

DJIBOUTI

Party Portrait

The Republic of Djibouti, a predominantly Muslim country, historically formed part of French Somaliland before voting to become an independent country in 1977. Djibouti is a semi-presidential republic, dominated by the Somali Issa Dir clan, and has held consistently free and fair elections. Djibouti's strategic location on the Gulf of Aden – close to the world's busiest shipping lanes as well as Yemen, Somalia and Saudi Arabia – has made it a highly attractive location for an array of regional and global powers to set up military bases. Since 2002, Djibouti has hosted Camp Lemonnier, the only American base on the African continent. Saudi Arabia and China are now building their own bases in Djibouti, prompting Japan to expand its own pre-existing military base in the country. Italy also operates a small military base there, crucial to operations to tackle Somali piracy. While not a major military or economic power, Djibouti's strategic position potentially affords it a degree of leverage. Djibouti maintains positive ties with most Middle Eastern countries, but is locked in relatively hostile bilateral relationship with neighboring Eritrea.

Key Interests

- Secure lucrative contracts with foreign powers to lease military and naval bases.
- Ensure domestic security and that Yemen's civil war concludes rapidly and peacefully.
- Continue US military action in the Middle East.

Sources of Leverage

Military - Djibouti will soon host Saudi, Chinese, American and Japanese military bases, playing a vital role in all of these countries' military operations in the Middle East

Regional Strategy

Djibouti's strategy is to maintain positive relations with most Middle Eastern countries, fostering particular close partnerships with the Sunni powers. The country will continue to position itself as an attractive strategic location for military and naval bases, increasing its leverage over regional and global powers and securing rents.

Powerful Individuals

President Ismaïl Omar Guelleh; Prime Minister Adboukader Kambil Mohamed; Chairman of the Chiefs of Staff General Zakaria Cheikh Ibrahim

Potential Negotiation Moves

Refugee Hosting - Offer to host some of the refugees fleeing Eritrea to Europe, reducing burden on southern member states such as Greece and Italy.
Leverage Concessions - Make foreign powers' continued operation of military bases in Djibouti conditional upon increased development assistance or military funding.
Commit forces to multilateral operations - Voluntarily contribute Djibouti armed forces to United Nations / African Union peace operation in Somalia, securing rents or political concessions.

Internal Conflicts

The Issa clan has dominated the country's politics for decades, both during and after French colonial administration. The Affar continue to feel aggrieved at its lack of political power and relative marginalization from government.

Memberships

ARAB LEAGUE, AU, IAEA, OIC, UN

Allies

SOMALIA Government, YEMEN Government

Partners

CHINA, EUROPEAN UNION, JAPAN, SAUDI ARABIA, UNITED STATES

Rivals

N/A

Adversaries

N/A

Active Armed Opponents

N/A

Proxy

N/A

External Sponsor

N/A

Aid Recipient

CHINA, EUROPEAN UNION, JAPAN, UAE, UNITED STATES

Aid Donor

N/A