

The Horn of Africa, comprising Ethiopia, Eritrea, Djibouti, Somalia and Somaliland, has now become the focus of what is being termed a 'Middle East Cold War'. The old bastions of power in the region, the US, UK and France, are being increasingly displaced by a new generation of Middle Eastern powers, with everyone racing to gain a foothold in what is becoming one of the world's most militarised regions. The leaders in The Horn are playing a deadly game of chess against the new forces shaping the region. Analysis by **James Jeffrey**.

A DEADLY GAME OF CHESS





Eritrea's President Isaias Afwerki (2nd r), Somalia's President Mohamed Abdullahi Mohamed (3rd r), Ethiopia's Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed (5th r) and Ethiopia's Deputy Prime Minister Demeke Makonnen (r) during their visit to the University of Gondar in Ethiopia in early November. They met to cement regional ties

A new scramble is underway in the Horn of Africa. Once written off as one of Africa's most volatile and treacherous regions for foreign involvement, a host of countries are now vying to gain a foothold. The Horn is becoming one of the world's most militarised regions, beside one of the world's most vital shipping lanes.

As usual, US policy is playing a role, especially when it comes to its long-term ally Ethiopia. As the Horn's most powerful and influential country, what happens to Ethiopia is likely to influence the rest of the region.

Since the 1991 revolution that brought Ethiopia's present ruling party to power, the US and the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) have forged a strong bilateral relationship, based primarily on Ethiopia's role in the Global War on Terror, with its large, professional and effective army and its formidable state security apparatus.

But now the US is shifting its focus away from terrorism toward political and economic threats, just as numerous squabbling Middle Eastern potentates jockeying for power in the region – Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) versus their bitter adversaries, Qatar and Turkey – are looking at forging closer connections with the region's countries to help them achieve their goals.

"In the last few years, the Horn of Africa has become a battleground on which Middle Eastern rivalries are played out," says Awol Allo, a UK-based law professor and frequent commentator on Ethiopia and the Horn region.

"Different groupings have engaged with the region in pursuit of their own interests. Some have been more successful than others, but the question for many is whether African countries are able to make these relationships work for them."

The latest incarnation of powerplay in the Horn is motivated by the same forces that once had the old imperial powers of Britain, France and Italy tussling over the region: plain old-fashioned rivalry and a desire to control the approaches to the vital shipping avenue of the Suez Canal.

But whereas before, Horn countries tended to show a healthy disregard for outsiders, now they are welcoming them with enthusiasm. It's not hard to see why, given how the financial benefits involved could bolster if not transform the region's benighted economies.

Added to which, it can't be denied how the emerging realpolitik has achieved some notable gains in terms of peace and stability, primarily the opening of the Ethiopia-Eritrea border after 20 years of animosity and conflict.

On the other hand, the geopolitical sparring and spider's web of alliances and rivalries also has the potential to unleash dangerous forces in a long-volatile region.

"The peace between Ethiopia and Eritrea will have a significant dividend for the Horn of Africa," says Hallelujah Lulie at Amani Africa, an Africa-based policy research, advisory and consulting think-tank. "But at the same time, US policy is shifting; new powers are emerging; there are rivalries over the Red Sea and



Celebrating partnership: People holding Chinese and Djiboutian flags as they wait for the arrival of Djibouti's President Ismaïl Omar Guelleh, prior to the launch ceremony for a 1000-unit social housing project being funded by China Merchants Group (CMG)

Yemen; economic influence is being used as a proxy; and in the background you have Iran, which is an enemy of Saudi, who are an ally of the US: it's a complex battleground."

Taking sides

Ethiopia has been dealing with meddling foreigners for the past two centuries and has proven adept at playing them against each other and switching allegiances to suit itself.

During the reign of Emperor Haile Selassie (1930-1974), Ethiopia forged strong ties with the US. But after a military coup overthrew the emperor in 1974, Ethiopia pivoted to Russia.

After the next revolution in 1991, it was back with the US. Since 2001, and as the Global War on Terror proceeded, that relationship continued to strengthen as Ethiopia and its ability to effectively wield hard and soft



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power regionally turned it into a vital US ally.

In recent years, however, the US has gradually come to perceive the rise of China and Russia, and not terrorism, as the biggest threat it is facing in Africa and elsewhere.

“Great power competition, not terrorism, is now the primary focus of US national security,” US Secretary of Defence, James Mattis, said in a January speech outlining the 2018 National Defence Strategy. “We face growing threats from revisionist powers as different as China and Russia are from each other.”

But while US policy was shifting, the Ethiopian government, belated since 2015 by ongoing protests in

the country and internal party squabbles, took its eye off the bigger picture outside Ethiopia.

“The EPRDF leadership failed to read the signal of the imminent US policy shifts,” says Mehari Taddele Maru, a Horn specialist. As a result, Mehari says, the EPRDF failed to prepare itself for the consequences.

“For one thing, Ethiopia continued to accept enormous Chinese investments in infrastructure and to forge economic and diplomatic ties between the two countries – and hence became the unintended target of [the] US policy shift from war on terror to economic confrontation with China.”

While the US knows it cannot match the scale of Chinese investment in Africa, it is still looking to curb Chinese economic influence in the region, Mehari says.

Fearing reproach from Washington, some East African countries may scale down their ties with China and revise their public procurement procedures. Aware of this, China has already announced its decision to cut down investment in Ethiopia until its current debt payment – which is colossal – is restructured. For example, the loan for a railway that stretches from Addis Ababa to Djibouti, just one of myriad Chinese-funded infrastructure projects, is \$4bn.

Amid such shifting sands, and with the US not offering as steadfast diplomatic support as before – including it not being as willing to look the other way over controversial practices by the Ethiopian government – the EPRDF became increasingly susceptible to its inner frictions and thereby less stable and sure of itself.

By the beginning of this year, the EPRDF’s position had become so precarious that former Prime Minister Hailemariam Desalegn became the first Ethiopian leader to voluntarily cede power in an effort to placate the criticism of his government and to calm the turmoil gripping the country.

“The paralysis was attributable to the internal weakness of the EPRDF, namely corruption, power struggles, and a lack of shared vision for the future,” Mehari Taddele Maru says. “Competition among [the] great powers due to the shift of focus from the War on Terror to strategic competition between the US, on the one hand, and China and Russia, on the other, accelerated this change.”

At the same time, the Ethiopian diaspora in the US was becoming increasingly effective in influencing US policy toward the motherland.

A week after the 2 April 2018 swearing-in of Abiy Ahmed as Ethiopia’s new Prime Minister, the US House of Representatives unanimously adopted a resolution entitled ‘Supporting respect for human rights and encouraging inclusive governance in Ethiopia’.

Unusually outspoken for US public policy in its criticism of Ethiopia’s government, the resolution – known as HR-128 – condemned the killings of peaceful protestors and excessive use of force by Ethiopian security forces; the detention of journalists, students, activists, and political leaders; and the regime’s abuse of the anti-terrorism laws to stifle political and civil dissent and journalistic freedoms.

“The new resolution is a reminder to the Ethiopian



Abu Dhabi's Crown Prince, Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan (c) receives Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed (l) and Eritrean President Isaias Afwerki (r) at the presidential palace in the UAE capital, Abu Dhabi

government that should it fail to reform, it can no longer rely on US largesse to contain problems at home," says Hassen Hussein, an academic and writer based in Minnesota. Since coming to power, Abiy has pushed through numerous reforms at blistering speed, releasing prisoners, inviting parties once deemed as terrorists back to Ethiopia, and easing restrictions on the press and free speech.

His game-changing modus operandi has also included reaching out to, and forging closer ties with Saudi Arabia and its ally, the UAE. After becoming Prime Minister, Abiy's first official visit outside Africa in May was to Saudi Arabia, and he has met with UAE's rulers; both of which have been only too happy to oblige, often in the form of a golden handshake.

"States in the Horn such as Ethiopia are trying to leverage these rapidly changing geopolitical dynamics to enhance their own influence," Awol Allo says. "Amidst the growing competition for influence among the Middle Eastern axes, Addis Ababa has managed to avoid taking sides, at least publicly, and leverage its geostrategic significance as the region's hegemon to attract much-needed investment from several different partners."

Juncture between Africa and Middle East

Relations between the Horn of Africa and Arab nations east of the Red Sea date back over millennia, spurred by a mixture of trade and the spread of Islam. This is what gives the Horn its hybrid character – a mix of African and Middle Eastern traditions and cultures.

The connection came to the fore following the 1973 Oil Crisis, triggered when oil-producing Arab countries cut down production to punish Western countries that supported Israel in the Yom Kippur War. Horn countries suddenly faced soaring inflation in the aftermath of the crisis.

"To overcome economic devastation and soaring debt, they began to court oil-rich Gulf States, offering political loyalty and natural resources in return for aid,"

Awol says.

"Countries such as Somalia, Djibouti, Egypt, and Sudan invoked their cultural and religious connections with the Gulf in a bid to gain help in dealing with their balance of payment crisis and political instability. Arab nations seized the opportunity, using their wealth and newfound geostrategic importance to expand their influence in the Horn and secure key loyalties."

But the end of the Cold War in the early 1990s caused a shift in relations as the Horn of Africa underwent several changes, Awol explains. "The Marxist-Leninist regime in Ethiopia collapsed. Somalia imploded into protracted civil war. Eritrea gained independence. And Sudan experienced an Islamic Revolution."

With revenue from oil also declining, he says, Gulf nations decided to retreat, which is how things stood for the following two decades. But now those nations are back, thanks to profound geopolitical shifts.

The Gulf's Cold War

What some are calling the Gulf's Cold War escalated in 2017 when Saudi Arabia initiated an Arab blockade of Qatar over its alleged support for terrorism and its cosy relations with Iran, with whom Qatar shares the world's largest gas field. Iran, the Shia Muslim power, has become the main regional rival to the Sunni Muslim-ruled Saudi Arabia.

As the Cold War developed, the adversaries, Saudi Arabia and Qatar, and their respective allies, all descended on the Horn, building military bases, signing defence pacts and taking over commercial ports in a bid to gain advantages.

The potential of this latest scramble to sow both good and ill is well illustrated by Somaliland's port of Berbera, which the UAE company DP World has taken over. It paid around \$400m for the privilege. This is a vast amount for Somaliland's tiny economy, added to which, the expansion will lead to a lucrative tenfold increase in the number of containers Berbera handles.

Furthermore, UAE is planning to upgrade the dilapidated road from Berbera to Ethiopia, all of which could help generate previously unimagined revenues for Somaliland, which economically remains utterly hamstrung by not being recognised internationally as a country, and is thereby unable to access international financial organisations and systems.

The deal holds undoubted commercial benefits for UAE, too, with Berbera granting access to Ethiopia's large and promising market, which was recently jeopardised when DP World was evicted from Djibouti, Somaliland's neighbour, due to a dispute over control of the city's Doraleh container terminal.

Yet Berbera's commercial potential for UAE pales in comparison to its strategic and military benefits, lying as it does, 140 nautical miles south of Aden, historically the most important port in Yemen, where Saudi and Emirati forces are engaged in a vicious war with Iranian-backed Houthi rebels.

The UAE is already using its naval base at Assab, on Eritrea's Red Sea coast, to bombard Houthi positions in Yemen. Berbera will provide more military options,

THE DJIBOUTI CONUNDRUM

The opening of the border between Ethiopia and Eritrea could appear bad news for Djibouti, which has handled 90% of Ethiopia's foreign trade since the border war with Eritrea was triggered in 1998.

Furthermore, on a visit to Sudan, Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed and President Omar al-Bashir presented plans to modernise Port Sudan together; and then while visiting Somalia, Abiy announced that Ethiopia would work with Mogadishu to upgrade four Somali ports.

But while land-locked Ethiopia is clearly looking to break its heavy dependence on Djibouti, its government is primarily seeking to diversify its access to the sea – and drive-down freight costs via increased competition – rather than reduce its use of Djibouti. After all, on a visit to Djibouti, Abiy also called for joint investment in the tiny nation's ports that serve so much of Ethiopia's cargo.

"These trade volumes will continue to grow as Ethiopian, Chinese and Djiboutian authorities have invested heavily in upgrading and enhancing infrastructure capacity along the Djibouti corridor," says David Styan, a professor at the University of London's department of politics.

Earlier this year, Styan notes, the centrepiece of this strategy – the 728-kilometre railway linking Addis Ababa to Djibouti, began full operations. The \$4bn project – financed, constructed and managed by China – has drastically cut the time and cost of shuttling containers by truck between Ethiopia's capital, its expanding manufacturing export zones and Djibouti's ports.

Furthermore, the development of prospective oil and gas projects in Ethiopia's eastern Somali region, which would also be exported via Djibouti as the nearest port, reaffirms the port nation's relevance to Ethiopia, despite the UAE deal at Berbera.

"They are not competitive yet, maybe in 10 years' time, but we have everything working now," says Youssef Jamar, transport manager for the Djiboutian branch of the Ethiopian Djibouti Railway Company, working alongside the Chinese company operating the four daily cargo trains going between the two cities. "And once they are up and running, we will compete with them."

And Djibouti is already looking and planning ahead. Its ambitious Vision 2035 blueprint for national development sees its harbours as a hub for Asian transshipments, servicing the entire region.

"As it develops ports and extensive Free Trade Zones with its Chinese partners, the entrepôt nation will remain critical for Ethiopia and prospects of regional economic integration, irrespective of developments in Eritrea or Somalia," Styan says.

He adds that Djibouti hopes its competitiveness will be emboldened by Kenya's LAPSET corridor, which aims to link its coast at Lamu to South Sudan and Ethiopia.

Despite all the fluidity, continued cooperation between Djibouti and Ethiopia over the ports and the railway line, and the freedom of movement and economic commerce that comes with them, remains an important generator of a peace and prosperity dividend for the whole region.

"The Horn needs improved ports and infrastructure to handle the current pace of Ethiopia's economic growth, on which broader regional integration and prosperity relies," Styan says.

analysts say, and leave it in a position to dominate Yemen after the war.

But more is at stake than just the war in Yemen. Berbera, like Djibouti and Assab, lies close to the 'Gate of Tears', the narrow Bab al-Mandeb Strait running between the Horn of Africa as it juts out toward the Arabian Peninsula, a choke point separating the Red Sea and Indian Ocean, through which millions of barrels of Europe-bound and China-bound crude oil pass every day.

"For over 25 years, maritime strategy and port development in the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden appeared relatively static," says David Styan, a professor at the University of London's department of politics.

Eritrea looked inwards, he explains, neglecting its coast, while Djibouti flourished, lucratively embracing Ethiopia's trade, overseas investors and foreign military bases. Meanwhile Somalia's shores became synonymous with piracy, prompting Western and Asian naval manoeuvres, quietly ensuring free passage to the Suez Canal. But now that status quo has been entirely shaken up.

"Ports in the Horn of Africa and Gulf of Aden are suddenly in the spotlight," Styan says. "They are proving to be of increasing interest to rival Arab and Chinese investors, and [so] the politics of ports have become central in shaping political alliances and enmities across the region."

What's in a border opening?

The influence of external forces interested in the region can be seen in the stunning and unforeseen rapprochement between Ethiopia and Eritrea. The opening of what was once one of the most fractious and dangerous borders in the world wasn't of interest just to the two main protagonists.

China's burgeoning presence in Djibouti, next door to Ethiopia, is of increasing concern to the US, which has its African military headquarters in the small coastal country.

Eritrea could serve as a future alternative to the current uncomfortable situation, but first it had to come out of diplomatic isolation, Mehari notes, especially by normalising relations with neighbouring Ethiopia. Hence the quiet campaign out of the public eye last year, involving church officials and US diplomats lobbying the two countries to come together and resolve their differences.

At the same time, Saudi Arabia and UAE, which have established a military base in Eritrea to further their war efforts in Yemen, are likely to have played a significant background role in brokering the deal, says Hallelujah, noting how they also want its economy stronger to suit investments they have made there, and plan to make, and knew that access to Ethiopia's burgeoning economy would be a significant boon.

The timing of the Saudi bloc's burgeoning interest in Eritrea and its environs appears most auspicious for Ethiopia. In June this year the UAE deposited \$1bn in Ethiopia's foreign currency strapped National Bank and \$2bn more into various investments. This came on the heels of Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed bin Sultan

Al-Nahyan, the crown prince of Abu Dhabi's two-day official visit to the Ethiopian capital.

Upon arrival at the city's airport, the crown prince was welcomed by Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed, who notably then took the driver's seat to take his guest around the city. The Prime Minister's deference could have had something to do with Ethiopia's links to the UAE's rivals in the Middle East feud, and Ethiopia's attempts to stay chummy with all involved.

"As it attempts to foster greater regional integration, Ethiopia has courted both the Qatar-Turkey and Arab axes to fill funding gaps for critical infrastructure and free trade zones," Awol says.

"It has managed to maintain close ties to Qatar. And it has been Turkey's favourite investment destination for the past several years, attracting nearly half of Turkey's \$6bn investments in Africa. At the same time, however, it has exploited its diplomatic muscle and importance to simultaneously strengthen ties with Saudi Arabia and the UAE."

While all this goes on, the US remains committed to Ethiopia "more than ever", according to staff at the US embassy in Addis Ababa.

"Ethiopia plays an important role for regional stability as the largest contributor to UN peacekeeping missions globally and host to one of the world's largest refugee populations," says a US diplomat who wished to remain anonymous.

"With a growing population of over 100m, Ethiopia also represents tremendous untapped economic potential. The reform process launched by Prime Minister Abiy opens the door for further progress and collaboration in all of these areas, not least because democracy and good governance are powerful factors in building political stability and economic prosperity. Far from drifting away from Ethiopia, the US is moving closer as we see a clear alignment in our priorities."

At the same time, the diplomat notes, the need remains for US counter-terrorism efforts to continue in partnership with Ethiopia, just as it does further afield

in Africa.

"The transnational challenges of terrorism and extremism in the Sahel, Northern Nigeria, Somalia, and now in Central Africa, and the rise of Boko Haram, Al Qaeda in the Maghreb, ISIS West Africa, and Al-Shabaab, require new, determined regional approaches to counteract these groups," says Tibor Nagy Jr., Assistant Secretary of State for the Bureau of African Affairs at the US Department of State. "This includes better-trained and paid African security and law enforcement."

Ultimately, the message from the US diplomatic corps is that America is sticking by Ethiopia, in line with its policy across all Africa.

"I want to set the record straight," Nagy says. "The United States has an unwavering commitment to the continent and its people. From the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief to Power Africa, to the African Growth and Opportunity Act, Feed the Future, the Young African Leaders Initiative, and numerous other development and exchange programmes, the United States has stood side-by-side with African nations since de-colonisation to improve livelihoods, increase life expectancy, open our markets to African exports, promote democracy and human rights, and elevate Africa's place in the world."

Hope for the Horn

When it comes to hopes for an ascendant Africa, the Ethiopia-Eritrea rapprochement is one of several seemingly positive political developments, assisted by external forces that together are generating optimism about the Horn emerging from the shadows and joining other regions prospering around the continent.

Eritrea has also signed declarations of peace and cooperation with Djibouti and Somalia; after years of hostility over the building of the Renaissance Dam on the Blue Nile, Ethiopia and Egypt have seen a significant improvement in relations; Sudan, too, has mended relations with Egypt and has managed to get US sanctions lifted.

"Many have welcomed these new political developments with euphoria, believing that they mark a new dawn for East African politics," Mehari says. "The Horn of Africa is indeed set for a significant departure from the past, but it is important to note that there are external factors behind these changes."

This is not lost on many of the citizens of the affected countries, who see such geo-political machinations as potentially problematic. Eritreans appear particularly sceptical about the motivations of their President, Isaias Afwerki, whose authoritarian regime is blamed for the endless stream of Eritreans crossing the Mediterranean toward perceived safety in Europe.

"Isaias never wanted the border open, but he had pressure put on him," says Yohannes, an Eritrean who was conscripted aged 16 and forced to serve for 18 years, and recently crossed the border to live in Ethiopia. "In the end he opened it for his image, not for the people. Nothing will change in Eritrea."

The concern among many is that ordinary Eritreans and Ethiopians are becoming caught up in the ensuing

A ship unloading at Berbera Port. The sleepy town of Berbera is slowly transforming as it assumes a major role on the Red Sea shipping route, allowing breakaway Somaliland to dream of prosperity and even recognition





Left: Oromos from different parts of Ethiopia celebrate Irreecha Afaan Oromo, the Oromo people's Thanksgiving holiday

UNDERBELLY OF REGIONAL SUCCESSES

Amid the proclamations of peace and love abounding around the Ethiopia-Eritrea rapprochement, Ethiopia has one of the world's fastest-growing rates of internally displaced persons (IDPs).

During the first six months of 2018, Ethiopia had more people displaced internally by conflict and violence than war-torn Syria and Yemen, according to the Geneva-based Internal Displacement Monitoring Center (IDMC).

It's currently estimated that Ethiopia has just under 3m people who have been displaced by ethnic-driven violence that has flared since the Oromo protests that began at the end of 2015.

The situation is Ethiopia's worrying secret amid all the encouraging headlines about unprecedented reform in Ethiopian politics and the praise being heaped on the new Prime Minister, who some say is not being vocal enough in admitting and addressing the scale of the IDP problem the country faces.

In neighbouring Djibouti, while the country remains peaceful, locals lament the lack of change experienced by most of the population, despite all the money coming in from the ports and military bases hosted.

"You have these amazing new building developments, but just outside them nothing has changed, the local buildings are in a bad condition and the people are poor," says a Djiboutian in his early thirties who works in the city's shipping industry and wished to remain anonymous. "You have a rich elite that shops in Paris and doesn't care about anyone else."

About 23% of the population live in extreme poverty, while about 48% of the working-age population are unemployed, according to the African Development Bank Group. The problem, educated locals agree, is that while regional connections and relations are improving on the macro level, the trickle-down effect to the micro level appears almost non-existent.

"I don't have much hope for Djibouti," says a local journalist. "Its future depends on its children, and the education here is really bad. There's no effective opposition, it has no political expertise."

Hence, the journalist concedes, it may well be best that the current President, Ismaïl Omar Guelleh, remains in power – as he has done since 1999 – because he is at least a shrewd operator on the international stage, capable of increasing Djibouti's stock.

"After all, he managed to get the American and Chinese militaries in the same place," he says.

When it comes to Eritrea, prospects appear just as gloomy for locals. The fourfold increase in Eritreans seeking refugee status in Ethiopia during the weeks that followed the border opening would appear to indicate a low level of confidence that the country's authoritarian regime will countenance political reforms any time soon. The Horn remains a tough region to live in for many.

struggle for influence in the region, with their respective governments being overly influenced by external sources and then neglecting their duties in their haste to comply.

"There hasn't been any legal ratification, or laws put in place by the government since the border was opened – they are ad-libbing the whole process," says a young Ethiopian doctor in an Ethiopian city near the Ethiopia-Eritrea border. "It's very lazy by the leadership, and potentially laying the groundwork for problems later."

The Horn, not many need reminding, has a history of minor events mushrooming into far bigger problems: the brutal two-year Ethiopia-Eritrea war broke out ostensibly over the entirely inconsequential town of Badme by the border.

Hence the fear that the Gulf rivals will put their brinkmanship before considering the potentially negative consequences for the still vulnerable states of the region, leading to consequences that even the less vulnerable states need be wary of.

"Ethiopia is engaged in a dangerous game," Awol says. "The combination of the Gulf's transactional politics and Africa's often kleptocratic leadership could prove treacherous as historic rivalries take on new twists and matters develop beyond the Horn's control. For now, Ethiopia is able to hold off such demands, but its smaller neighbours are struggling. And things may only get ever tougher and more unpredictable as the Middle Eastern battle for supremacy plays out in the Horn of Africa."

Already, relations between Somaliland and Somalia have sunk to a new low in the wake of the UAE deal over Berbera. Somalia sees this as undermining its sovereignty, declaring the port deal illegal, due to Somaliland's de facto independence from Somalia still being unrecognised internationally.

Amid the increased animosity between the two countries there has been a rise in people killed during border clashes this year. In Somalia itself, tensions have worsened after some opposition politicians took the opportunity of joining Somaliland's side in backing UAE, while some Emirati-funded units have reportedly refused to obey the government.

All this has raised fears that Somalia, which has rarely been at peace since 1991, could slip back into the type of chaos that allowed radical Islamist groups to flourish, emboldened pirates to strike at international shipping, and dragged down the reputation of the Horn of Africa, making it a pariah in the world's eyes.

"East Africa will need all the assistance it can get, be it from developed liberal states, from Gulf monarchies or Asian economic powerhouses," Mehari says. "But as the competition between China and the US intensifies, it increasingly looks like this financial support will come with conditions."

"Therefore, countries in the region and the continent as a whole should resist unwarranted interferences in their internal policy decisions and insist on their sovereignty being upheld. If they succeed in this, they will be able to reap the benefits of the emerging economically competitive multipolar world order." **NA**

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