2018, the Trump administration issued the "2018 US Africa," foreign policy paper, in which it described its trade and investment strategy. At the time of the announcement, the then-National Security Advisor John Bolton explained the dangers of Chinese trade and assistance practices, saying they were “predatory,” which eventually makes African states obey Beijing through the pressure of debt repayment. Bolton asked African governments to choose the US over China and Russia as their commercial, security, and political partner (Schneidman and Signé 2018). The Prosper Africa initiative, which was announced just after the "2018 US Africa" policy paper, promotes investment in Africa by US private companies, and USAID is also promoting their first Private Sector Engagement Policy.

2.3 China

China has been participating in anti-piracy activities since 2008 and has naval presence around the Horn of Africa. In 2017, China established its first overseas military base in Djibouti, for the purpose of merchant ship protection, dispatching peacebuilding activities, and protecting their own nationals in case of emergency. With the opening of a Chinese military base in Djibouti, Western countries became increasingly wary of Chinese expansion in the region. However, as Abdul Mohammed, Chief of Staff at the AU High-Level Implementation Panel said in a forum, "China is the most tangible country for Africa" since "they have a strategic interest in Africa." The clear ideas of the Belt and Road Initiative, associated with hard investment negotiations at the forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) make China an easier access point for Africa (United States Institute of Peace 2018).

However, the African countries are starting to be more cautious about Chinese investment for fear that it might make them overly indebted and may take over important infrastructure as collateral for loans. These negative aspects of Chinese investment are often discussed in countries where the domestic media is already mature. However, in countries such as Djibouti, Eritrea, and Somalia, where domestic media is underdeveloped, it is hard for the media to sufficiently monitor and scrutinise the actions of the authority.

2.4 Japan

Japan established a Self-Defense Forces base in Djibouti in 2011. The initial aim was to protect their merchant ships from piracy, but recently an information gathering mission was added in the Middle East. The base in Djibouti was Japan's first overseas base after World War II. Japan's greatest concern is the freedom of navigation by sea, especially in the Indo-Pacific area, and the stable supply of oil from the Middle East. Thus, Japanese diplomatic and political

priorities are given in the areas from the Arabian Peninsula and to the east, and Japanese economic presence in the Red Sea and along its coastal areas is not significant.

2.5 Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE)

Due to the rising food prices caused by the economic crisis of 2008 and the Arab Spring, Saudi Arabia began to increasingly focus on food security and has shown a strong willingness to invest in the agricultural sector of Sudan and Ethiopia (Khorrami 2020). Since the expansion of the Arab Spring and the split within the Middle East (i.e., Qatar, Turkey and Iran on one side and most of the other countries on the other), they recognize the west coast of the Red Sea as a place of a zero-sum game. If the central government does not side with them, they will back domestic opposition groups. Given the financially asymmetrical relationship between the Gulf and the Horn of Africa, there is some concern that the conflict among them will be exported to the Horn of Africa, and a proxy war similar to that in Yemen may occur in Africa (United States Institute of Peace 2019).

The UAE focuses on port development and already has dozens of military and commercial ports on both banks of the Red Sea. In Djibouti, Dubai's DP World developed and operated a container terminal; however, the relationship between the authorities in Djibouti and DP World deteriorated from around 2012. In 2015, the Djibouti government forcibly regained the right to operate the port. This occurred around the same time as war broke out in Yemen. The UAE subsequently developed a military port on the other side of the Red Sea, in Assab, Eritrea, as their strategic strong point.

Table: List of Countries with a military base in Djibouti

Country	Annual fee paid to Djibouti (USD)	Number of military personnel stationed	Detail description of the military base
France	40,000,000	1,450	Set up in 1883 (located in Heron district and Camp Lemonnier). Number of people deployed: 4,300 in 1978, decreased to 2,400 in the 2000s and decreased to the current level of 1,450, which is the minimum stipulated in the 2011 treaty.
US	63,000,000	4,000	Set up in 2002. Annual payments doubled in 2015 (and a plan of 1BUSD upgrade). ³
Japan	3,500,000	180	Set up in 2011 and added information gathering activities in the Middle East in 2019.
China	20,000,000	1,000	Set up in 2017.
Italy	2,500,000	80	Set up Oct 2013 and fully operational from March 2014.
Germany	(NA)	30-80	Operation Enduring Freedom (EU) (2001-). Operation Atlanta (EU) (Camp Lemonnier).
Spain	(NA)	50	Operation Atlanta (EU) (2005-) (Camp Lemonnier).
Saudi Arabia	(145,000,000?)		(Forthcoming).
Total	129,000,000		

Source: nytimes.com, tv5monde.com, sankei.com, and slate.fr

Note: table made by the author from the media sources mentioned above.

3. Diplomacy of Djibouti

Soon after the 9/11 terrorist attacks, the US begun fighting terrorism in the Middle East, and in 2002, they established a military base in Djibouti. Since then, Djibouti's geopolitical value has increased dramatically. In addition, the increasing momentum of the international community collaborating on counter piracy in the Bab El Mandeb Strait since the late 2000s⁴, also created a

³ The New York Times, February 25, 2017, "U.S. Wary of Its New Neighbor in Djibouti: A Chinese Naval Base"

(<https://www.nytimes.com/2017/02/25/world/africa/us-djibouti-chinese-naval-base.html>)

⁴ At its peak, the piracy in the Bab-El-Mandeb strait amounted to around 11 billion USD in 2011. (T. Chanda 2017)

favorable trend for Djibouti. Japan opened a base in 2011, Italy in 2014 and China in 2017, all with the aim of combating piracy.

With the rise of its geopolitical importance, Djibouti began utilizing its geopolitical value as an exploitable resource, and attracted significant numbers of military bases as well as economic investments. This can be understood as “small state diplomacy.” Although there is no single clear definition of a “small state,” M. East, for example, suggests four aspects to consider: area, population, and economic and military size (East 1973). In practice, “smallness” is often judged based on population size; for example, the Commonwealth primarily classes a small state as a nation state with a population of 1.5 million and less.⁵ Under any of the definitions mentioned above (i.e., area, population, or economic and military size), it seems reasonable to categorize Djibouti as a small state.

In theory, small states need a strategic approach to compete with major powers in the international community. Long described the origins of a small state’s power to compete on the international sphere in three categories: derivative, collective, and intrinsic (Long 2017). As examples of collective power, Singapore uses ASEAN⁶ to keep appropriate distance from both China and the US to protect their own interests, and the Maldives strategically focuses on a specific sector—climate change—to efficiently exert its voice in the international community. Strategies such as creating tax havens, hosting military bases, and building “free zones” are also viewed as utilizing intrinsic powers; however, these strategies are perceived as the gray and niche spaces at the margins of international rules and are often criticized as “modern-day piracy” (le Gouriellec 2020). The Djiboutian politicians seem to understand the shortcomings of small states

⁵ The Commonwealth’s roots go back to the British Empire. It is a voluntary association of 54 countries with 32 small states. (More information can be found here: <https://thecommonwealth.org/>)

⁶ Founded in 1967, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) is an economic union of 10 southeast Asian countries.

and are applying strategies such as actively hosting foreign military bases and building the largest free zone in Africa in order to overcome their limited military and economic capacity. To support this view, in a news article in the Djiboutian national newspaper “La Nation” in December 2015, President Guelleh explained that the aim of stationing foreign militaries in Djibouti is to improve its visibility on the international stage.

For many of the small states, the small scale of the military is a challenge. Generally, it is thought that hosting a foreign military base will be beneficial to the host country in the event of an emergency. However, France is the only military stationed in Djibouti with emergency protection clauses, and other countries are likely to respond only when there is a clear threat to their troops. Moreover, France also wants to remove these protection provisions; during the discussions for the renewal of the Defense Cooperation Treaty in 2011, the then President Sarkozy tried to eliminate the provision, but after negotiations the clause remained. In 2008, when Eritrea invaded the northern border, both of the foreign militaries stationed in Djibouti at the time—the US and France—were reluctant to send troops to the border. In the end, it was Qatar, which does not have a military base in Djibouti, who embarked on an arbitration between the two countries. Therefore, the effect of the hosting of foreign military base, on national security, is limited.

Hosting foreign militaries also entails the risk of being considered as an integral part of military actions. Martineau Jean-luc points out the risk of Djibouti being considered a complicit entity in Yemen's civil war. In particular, Djibouti could be seen as allying with Arab and Western countries because it has refused to accept military bases from Iran, which is at odds with Arab countries, and from Russia, which has rivalries with Western countries (Jean-luc 2018). In addition, when the civil war in Ethiopia intensified in the fall of 2021, US military officials in Djibouti suggested that an attack on Ethiopia could be carried out from a US military base in Djibouti. Immediately after this, Djibouti’s Foreign Minister took to Twitter and stated: "(t)hat is

not going to happen" (The New Arab Staff 2021). It is uncertain whether the Djiboutian government can actually stop any military actions planned from the foreign bases in their country. Even so, the presence of foreign forces could make the host country accountable for the actions of the troops stationed there, essentially jeopardizing the independent political will of the country.

There is noticeable power asymmetry between the countries with troops (or self-defense forces) in Djibouti—the US, France, China, Japan, and Saudi Arabia—and the country itself. One of the strategies employed by small states to negotiate with great powers on equal terms is to use multilateral coalitions. The government of Djibouti recognizes the importance of multilateral diplomacy and is acting on it; for example, the country ran for non-permanent membership of the United Nations in 2020, and actively participates in the Arab Union, the International Organization of the Francophone, and IGAD⁷. However, Djibouti has not yet succeeded in effectively making its voice heard, as it has not formed a strong coalition that can compete with major powers. To rectify this imbalance of power, Djibouti has expanded the range of troops stationed in its borders to include those from Arab countries and China. As a consequence, Djibouti does not always share the common ideology or purpose with the countries stationed there, creating a sort of inconsistency, where it coexists with contradictory forces in its own territory.

4. Djibouti's national strategy towards foreign military bases

As we have seen, Djibouti has many foreign military bases and is recognized as a country in an important geopolitical location. While Djibouti is rarely the subject of academic literature, previous research in other countries gives us useful analytical tools that can be employed in this

⁷ The Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) is a regional coalition of seven east African countries—Djibouti, Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia, Sudan, Uganda, Eritrea, and South Sudan. (More information can be found here: <https://igad.int/>)

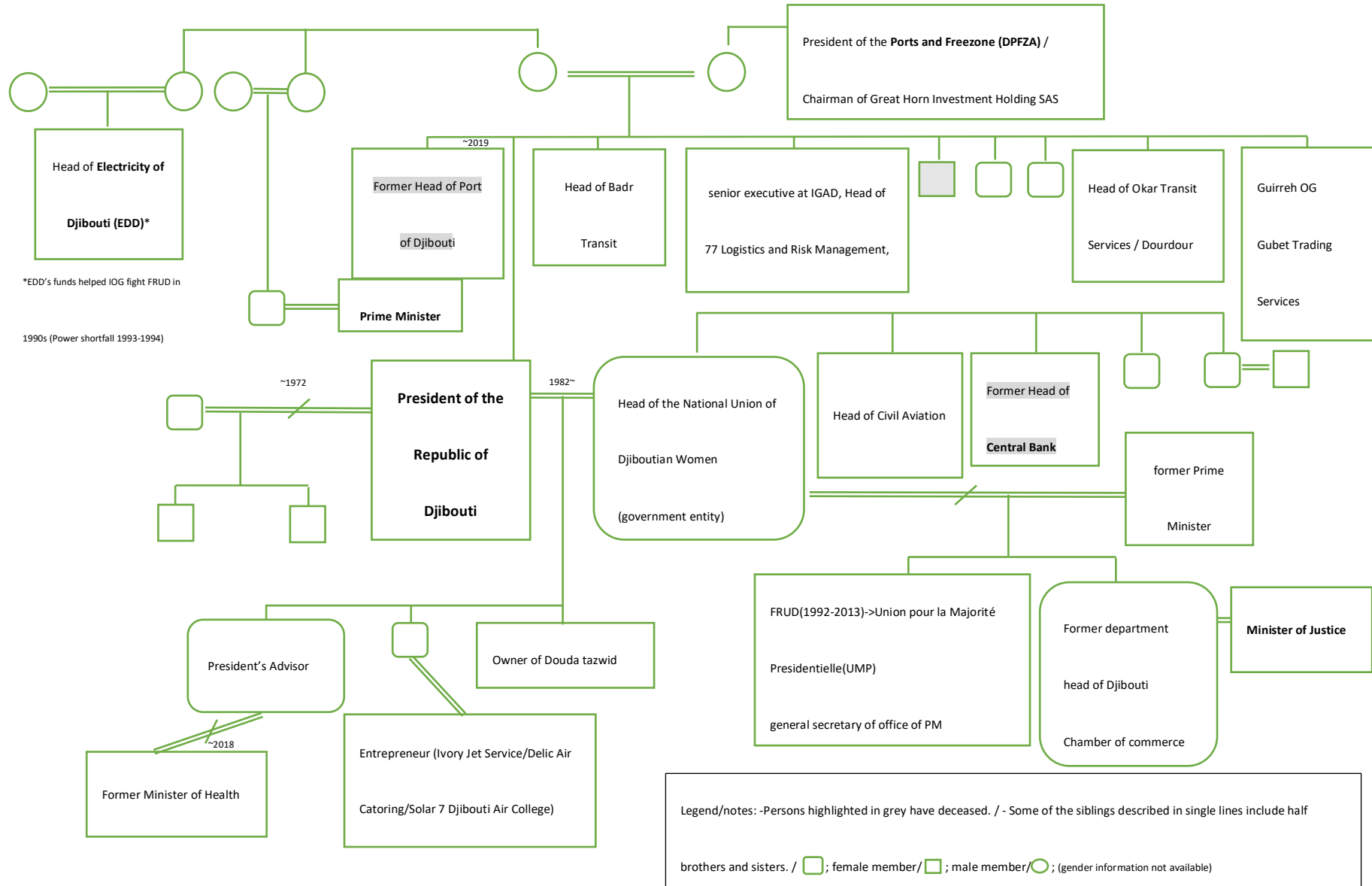
paper. First, Clapham's classic, which analyzes governmental structures in Africa, provides an effective perspective on state survival strategies (Clapham 1996). Clapham argues that post-colonial African countries often confront situations where national survival is at stake, and therefore, survival is the foremost concern of policymakers. Here Clapham questions *whose* survival? Is it the survival of the policymaker, the nation, or the civilians? The answer is that it is firstly the ruler's own survival and the survival of his family and cronies that support the ruler, but the degree to which that is also the citizens' survival, depends on the particular state system and circumstances they are in.

Sonia le Gouriellec (2020) describes the concentration of power as a common feature of small states, where kinship inevitably plays a major role in job allocation. As this situation evolves over time, the political leaders begin to treat the country as if it were their personal property; scholars have called these states "neo-patrimonial".⁸ The figure below shows the key political and business posts occupied by the Djiboutian President's relatives. The two major ethnicities in Djibouti—Somali and Afar—have had some hard times during the course of the country's history. The President has always been a Somali and the Prime Minister has always been an Afar. However, interestingly, the current prime minister is also a relative of the president. Relatives of the president also hold key posts in the ports and logistics industry, which accounts for 46.6% of Djibouti's economy (Annual Statistics of Djibouti 2021, 102).⁹ From this figure, Djibouti can be considered a typical neo-patrimonial state in that it has a neo-patrimonial system with the president as the head of the family-state system.

⁸ For example, Shmuel N Eisenstadt's 1973 book "Traditional Patrimonialism and Modern Neopatrimonialism" and some more recent works such as Van de Walle's 2005 book "Democratic Reform in Africa."

⁹ Calculated from the sum of "Trade," "Transportation, post, and courier," and "Information and Communication."

Figure 4: Presidential family tree and their occupation



Much has been written about how the rulers distribute the rent they receive from the state to strengthen their regime, and why such distribution strategies are adopted (for example, Rana et al. 2021 and Roessler and Ohls 2018). As we saw earlier, Djibouti has a neo-patrimonial system with the president as the head of the state, which we can consider supported Djibouti's long-term stability. Since the reforms of the political parties in 2003, the representative party of the Somali people, the People's Rally for Progress, and the representative party of the Afar people, the Front for the Restoration of Unity and Democracy (FRUD), have been fighting elections as a coalition party. Thus, in Djibouti, the two major political parties of the major ethnic groups fight the election together as one coalition party; there is no way of knowing the public sentiment towards each of the political parties through elections, nor any major redistribution of power that happens as a result of voting. The actual distribution of power between the two ethnic groups and tribes is carried out in patronage practices and through power sharing within the ruling party.

Previous research suggests that the kind of rent policymakers can use to consolidate their own survival is an important factor in considering the distribution mechanism. In some cases, such as in oil exporting countries, the number of reserves, extraction locations, and fluctuations in international market prices have a significant impact on the mechanisms of domestic power sharing (Morse 2018). In the case of Djibouti, its geopolitical position can be seen as the resource from which the ruling elites can extract revenue. The logistics industry, the ports and the foreign military bases are the primary means of earning income from resources.

The following section discusses the advantages and disadvantages of having a foreign military base in the country, reflecting on previous research and the information compiled in Sections 2 and 3—the intentions of each country (Section 2) and Djibouti's diplomatic strategy (Section 3). The interests at play when hosting foreign military bases will be explored from the

two perspectives of Djibouti's national security (Section 4.1) and its social and economic development (Section 4.2), with the two viewpoints of rulers and citizens as the vertical axis.

4.1 National security strategies

When considering national security, there are external and internal threats; Djibouti is exposed to hostile neighbors and terrorist organizations, and forces that oppose the current administration can vitalize. For each of the threats to the national security, I discuss if the presence of foreign military bases has an effect to alleviate the threat or vice-versa.

4.1.1 External threats

Since independence, Djibouti has been at risk of invasion and annexation from neighboring countries. To the north is Eritrea, a country under dictatorship, and to the south is Somalia, home to *Al-Shabab*, militant forces that insist on rigid Sharia law. Foreign troops can provide protection against these threats. However, when Eritrea invaded the northern border in 2008¹⁰, it was the Qatari army that came to help and not the foreign troops stationed in Djibouti. Qatar deployed troops to secure the border for some time, but withdrew in 2015 when Qatar became isolated amongst the Gulf states and Djibouti decided to side with the Saudis. Currently, the military presence of Saudi and the UAE in Djibouti seems to work as a deterrent to aggression from the north, since Saudi Arabia and the UAE are important donors for Eritrea.

Al-Shabab, an Islamic terrorist organization based in Somalia, is one of the most alarming organizations for the US; for example, there were approximately 200 ground operations to Somalia that were launched from the US military base in Djibouti between 2017 and 2018

¹⁰ As of 2021, the fate of the 13 Djibouti soldiers captured by Eritrea during the 2008 border dispute remains unknown (F. Soudan 2018).

(Eydoux 2021). As a result of these military operations, the explosions that injured several people in the capital in May 2014, was the only terrorist attack Djibouti has had for decades.

When considering security towards external threats, it is quite clear that being on the receiving end of fewer external attacks is beneficial to the rulers, since that way, there is less need to spend money on the repercussions of an attack and they will be able to invest resources in other priorities. However, whether or not it is beneficial to citizens depends on the individuals' position and tribal relationship with the ruler. For those who are not satisfied with the current regime, zero external threat means that they cannot use strategies such as allying with external threats to extract favorable conditions for themselves. As we have seen above, in general the existence of foreign troops makes those who present an external threat hesitant to carry out attacks. However, it is uncertain to what extent the foreign forces would react in cases of actual attacks.

4.1.2 Rebels inside Djibouti

Somalis living mainly in the southeastern area and Afars residing mainly in the northwestern area are the two major races in Djibouti. Somalis are central to Djibouti's politics and economy; the president is Somali and the majority of residents of Djibouti city, where most of Djibouti's economic activities take place, are Somalis. Against this backdrop, a civil war broke out in 1991, between the Afar rebel army—the Front for the Restoration of Unity and Democracy (FRUD) — and government forces. Although the government and FRUD reached a peace agreement in 1994, some hardliners remained as *armed* FRUD, and occasional skirmishes still occur today. Although it is unlikely that the foreign forces stationed in Djibouti will act against domestic opposition forces, by giving large base fees and economic aid to the current administration, and by protecting the country from external threats, the existence of foreign bases indirectly supports government forces.

The existence of foreign bases certainly supports the ruling regime; however, the degree to which the strategy benefits citizens depends on the distance of the person from the ruler and other aspects, which requires closer investigation. Although the majority of citizens may not wish any rebels to disrupt their daily life, since the ability to pose a threat to the government—the “threat capabilities”—is directly related to the bargaining power of the group (Roessler and Ohls 2018), big power imbalance with these opposition groups may have longer term repercussions, such as another civil war.

4.1.3 Risks and responsibilities as host

The militaries stationed in Djibouti have no obligation to explain their operations to the Djibouti government. Some of the US missions include drone strikes in the Middle East as well as the Horn of Africa region. Since Djibouti hosts foreign troops, it could be argued that they are partially responsible for the military action of these troops. Therefore, the country risks being a target of retaliation. Indeed, the explosion in Djibouti city in 2014 was carried out by al-Shabab, who claimed dissatisfaction at the French providing training to the Djibouti army to fight in Somalia (Reuters, May 27, 2014). Similarly, during the presidential election of 2021, Al-Shabab expressed discontent towards the regime under president Guelleh, which it claimed had turned Djibouti into "a military base from where every war against the Muslims in East Africa is planned and executed" (Rédaction Africanews 2021). When considering the risk of retaliation, the interests of policymakers and citizens are aligned. If the Djiboutian government is seen as being responsible for the actions of foreign troops, the Djiboutian citizens can also be targeted.

4.2 Political and economic strategies

4.2.1 Revenue from the base and its distribution

In 2012, the rent revenue from military bases stationed in Djibouti was approximately 70 million USD (30 million USD was received from the US and 40 million USD was received from France), which was 15% of the government’s revenue and donations (Djibouti “Annual Statistics,” 2017-2021). In 2020, the total yearly rent revenue was around 129 million USD (the US paid 63 million USD¹¹, France paid 40 million USD¹², China paid 20 million USD, 3.5 million USD was received from Japan, and 2.5 million USD was received from Italy¹³), which amounted to 18%¹⁴ of all revenue and donations. The table below shows the breakdown of the Djiboutian government’s revenue and donations. From 2012 to 2020, total revenue and donations increased by about 50 percent and rent from foreign military bases grew.

Table 4.2.1. a: Revenue and Donations of Djibouti (million USD)

	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
revenue and donations	464	539	527	638	651	650	678	770	719
total budget revenue	349	475	435	519	609	600	619	640	589
tax revenue	269	308	310	367	363	371	397	420	364
direct tax	118	128	144	150	155	154	164	175	153
indirect tax	119	141	147	175	181	195	202	211	191
other tax	32	40	18	42	27	22	31	34	20
non-tax revenue	80	166	125	152	245	230	222	220	225
Donations	115	64	92	118	42	50	59	131	130

Source: Djibouti Ministry of Economy and Finance in charge of Industry, “Annual Statistics,” 2017-2021

¹¹ The New York Times, February 25, 2017, “U.S. Wary of Its New Neighbor in Djibouti: A Chinese Naval Base” (<https://www.nytimes.com/2017/02/25/world/africa/us-djibouti-chinese-naval-base.html>).

¹² TV5 monde, 24 March, 2021, “Djibouti, un pivot stratégique cher aux puissances étrangères” (Djibouti, a strategic pivot dear to foreign powers) (<https://information.tv5monde.com/afrique/djibouti-un-pivot-strategique-cher-aux-puissances-etrangees-401023>).

¹³ T. Fakude, 15 March 2021, “The militarization of the Horn of Africa—Examining China’s military base in Djibouti” (<https://afraid.org/index.php/reports/28-the-militarization-of-the-horn-of-africa-examining-china-s-military-base-in-djibouti>).

¹⁴ Calculation is: 129 million USD (total rent revenue from foreign military base) divided by 719 million USD (Total revenue and donations in 2020).

The flow of aid and investments is also thought to be linked to the establishment of military bases. The amount of donations varies from year to year, but it accounts for about 10% to 20% of the national budget (shown in the table above). The net total receipts of aid and investments from the main source countries are shown in the table below.¹⁵ The top four countries, France, Japan, the United States, and China are all countries with military bases. The funds received from most countries are concessional, and therefore fundamentally different to those received from China that are mostly commercial loans. China has invested specifically in projects related to the Belt and Road Initiative, and since 2012, has invested approximately 600 million USD in the Djibouti-Addis Ababa Railway (inaugurated in 2017) and approximately 500 million USD in the Dorale Multipurpose Port (inaugurated in 2017). A significant amount has also been invested in oil pipelines, water pipelines, and part of the largest free zone in Africa built adjacent to the Multipurpose Port. Djibouti already had a high debt rate at 50.2% of GDP in 2015 (African Development Bank 2021), which rose to 74.1% of GDP in 2021 (African Development Bank 2022).

¹⁵ Arab countries are also understood to have invested in the country, but the overall picture is difficult to grasp due to a lack of published data. Similarly, China has not released any official statistical data; however, some NGOs have used media reports to compile information on Chinese investments. AIDDATA was used for this paper.

Table 4.2.1.b: Total Receipts (NET) from main source countries (million USD)

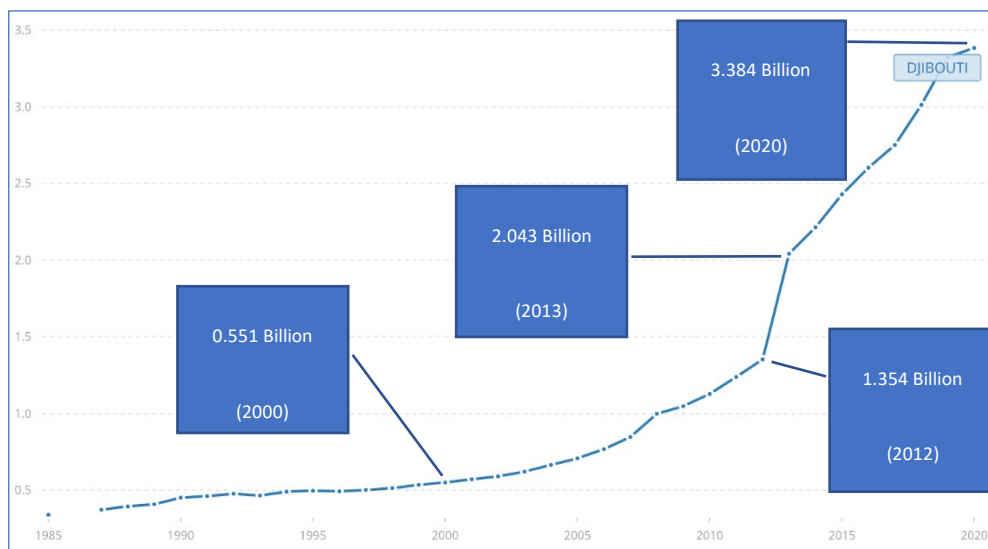
	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
France	41	44	75	-8	61	38	42	33
Japan	24	15	18	18	9	17	9	44
US	10	10	9	6	7	12	10	25
Canada	3	15	2	1	1	1	1	1
Italy	5	4	0.2	0.1	0	0	0	0
Spain	1	0.3	0	0	0	0	0	0.2
UK	-5	-5	-5	0	0	0.1	0.1	1
China	85	792	76	24	1183	377	(N/A)	(N/A)

Source: OECD, 2021, “Geographical Distribution of Financial Flows to Developing Countries Disbursements, Commitments, Country Indicators” (for OECD countries) / AIDDATA, 2021, “AidData’s Global Chinese Development Finance Dataset, Version 2.0” (for China)

Between 2012 and 2020, the GDP of Djibouti increased from 1.4 billion USD (1,419 USD per capita) to 3.4 billion USD (2,918 USD per capita) (see figure 4.1.). Per capita GDP is much higher than neighboring countries, such as Ethiopia (919 USD (2020)) and Somalia (416 USD (2020)) (World Bank 2021). In contrast, the poverty rate (the percentage of people living below the national poverty line of 2.11 USD per day) only dropped slightly from 23% in 2012 to 21% in 2017, with an unemployment rate of 47% (as of 2017) (UNDP 2020). Thus, there is clearly more to be done on the distribution of wealth. Although 46.6% of GDP is derived from port activities (Annual Statistics of Djibouti 2021, 102), employment in the sector makes up only 19.13%¹⁶ of the workforce, with the biggest employer being the government (44.97% of the workforce) (ibid, 39). Combined with what we have seen in Figure 4.1, we can see that the bulk of the GDP is produced by state-owned enterprises and redistributed through the governmental system, in part, through direct employment.

¹⁶ Calculated from the sum of “trade” and “transportation and communications.”

Figure 4.2.1: GDP of Djibouti (current USD)



Source: World Bank Open Data. Caption added by author.

4.2.2 Drawbacks on economic development

The expansion of military bases is beginning to hinder the city's economic activities. For example, the Djiboutian government has been in negotiation with France, for some time, for the return of the French naval base in the Heron district. According to the magazine Africa Intelligence, Djibouti wants the entire Heron area to be an upmarket business district, but it has not come to an agreement with France, who wants to secure its base at the tip of the peninsula (Africa Intelligence 2021). As another example, US, French, and other military aircrafts, and civilian aircrafts share two runways at Djibouti International Airport, and troubles occasionally occur. In one case in April 2018, a US aircraft crashed on the runway of Djibouti International Airport. Although the pilot had escaped and was safe, US military air operations were stopped by the Djibouti government until they could both ensure safety through a joint investigation of the accident (Browne 2018). On the other hand, Americans are accusing the local air control of indolence; a US military official told VOA that several near-miss cases and drone crashes could be the result of poor instructions from air traffic control (VOA News 2015). Consequently, it has been reported

that President Guelleh is planning to build a new airport south of Djibouti City, to avoid inconvenience caused by military and civilian use of the same airport; however, funding for construction has not yet been secured.

In sum, the uncontrollable foreign military missions pose a threat to civilian life and to some extent the occupation of land hinders economic development. However, in terms of the survival of the ruling regime, the effect of this disruption is negligible.

A summary of the discussion in this section is shown in the table below.

Table 4.2.2: Summary of discussions

Threats and Risks	Advantage/ Disadvantage for the survival		Description
	of the ruler	of the citizens	
4.1. National Security			
1) External Threats (Eritrea to the north and Al-Shabab to the south)	Advantage	Depends on the individual's situation	In general, the existence of foreign troops makes those who pose an external threat hesitant to attack, but it is uncertain how much the foreign forces will react in cases of an actual attack.
2) Rebels inside Djibouti (armed FRUD)	Advantage	Generally, an advantage	Foreign bases indirectly support the government forces by providing fiscal support and general protection.
3) Risks and responsibilities as host	Disadvantage	Generally, an disadvantage	When a foreign army attacks another country, the country hosting the base may also be the target of a counterattack.
4.2 Political and economic strategies			
1) Revenue from the base and its distribution	Advantage	Not always an advantage (the degree a person can earn is subject to client-patron relationships)	Base fees are a stable source of revenue for the government, and the government can control domestic groups through the redistribution of revenue to the local communities.
2) Drawback on economic development	Disadvantage (but negligible in terms of its survival)	Disadvantage	Occupation of major land in the city of Djibouti by foreign bases can hinder the economic development of the city.

5. Conclusion

Based on the above discussions, the following section summarizes the analysis for each of the research questions.

5.1 Impact of foreign military bases on Djibouti's economy and society

Section 4 examined the positive and negative factors of hosting foreign military facilities. Overall, the presence of foreign militaries has had a positive impact in terms of security and national stability. However, the number of countries stationed in Djibouti has increased since 2011, and since the establishment of the Chinese base in 2017, the US-China rivalry has caused several disputes. In addition, depending on the type of operation implemented from those bases, there is a risk of retaliation against Djibouti itself. Therefore, close attention must be paid to determine whether hosting foreign bases will negatively affect future security or not.

The paper also verified that hosting military bases has great economic significance for the current administration. Revenues derived from leasing military bases accounted for 18% of the government's total revenue in 2020. In addition, donations, such as grant assistance, are closely related to the stationing of foreign military bases, and the amount of donations account for 10 to 20% of the Djiboutian government's revenue and donations. China's investment mostly takes the form of private-based loans rather than grants; however, the investments provide the infrastructure that Djibouti has long wanted. The scale and speed of Chinese investment is overwhelming other investors. However, the amount of debt from China (including private companies) has accumulated rapidly, which presents significant burdens on the future repayments.

Ethiopia is a major trade partner with Djibouti. As Ethiopia's economic development has increased, so too has the volume of trade. The increase of trade coupled with the port development,

the Djiboutian economy could achieve steady growth. The country's GDP was 1.4 billion USD in 2012, and more than doubled to 3.4 billion USD in 2020. One cannot attribute all this growth to the foreign military bases but, as mentioned above, they do have a positive effect on the peace and stability of the country and attract large donations and loans. Therefore, hosting the bases has contributed significantly to economic development.

However, looking at the impact on the general public of Djibouti, the benefits of economic development are barely noticeable. Poverty rates (percentage of people living below 2.11 USD a day (national poverty line)) have only slightly decreased from 23% in 2012 to 21% in 2017. The unemployment rate is still high (47% as of 2017), and there have been few tangible results for the poor.

5.2 Intentions of the current administration to host foreign military facilities

The geopolitical importance of Djibouti has risen sharply since 2001, which was accelerated by the spread of piracy off the coast of Somalia in the late 2000s. For a country without any resources to sell, rising geopolitical value was a great opportunity. Djibouti took full advantage of it and extracted benefits for its own economic development. As Sonia le Gouriellec points out, the studies on small states can well explain the intents. In small states, kinship and personal relationships tend to have a great influence on the placement of positions and the procedures of public affairs. This is exactly the case in Djibouti and President Guelleh and his adherents have controlled the domestic repulsion towards the current regime, using the income from the foreign military bases and related donations—putting people close to him in important positions while fulfilling some of the demands of the groups far from him in order to maintain dominance. In that sense, it can be said that the foreign military bases have benefited the current administration more than they have the national security and economic development of the general public.

As described in the introduction, the purpose of this paper was to analyze the impact of the foreign military presence in Djibouti on the local society and the intentions of the current administration. Through these analyses, it was found that while there are some advantages and disadvantages to hosting military bases, they contribute considerably to the maintenance of the current administration but have few positive effects on the local poor. Being a host to military bases brings wealth to the nation; however, the mechanism for the distribution of that wealth must be considered elsewhere as it will be essential for the country's development in the longer term.

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Abstract (in Japanese)

要 約

ジブチはアフリカ東部のいわゆる「アフリカの角」地域に位置し、紅海の南の入り口であるバブ・エル・マンデブ海峡の西岸にある小国である。地政学的に重要な位置を占め、米国、フランス、日本、中国、イタリアの 5 か国がジブチに軍事基地（日本の場合は自衛隊拠点）を置いている。本稿では、外国の軍事基地誘致はジブチの現政権及び一般大衆それぞれにとって、合理的な選択であるか否かを検討する。

本稿ではまず、ジブチに海軍基地開発をした、あるいはしようとしている国々の意図を検討する。次にホスト国であるジブチ自身の外交戦略について議論し、続いて、外国の軍事基地を誘致する戦略は国家の存続にとって有利か不利か、それぞれの要因を分析する。この分析を通じ、筆者はジブチの軍事基地誘致戦略は確かに国の経済発展を促進してきたが、一般大衆への分配メカニズムは国の経済発展とは別に考慮する必要がある、と主張する。ジブチでは現政権の権力が強化された一方で、国民、特に貧困層が感じられる恩恵は小さい。

紅海沿岸では軍港開発競争が激化しており、沿岸の国々は最も良い条件をもたらす国に軍港開発の権利を与えようと画策している。ジブチは既に多数の軍事基地を誘致しており、それを梃子に資金や投資を呼び込み、国の経済発展を促進した先例である。したがって本稿の分析は、紅海沿岸諸国の今後の戦略を検討するうえでも参考になると考えられる。

キーワード： 海の覇権争い、紅海、外国の軍事基地誘致、国家の生存戦略、小国の外交、新家産主義国家、ジブチ