



HORN OF AFRICA BULLETIN

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China's Inexorable Rise: Blessing or Threat for the Horn?

By Demissie Fantaye



“despite your triumphs in sewage, drinking water and Olympic gold medals, still don't have democracy...we may not have sewage, drinking water, and Olympic gold medals, but we do have democracy... If I were making a country, I'd get the sewage pipes first, then the democracy”^[i]

The appropriateness of a quote from a novel about a chauffeur-cum- servant who murders his employer may not seem immediately obvious in the context of a Horn of Africa Bulletin (HAB) thematic issue on Sino-Horn of Africa relations. But there are some intriguing parallels. The plot of the novel unfolds in the form of letters written by the narrator (i.e. the murderer) to the then Premier of the People's Republic of China (PRC), Wen Jianbao.^[ii] Even more strikingly, a constant refrain in the novel are the implicit and explicit contrasts between India and China, that the narrator draws attention to especially in terms of the developmental gains achieved by the PRC with its distinctive political system relative to the entrenched corruption and social injustice in democratic India. A variation of this binary trope is a standard feature of the media and academic treatment of China in Africa.

The notion that China's illiberal political system and its socio-economic achievements provide an implicit model for Africa to emulate-or that the Chinese model presents both a tempting option and source of support for aspiring and actual autocrats in Africa, is a central trope in both the media and academic literature that seeks to describe and explain the PRC's remarkably rapid expansion of influence in Africa.

Chinese state-owned enterprises and private corporations are important investors in oil, minerals, infrastructure development and to a lesser extent also in industry and agriculture. The government of China utilizes credit facilities (preferential or concessional loans), through specifically designated financial institutes-the China Export-Import Bank (EXIM Bank), the China Development Bank and the China Agriculture Development Bank (CADB)-to promote trade and foreign direct investment with countries in the Global South.

The PRC's engagement on peace and security issues in Africa has expanded in the past two decades. China has sent contingents to participate in United Nations peacekeeping missions in Liberia, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Mali and South Sudan. China is also taking on a more expansive role in conflict management and mediation efforts to defuse inter-state and intra-state conflicts in several African states. The PRC's first military-naval base outside China was established

in Djibouti in 2017 and the PRC naval units participate in the multinational counter-piracy naval task force in the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden.

The People's Republic of China (PRC) through trade, investment and financial engagement (concessional loans and grants), has increasingly emerged as the most important foreign economic partner for countries in the Horn. Infrastructure projects in the Horn with critical national economic significance and which could accelerate regional economic integration are funded by Chinese credit facilities and the work is carried out by through joint ventures with Chinese corporations.

The rapid and disconcerting (for some) prominence of the PRC in the economic, diplomatic and military spheres globally and in Africa in particular, has raised concerns that China's rise and its intentions could prove to be a source of instability and tensions. Nowhere has this been more so the case, than in Africa where the PRC's economic operations and its expanding influence, has drawn accusations of 'neo-colonialism', 'economic exploitation' and 'debt trap diplomacy'. Chinese corporations in Africa have also been accused of exploitative practices with African labor, engaging in large scale land grabbing and environmental pollution. Finally, the principles undergirding the PRC's relations with Africa, especially the emphasis on 'non-interference' and 'respect for sovereignty', have been interpreted by some as a pretext for cooperative relations with authoritarian regimes in Africa.

There are many problems with the conventional treatment on Sino-Africa relations such as issues of bias, positionality and the seeming inability or unwillingness to historicize Africa's international relations.

China's increasing prominence in Africa cannot be disentangled from shifts in the global balance of power where the traditional hegemons are increasingly being challenged by emerging powers. In the context of the Horn, China's expanding reach is also occurring in a context where middle-range external powers such as the Gulf monarchies and Turkey are engaged in a scramble for influence and military bases.^[iii] Understandably, one could then view the tenor of media and academic coverage of China as a manifestation of deeper unease relating to the changing world order. More specifically, the current focus on China in Africa cannot be decoupled from the ratcheting up of tensions between the United States and China over the South Pacific, trade and technology.^[iv]

This issue of the HAB had the objective of understanding the impact of China's expanding influence in the Horn of Africa by foregrounding perspectives not just from the Horn but also perspectives that are alternative. The articles in this issue of the HAB have not only achieved the goal of foregrounding perspectives absent from mainstream coverage of Sino-Africa relations but have also addressed under explored aspects of the relationship between China and the Horn.

The article by Dr. Ferras explores the expansion of foreign (non-African) military bases in Djibouti and explores the motivations and incentives that explain this trend. Dr. Ferras article is extremely interesting in also diverging from the alarmism and scaremongering that characterizes much of the analysis of the PRC's first foreign military base. The article also compares the impact and relative benefits of the scramble for military bases from the point of view of governments in the Horn and concludes on an unusual note in suggesting that China's military presence in the Horn is more benign and less threatening than usually supposed.

The article by Mushtaq is a very interesting exploration of an aspect of China's growing global influence that is often ignored, specifically the notion of soft power and the Chinese media expanding presence in Africa. The article showcases critical differences in the media coverage of Africa and African issues between Chinese and Western media. The article suggests that the global information

order is evolving even if not necessarily in the direction of the old notion of a 'New World Information and Communication Order' (NWICO) that was a central goal of Global South advocacy in the late 20th century. One possible gap in the article may be the relative absence of analysis on how African media actors are engaging and reacting to China's expanding presence in Africa.

Mr. Ahmed's article is more narrowly focused on analyzing the possible implications of a fishery agreement between the Somalia Federal Government and China. The article analyzes the potential benefits and risks associated with the agreement and suggests that continuing conflict and political divisions in Somalia could impact the agreement. More critically, the article argues that lack of consultations of coastal communities regarding the fishery agreement is a worrisome gap that could potentially function as a source of future grievances.

The final article in this issue of the HAB discusses China's expanding economic and political weight in the Horn by situating it in a global and regional context defined by seismic shifts in the global balance of power and the parallel Western, Gulf and Turkish scramble for military and economic influence in the region. Leulseged's article makes a persuasive case for the benefits of China's multifaceted economic linkages with the member states of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) but sounds a note of caution in urging governments in the Horn to avoid being entangled in the rivalries between China and the West. The article urges governments in the Horn to engage in joint consultations and to articulate a common position in the face of the scramble for military and economic influence by external actors in the Horn. The author also argues that both the IGAD and the African Union (AU) have a key role to play in terms of developing a comprehensive i.e. African response to the military and economic scramble for influence by external actors in Africa.

Readers of the HAB will find the articles in this issue of the HAB highly relevant and topical especially in the context of the political shifts occurring in Ethiopia and Sudan. Historically in the Horn of Africa domestic political shifts often lead to shifts in foreign policy orientation. The articles in this issue of the HAB provide alternative perspectives and views which despite their limitations would provide analysts and actors in the policy realm in the region, with valuable insights.



[i] Adiga, Aravind. *The White Tiger*. 1st ed. New York: Simon & Schuster, 2008.

[ii] Between 2003 and 2013.

[iii] Also covered in earlier HAB issues, see for instance: Horn of Africa Bulletin. "Gulf engulfing the Horn". September-October 2017. <https://life-peace.org/resource/the-gulf-engulfing-the-horn/> ; Horn of Africa Bulletin. "Maritime Insecurity Dilemmas amidst a new scramble for the Horn". March-April 2018, <https://life-peace.org/resource/maritime-insecurity-dilemmas-amidst-a-new-scramble-for-the-horn/>.

[iv] See: Remarks by National Security Advisor Ambassador John R. Bolton on the Trump Administration's New Africa Strategy, December 18, 2018. <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefings-statements/remarks-national-security-advisor-ambassador-john-r-bolton-trump-administrations-new-africa-strategy/>; Stephens, Phillip. "Trade is just an opening shot in a wider US-China conflict." *Financial Times*, May 16, 2019, <https://www.ft.com/content/9317cc0e-7664-11e9-be7d-6d846537acab>. Kuo, Lily & Sabrina Siddiqui. "Huawei hits back after Trump declares national emergency on telecoms 'threat'." *The Guardian*, May 16, 2019.

Djibouti : la naissance d'une « armée européenne » ?

By Patrick Ferras



Djibouti est restée sous les feux des projecteurs ces derniers mois. L'animosité entre la Chine et les États-Unis, entretenue depuis deux ans par un président aux dérapages verbaux excessifs, peut se sentir sur ce territoire où se concentrent les moyens de trois des plus importantes forces armées du monde. La France, les États-Unis et la Chine sont aux premières loges, face à la Péninsule arabique, à quelques encablures du détroit d'Ormuz et aux pieds de la mer Rouge et du Golfe d'Aden. D'autres acteurs (Japon, République fédérale d'Allemagne...) jouent un rôle mais n'ont pas la puissance militaire équivalente, des marines autonomes, des moyens interarmées d'intervention, d'ambitions géopolitiques autres que la lutte contre la piraterie, les trafics en tous genres.

La construction d'une base chinoise à Djibouti, une première pour cet État, et par conséquent l'arrivée de militaires, ne sont pas passées inaperçues. Les prises de position américaines sur cette présence se sont révélées très dures, parfois mensongères, comme l'indique les premiers éléments de la nouvelle politique américaine en Afrique dévoilée par le secrétaire d'État John Boltonⁱ. Le retour d'une guerre froide avec l'Afrique comme théâtre d'opérations n'est pas une idée d'un autre temps. La Chine est ambitieuse, contrecarre les visées américaines et doit provoquer une réflexion géopolitique pour la France comme l'Union européenne à l'heure où le multilatéralisme semble être la seule parade aux excès de l'administration Trump.

AFRICOM, à la recherche de la cohérence

La stratégie américaine a été développée dans un document de juin 2012 (*U.S. Strategy toward Sub-Saharan Africa*). Un des quatre piliers, « promouvoir la paix et la sécurité », se basait essentiellement sur la lutte contre Al-Qaeda et d'autres groupes terroristes, la promotion de la coopération en matière de paix et de sécurité régionale et la réforme du secteur de la sécurité, la prévention des menaces criminelles transfrontalières, de la prévention des conflits et le soutien des initiatives de promotion de la paix et de la sécurité. C'est à l'AFRICOM, le commandement militaire américain pour l'Afrique, opérationnel depuis octobre 2008 et basé à Stuttgart (République fédérale d'Allemagne) qu'il revient de mettre en œuvre cette stratégie. Comme le rappelle Maya Kandel, « L'Afrique ne compte pas parmi les priorités stratégiques des États-Unis, mais il y a un regain d'intérêt ! ⁱⁱ ». *The light footprint* a été développé comme une approche opérationnelle flexibleⁱⁱⁱ. La stratégie américaine actuelle viserait à diminuer les ressources sur le sol africain au profit d'autres théâtres. Nous pouvons nous demander si cette approche correspond à une réelle adaptation à la situation sécuritaire ou si elle est simplement un basculement des priorités américaines sans connexion avec la réalité des menaces. La demande de diminution des opérations de maintien de la paix (en termes financiers et d'effectifs) et le refus de faire financer par les Nations Unies la Force conjointe du G5 Sahel ne doivent pas apparaître comme des surprises. L'annonce d'un nouveau texte de stratégie par John Bolton, à la fin de l'année 2018, ne doit pas nous étonner à l'heure des rivalités de tous types entre cette puissance militaire inégalée et la Chine, dont la montée en puissance des forces armées est une évidence. Djibouti, à ce titre, reste le point central de la lutte contre le terrorisme (Yémen et Somalie) et une des seules implantations permanentes des Américains en Afrique^{iv}. L'arrivée de la Chine sur le plan militaire ne peut être que synonyme de rivalité.

Les Forces françaises stationnées à Djibouti, la force de l'habitude

La garnison de Djibouti est la plus importante de nos installations à l'étranger malgré une baisse importante de moitié des effectifs en dix ans. Les Forces françaises stationnées à Djibouti (FFDj) s'articulent autour d'un état-major interarmées, un régiment interarmes d'outre-mer, un détachement de l'aviation légère de l'armée de terre, une base aérienne, une base navale et un centre d'entraînement au combat et d'aguerrissement au désert. Positionnées sur la façade Est de l'Afrique, les FFDj constituent une plateforme stratégique, opérationnelle et logistique. À ce titre, elles sont en mesure d'accueillir mais également de projeter rapidement des forces en cas de crise dans la sous-région, vers l'océan Indien ou le Moyen-Orient. L'autre volet de la mission des FFDj est une mission de coopération bilatérale, régionale. La France a signé un traité de coopération en matière de défense, le 21 décembre 2011^v. L'article 4 intitulé « clause de sécurité » est le plus important du Traité. Il dispose que les deux Parties échangent « des vues, des informations et du renseignement », évaluent la « situation en cas de menace », et en cas d'agression armée, « définissent les moyens à mettre en œuvre pour la défense de la République de Djibouti » *sous couvert de l'article 51* de la Charte des Nations unies. Il est aussi précisé que la « Partie française *participe* avec la Partie djiboutienne à la police de l'espace aérien et la surveillance des eaux territoriales selon des modalités particulières ». Néanmoins, les possibilités opérationnelles françaises sont relativement modestes. En revanche, la Partie française s'engage à verser à la Partie djiboutienne au titre de la présence des forces françaises stationnées une contribution forfaitaire de 30 millions d'euros par année civile. L'impact financier est le point le plus important du traité car la présence des forces américaines, françaises et chinoises empêche tout risque de conflit majeur avec un État de la Corne de l'Afrique. Ce Traité est donc un document peu réaliste sur le plan opérationnel et demeure un excellent compromis financier pour la Partie djiboutienne. Les forces françaises à Djibouti qui contribuent au saupoudrage de nos moyens militaires, sont l'illustration d'une perte d'influence militaire majeure. Nous voyageons donc en première classe avec un ticket de seconde, résultat d'une concurrence militaire de plus en plus forte que nous n'avons pas anticipée et à laquelle nous n'avons pas les moyens de nous adapter.

La Chine à Djibouti : patiemment mais efficacement

Les Forums de coopération Chine – Afrique (FOCAC) ont été instaurés depuis 2000. Tous les États africains y participent, à l'exception du Swaziland^{vi} (Eswatini) et de la République arabe sahraouie démocratique^{vii}. La stratégie chinoise est bien connue et a fait l'objet de deux documents de politique étrangère dont le dernier a été présenté en décembre 2015 en Afrique du Sud^{viii}. La politique chinoise met en relief un principe de base que nous retrouvons dans la politique commune de défense et de sécurité de l'Union africaine : la non-ingérence dans les affaires intérieures d'un État. Partant de ce principe, la Chine finance des activités et des programmes de sécurité et de défense africains en bilatéral, en régional et au niveau continental. Elle octroie des dons, vend des armements. Elle participe à des opérations de maintien de la paix avec des effectifs modestes au regard de ceux de l'armée populaire chinoise^{ix} et patrouille dans la mer Rouge comme dans l'océan Indien. Si la base chinoise à Djibouti a été inaugurée en 2017^x, elle ne comporte à ce jour que peu de moyens militaires. Annoncée avec une capacité de 10 000 personnes, les infrastructures se limitent pour l'instant à un accueil possible de 5 000 hommes au maximum^{xi}. Dans les prochaines années, les forces chinoises ne manqueront pas de demander des terrains d'entraînement (champs de tir, terrains de manœuvre) et une capacité d'accueil de moyens aériens à temps complet. Mais le principe chinois de non-ingérence dans la politique des États ne laisse pas penser à une activité militaire importante de la base. En revanche, elle permettra la mise en place des contingents chinois de maintien de la paix en mission en Afrique et les évacuations de ressortissants (cf. les problèmes rencontrés par les autorités chinoises lors de la crise libyenne en 2011). La seule piste à l'intérieur

de l'enceinte mesure 400 mètres et permettra le posé d'hélicoptères. Nous sommes donc loin d'une garnison centrale comme les Américains en disposent à Djibouti (et sur le terrain de Chabeley, utilisé par les drones). La « base » de Djibouti permettra à moyen terme d'assurer la libre circulation pour le volet maritime de la route de la soie pour l'Afrique orientale. La Chine est la seule puissance à avoir eu l'idée de développer des projets nationaux, régionaux et continentaux tout en s'appuyant sur les intérêts chinois. Contrairement aux Américains ou aux Français, ils ne s'engagent pas militairement mais financent des activités liées à la paix et à la sécurité. Cette non-ingérence porte ses fruits. L'acteur chinois est sollicité et bénéficie d'un blanc-seing. Le financement du siège de l'Union africaine fut un coup de maître pour un investissement très modeste (250 millions de dollars^{xii}).

La présence de l'empire du Milieu à Djibouti et la comparaison de sa stratégie avec celles des deux autres acteurs majeurs présents sur ce territoire, doivent nous interroger sur l'avenir des implantations militaires et de leurs conséquences sur le continent africain.

Vers un vrai multilatéralisme et la naissance d'une garnison européenne

Les trois stratégies que nous avons présentées sont complètement différentes. Les deux acteurs des relations internationales de ces deux dernières années, la Chine et les États Unis, se font face sous les yeux d'une puissance moyenne rêvant toujours de son passé mais obligée de vivre chichement et sans grande envergure. Les USA dans la lutte contre la piraterie et le terrorisme se sont donnés les moyens de développer une garnison et d'y déployer les moyens adéquats. Au large de la Somalie, ils restent très présents. Quand leurs objectifs seront atteints, ils n'hésiteront pas à quitter la Corne de l'Afrique. La Chine avance ses pions sous un regard africain très admiratif. Sa démarche est pragmatique et annoncée. Cette vision chinoise est appréciée par les acteurs africains au nom du principe de non-ingérence. Que penser de l'intervention française au nord du Tchad pour sauver une fois de plus le soldat Debby ? Comment interpréter les propos du ministre français de l'Europe et des affaires étrangères après l'élection présidentielle de la République démocratique du Congo (janvier 2019^{xiii}). Ce manque de réalisme de la politique française, ces erreurs maintes fois répétées, sont à l'opposé des positions diplomatiques chinoises. La Chine ne s'embarrasse pas de communiqués aux effets plus que contre-productifs ou d'interventions militaires dont le coût politique est élevé.

Prisonnière de ses traités de coopération en matière de défense qui n'ont plus de raison d'être, la France joue encore au gendarme de l'Afrique. C'est cette situation dont les Africains ne veulent plus. La France n'a toujours pas tourné la page de sa présence militaire, héritage du passé^{xiv}, savamment entretenu au travers des écoles militaires et de notre modeste réussite en matière de coopération militaire d'influence. L'enseignement pragmatique de la Chine en Afrique doit être étudié car il est réaliste et fonctionne tout en s'adaptant aux particularités africaines. Il n'existe pas d'intérêts français à Djibouti. Il existe des intérêts européens et la démarche française doit le prendre en compte pour la porter au niveau de l'Union européenne. Le détroit de Bab el Mandeb est un des lieux stratégiques de la planète. Il ouvre l'accès à l'océan Indien et reste très important pour la route la plus courte qui relie l'Asie à l'Europe,

L'Union européenne tend à redéfinir sa politique vis-à-vis de l'Afrique. La volonté du président français de penser multilatéralisme (et coopération contemporaine) doit s'accompagner de décisions claires dans ce sens. Comme nous l'avons souligné, les intérêts à Djibouti sont européens et pas seulement français. Dans une zone de stabilité relative, l'UE doit prendre à sa charge la protection de ses intérêts stratégiques. Si la connaissance française de la région est un atout, envisager de transformer Djibouti en une base européenne ne doit pas être négligé. La France y garderait le

statut de Nation-cadre au sein d'une implantation européenne. La mission *Atalanta* et les *European Union Training Missions* (EUTM) ont montré au fil du temps qu'elles permettent d'obtenir de bons résultats malgré le scepticisme qui les a toujours précédées. « L'armée européenne », annoncée par le président français lors des commémorations de la Première Guerre mondiale en novembre 2018 pourrait trouver là matière à exister et amorcer un changement de comportement trop militariste de la France.

La République de Djibouti, avec l'implantation militaire des grandes puissances, pourrait devenir un laboratoire de réflexion sur les engagements militaires des partenaires extérieurs au continent africain ainsi que leurs conséquences sur les besoins en sécurité des États de la Corne de l'Afrique. En implantant une « base européenne », l'UE serait aux premières loges pour atténuer les risques de confrontation entre les États Unis et la Chine tout en protégeant ses principales lignes d'approvisionnement.

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i (<https://newsafrika.fr/afrique-bolton-annonce-une-politique-americaine-plus-selective-lignes-de-defense/22374/>, consulté le 17 février 2019).

ii Rapport d'information du Sénat français par MM. Jean-Louis Carrère, Robert del Picchia, Mme Josette Durrieu et M. Alain Gournac, « *Évolutions stratégiques des États-Unis : quelles conséquences pour la France et pour l'Europe ?* », pp. 104-106, juillet 2014. Ou « *L'Afrique est restée sous le radar de Donald Trump* » de Maya Kandel, 11 novembre 2018.

iii Hunt Friend Alice et Wise Jamie D., « *The Evolution of U.S. Defense Posture in North and West Africa* », www.csis.org, août 2018.

iv La deuxième implantation militaire américaine est en cours de construction au Niger. La contribution forfaitaire américaine à Djibouti est évaluée à 63 millions de dollars (<https://www.geostrategia.fr/base-militaire-chinoise-a-djibouti-symbole-dun-changement-de-posture-strategique/>, 14 décembre 2017).

v Ratifié en 2012 par l'Assemblée nationale française.

vi Cet État ne reconnaît pas la République Populaire de Chine.

vii Cet État n'est reconnu que par l'Union africaine.

viii Réaffirmé lors du FOCAC de Beijing en septembre 2018 et de son plan d'action 2019-2021 (<https://focacsummit.mfa.gov.cn/fra/>, consulté le 10 mars 2019).

ix 2 512 hommes au 31 janvier 2019 (<https://peacekeeping.un.org/fr/troop-and-police-contributors>, consulté le 15 mars 2019).

x Le loyer est évalué à 20 millions de dollars (<https://www.geostrategia.fr/base-militaire-chinoise-a-djibouti-symbole-dun-changement-de-posture-strategique/>, 14 décembre 2017).

xi Entretien à Djibouti en mai 2018. Si les effectifs annoncés étaient avérés, la présence militaire chinoise serait supérieure à celle des États-Unis.

[xii](#) Cette somme est égale à 75 % des sommes engagées par les partenaires extérieurs pour le financement de la mission de l'Union africaine en Somalie en 2017. La communication réalisée par la Chine a été à la hauteur de l'événement (le bâtiment, construit à Addis Abeba, a été livré pour le sommet du cinquantenaire de l'UA en 2013). En revanche, nous n'entendons jamais parler du financement de l'AMISOM par l'Union européenne depuis 2007 !

[xiii](#) Le ministre français des Affaires étrangères a estimé « que les résultats de la présidentielle en RD Congo n'étaient pas conformes aux résultats qu'on a pu constater... » (<https://www.slate.fr/story/172146/le-drian-republique-democratique-congo-election-presidentielle-regard-ingerence>, , 11 janvier 2019).

[xiv](#) Les passes d'armes entre la France et la Russie sur la République centrafricaine (discours des ministres français des affaires étrangères et de la Défense au Forum de Dakar 2018) sont révélatrices de notre comportement arrogant et de cette volonté de chasse gardée.

Africa tunes in to China

By Najum Mushtaq



How times change. When China's state news agency, Xinhua, opened a bureau in Cairo in 1958 and Radio Peking began transmissions to east Africa in Swahili in 1961, the news, commentary and even music bore the inescapable imprint of Mao's Little Red Book and China's anti-colonial communist ideology. And, although "television access was minimal...the Chinese used film to advertise the depths of Sino-African relationship and extol the benefits of Maoism."ⁱ Spreading the revolution of Mao and solidarity with the emerging post-colonial socialist regimes and movements used to be the main function of the Chinese media in Africa—and almost everywhere else.

Since the turn of the century, however, the much-expanded and sophisticated Chinese media has become a supporting act in promoting economic growth and 'harmonious development' through Chinese investments in African markets. It has "become an increasingly important part of the 'going out policy' that characterized China's approach to international relations in the post-Cold War era. In the 1990s, this strategy was limited to trade and industry, but since the mid-2000s, it has broadened to include the media as a vehicle for public diplomacy."ⁱⁱ

Another stark difference from the erstwhile Maoist era is that not all Chinese media operating in Africa are owned by the state or the Communist Party; private business outlets, with patronage and consent of the party, have also waded into the market. Nonetheless, both sides remain uncritical of China's policies—or for that matter, of governments in host countries—and vie to present a positive picture of the continent and its relations with China. As a Daily China journalist says, "Our motto used to be, 'Let China go out into the world; let the world understand China. Now it's: 'Report on China; influence the world.'"ⁱⁱⁱ

An elaborate Chinese plan

The breakthrough for the Sino-Africa media relations came in 2006 when 48 African states at the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) agreed to the Beijing Action Plan. Among its other salient features, the plan laid out three key areas of China's media expansion in Africa: engagement with African media institutions, promoting the practice of journalism, and training African journalists. Section 5.8 of the plan identified five points of Chinese engagement with African news media:^{iv}

1. Increased contacts between their respective news media contribute to comprehensive and objective news coverage of the other side, the two sides encouraged their respective news media to play a positive role in enhancing mutual understanding and friendship.
2. The two sides support multi-level exchanges and cooperation in various forms between their press authorities and media and exchange more visits between media groups.
3. The two sides support and encourage more reporting and coverage by their news media of the other side and will provide mutual assistance and facilitation to each other's news agencies in sending resident and non-resident correspondents for news reporting.
4. The Chinese side will continue to host workshops for African correspondents and invite heads of press authorities and media groups as well as correspondents from Africa to China to exchange views, cover news and explore ways of conducting effective cooperation.
5. The two sides agreed to expand cooperation in radio and television broadcasting. China will focus on helping African countries train radio and television staff.

Since then, China's media presence has grown markedly in all these areas. The South China Morning Post reported in 2009 that the Chinese government was planning to spend 45 billion yuan (\$4bn) "on the overseas expansion of its main media organisations in an aggressive global drive to improve the country's image internationally. The three state media giants – Central China Television, Xinhua News Agency and the People's Daily – could each get up to 15 billion yuan if they came up with 'worthwhile projects' to enhance their global influence."^vThe main geographical focus of this drive has been on expanding into the African continent.

In 2012, the external arm of state-run China Central Television (CCTV) launched its Africa service through a bureau in Nairobi (renamed and consolidated as China Global TV Network—CGTN—in 2016), the first Chinese news hub of its kind outside of Beijing. More bureaus have since been opened in Lagos, Cairo and Johannesburg. The CCTV was designed, to compete with—and counter—the BBC and CNN and it provides a mobile TV news service 'I love Africa'. Similarly, China's state news agency, Xinhua, has 30 bureaus to report from Africa and it also broadcasts through a television channel.^{vi}

A private Chinese company, StarTimes, has "purchased a controlling stake in South African satellite television provider Top TV, adding to its presence in thirteen other African countries and the state-run radio broadcaster. China Radio International, had FM stations in three East African cities, while its AM channel covered all of Kenya....By the start of 2011, Xinhua's television station, CNC World, had begun broadcasting to African satellite and cable viewers and that same year, partnered with a Kenyan mobile operator to provide news feeds for mobile phones."^{vii}

Also in 2012, *China Daily Africa*, a newspaper, and *ChinAfrica*, a magazine, were published and released across the continent. Whilst both print outlets rely heavily on local journalists and media workers, media observers say that editorial decisions are made in Beijing. "CGTN has two editorial meetings: one for all staff and another where Chinese editors seek approval for the stories from their bosses in Beijing. 'Once it touches on Chinese state interests, censorship kicks in,'" says Emeka Umeji, a Nigerian academic."^{viii}

Besides the Chinese ripples on airwaves and in print, this media expansion is taking place in more subtle and strategic ways. China offers a mass training program for African journalists with about 1,000 of them attending courses in China every year. "A second, nascent source of influence is via

Chinese investment in private companies. In 2013, for example, state-backed Chinese investors (including a subsidiary of CCTV, CGTN parent company) bought a 20% stake in Independent Media, a South African company...The third, and most important, development is the expansion of *StarTimes*, a private pay-tv company with close links to the Chinese government. Increasingly it is the primary vehicle for the expansion of Chinese soft power in Africa. Since it began operating in Rwanda in 2008, *StarTimes* has branched out to roughly 30 countries across the continent.^{xix}

Along with investments in media, China has given loans and grants to several African governments to build the communications infrastructure. Nigeria, for instance, has purchased satellite technology from China and Malawi has commissioned a fiber-optic communication project worth \$22.94 million. In some instances, notes a media analyst, “infrastructural support was implicitly linked to political ends.” For example, in 2002 and 2006, Zambia received FM transmitters and for further extension of radio services to seven provinces. In both instances, this transfer of technology coincided with the election cycles in the country and supported the then ruling pro-Beijing Movement for Multiparty Democracy.^{xx}

What do the Chinese media offer?

Like other global media channels, the Chinese media has adapted to the 24-hour news and entertainment cycle. Xinhua works as any other western wire agency and reports news and analysis from a Chinese perspective. The TV channel CGTN has the usual mix of soap operas, sports, business, lifestyle and culture in addition to global and domestic Chinese news. Compared with the BBCs and Al-Jazeera of the media world, the additional element that the Chinese channels—CGTN and those aired via *StarTimes*—provide to their African audience is their emphasis on Chinese values and the Chinese government’s point of view. And, unlike most other ‘western’ media, it tends to paint a more positive and optimistic picture of the state of African societies.

Gagliardone and Nyíri (2017) in a study of Chinese journalists working in Africa describe “their work as belonging to ‘a style of journalism that focuses on collective achievements, rather than divisive issues or sensational news’ and elicited the idea of ‘a new form of developmental journalism, one that could provide information that can be directly incorporated in activities beneficial for a country’s growth.’^{xxi}

According to Du Feijin, head of the publicity department of the Beijing committee of the Communist Party, in 2017 Beijing enterprises and institutions dubbed around 8,000 hours and translated more than 10,000 hours of Chinese films and TV series in 2017. Swahili and Hausa language dubbing contests for Chinese movies and TV series were also held and 17 films and 400 TV show episodes in seven languages including French, Portuguese and local languages were aired across 20 African countries as part of the Beijing TV Dramas Broadcasting Exhibition in Africa,^{xxii}

And, like most other things Chinese it is inexpensive. For example, notes, Madrid Morales, “*StarTimes*’ big selling point has always been its affordability...When selling its services to governments, it is often able to offer the lowest bids alongside long-term, low-interest rate financing provided by China’s Exim Bank. At the consumer level, it offers some of the lowest prices for pay TV, it provides relatively inexpensive decoders and, more recently, has begun free satellite dish installations in rural communities where [digital TV] was out of reach. With this multipronged strategy, in 2016, the company claims to have reached 10 million subscribers” in 30 African countries.^{xxiii} The company has also been a leading player in Africa’s transition from analog to digital TV.

Is Africa listening and watching?

It is hard to quantify soft power—and harder still to measure the impact of news media and TV channels. Whilst it is difficult to come up with a credible number for viewers of CGTN, it has over 77m followers on Facebook, most than any TV channels in the world. (Most of them, however, are Chinese in the country.) Also, China did not become a major media player in Africa until this decade and it may perhaps be too short a time to fully evaluate its impact on African hearts and minds. Early signs, though, point to significant improvement in China's image and effectiveness of its media plan for Africa.

Several studies and surveys done over the last couple of years suggest that Beijing's efforts are paying dividends and building a favourable perception of China in Africa. A 2016 Stanford University research in six African countries concluded that 'in many cases, the larger the Chinese media presence in a country and the more access to relevant media technology, the more favorable public opinion toward China has grown across multiple dimensions.'^{xiv}

According to the Economist, another survey of youth from 18 African countries found that of those who had watched CGTN, 63% had liked the channel and only 13% had a negative view. More than half said they agreed with CGTN's "ideological agenda".^{xv}

Much of this early success is due to the contrast between the negative picture of Africa that has been presented by the mainstream conventional international TV channels for decades and the positive news that Chinese media has to offer to its African viewers. By associating themselves with the notion of positive news, Chinese media appear to be taking the lead in appropriating a narrative that other news organizations have been developing for some time, observes a survey of African journalist students.^{xvi}

Conclusion: Many voices, one world

The advent and recent surge of Chinese media into African markets is a reflection of changes in the country's domestic politics and economy as well as its response to the changed geopolitical and technological context in the late 20th and early 21st century. China's ambitious global trade, investment and growth agenda warrants a matching effort to influence public opinion and perceptions in partner countries. Especially in post-colonial African societies, exposed as they have been almost exclusively to western media and culture, Chinese news and entertainment outlets provide an alternative external view and perspective on Africa. It may have a predetermined tone of positivity and an avowed purpose of promoting Sino-Africa relations, but China's media is making its presence felt in a growing crowd of old and new competitors vying to capture African audiences. In its own way, the expansion of Chinese media signifies movement towards a New World Information and Communications Order, an idea advocated by developing countries at UNESCO in the 1970s and 80s, which called for addressing imbalances and hegemonies in global media coverage and envisioned "many voices, one world" in a "new, more just, and more efficient" global media.^{xvii} Whilst the original ideals of justice and more equitable control of media may not be a top priority for the Chinese media intervention, it is nonetheless building and shaping a new media order on the African continent.

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Potential Risks and Rewards of Sino-Somalia Fishing Agreement

By Mohamed Ahmed



Context

During the recent Beijing Summit of the China-Africa Cooperation Forum in September 2018, Chinese President Xi Jinping pledged \$60 billion in financing for projects in Africa in the form of assistance, investment and loans.^[i] Chinese investment and trade with Africa have increased significantly over the past few years, surpassing Europe and the United States (US) who used to be the predominant sources of foreign investment and the main market for African exports.^[ii] Some of the primary motivations that lie behind China's push toward increased investments in Africa include the desire to secure a dependable source of [raw materials](#) to fuel China's own rapidly growing economy, the desire to increase China's global political influence and the opportunities presented by [emerging market economies](#) in Africa.^[iii]

Sino-Somalia Relations

In a meeting with the President of Somalia, the President of the People's Republic of China stated that China had always aided Somalia in preserving its national sovereignty, security and territorial integrity.^[iv] The remarks testify to the historical significance of China- Somalia relations. Some of the most notable buildings in Mogadishu such as the National Theater and the Football Stadium were built by China.^[v]

President Jinping said that China and Somalia enjoy a long history of friendship, adding that Somalia was the first country in East Africa to establish diplomatic relations with China and that Somalia was also one of the countries supporting the People's Republic of China in restoring its lawful seat in the United Nations.^[vi] Since 1991 China has invested in over 80 infrastructural projects such as hospitals, stadiums and roads in Somalia.^[vii]

In the latest iteration of the two countries' relationship, the Federal Government of Somalia (FGS) granted fishing licences to 31 Chinese vessels to exploit tuna and tuna-like species off its coast in a bid to tap the sector for economic growth.^[viii] In addition, bilateral trade volume between China and Somalia reached 485 million US dollars in 2017 with year-on-year growth of 20 percent.^[ix]

The Agreement

In a ceremony on December 11, 2018 Somali President announced that his administration has granted 31 fishing licenses to the China Overseas Fisheries Association. "These licenses allow tuna fishing, and this shows that Somalia issues licenses through the legal process," he said.^[x] According to the FGS, the new licenses are restricted to migratory tuna stocks, and will not affect local fisheries as the licence restrictions reserve the waters within 24 nm of the coast for local fishermen.^[xi] Upon entering or leaving Somalia's Exclusive Economic Zone, the boats will also have to declare their positions, besides the weight of catch on board by species.^[xii]

Some observers, however, fear that this may aid the return of Somali pirates as fishing stocks could be depleted and the livelihoods of local fishermen threatened. There are also concerns that China would dump toxic wastes in Somalia's waters thus leading to environmental degradation.^[xiii] Moreover, it is not clear how Somalia will ensure compliance with the letter and spirit of the agreement or if it even has the necessary monitoring regime and tools.

Somalia, Somalis and Fish

Somalia's estimated 3300 km coast is the longest in continental Africa^[xiv] spanning the Indian Ocean and the Red Sea. Nevertheless, the weak FGS does not exert control over all of Somalia's coast. For example, Somaliland declared independence from the rest of Somalia in 1991 and does not recognize agreements signed by the FGS. Equally, the semi-autonomous region of Puntland in north eastern Somalia manages its coast more or less independently. Both regions have signed agreements with companies in the past in defiance of the FGS.^[xv]

Although Somalia's coast is among the richest fishing grounds in the world teeming with shark, tuna, sardines, snapper and lobster,^[xvi] the irony is that ethnic Somalis who make up around 85%^[xvii] of the population prefer livestock meat to fish.^[xviii] Traditionally, the majority of those in Somalia who engage in fishing for subsistence are ethnically non-Somalis. These non-Somali ethnic communities include the Barawani who live in the coastal town of Baraawe, the Baajuun in the lower Juba and nearby islands and the Shaanshi in Mogadishu area. Fish and chicken tend to be regarded as inferior foods by ethnic Somalis.^[xix]

Nonetheless, a discussion about Somalia coast cannot elide the issue of piracy off the coast of Somalia. Although Somali piracy has been occurring since 1991 and even before,^[xx] it is since 1995 that piracy has emerged as a major concern for ships passing through the Gulf of Aden, the Arabian Sea, and the western Indian Ocean.^[xxi] After several high profile hijackings by Somali pirates such as the cargo ship *Faina* and the very large crude carrier (VLCC) *Sirius Star* on September and November 2008, Somali pirates got the attention of the world community in part because the *Faina* was carrying shipment of arms destined to South Sudan and could have ended up into the hands of Somali militants. The hijacking of the *Sirius Star* was no less eventful as it was carrying two million barrels of crude oil. The *Faina* was released after a ransom payment of a \$3.2 million.^[xxii]

Several theories have been proposed to explain the phenomenon of piracy in Somali waters in the last two decades such as the absence of capable central government, poverty, toxic waste dumping, and illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing.^[xxiii] Afyare et al argue that crime of opportunity explains the motives of Somali pirates and their ring leaders although other factors contributed to it.^[xxiv] On the other hand, Lucas argues that while economic and geographic factors offer a partial explanation for Somali piracy, they do not account for the dramatic increase in pirate activity over the past twenty years. Instead, he argues that this rise is primarily a result of Somalia's political instability.^[xxv]

Potential Rewards of the Agreement

In addition to the menace of overfishing by foreign vessels, Somalia currently does not possess the capacity to fully benefit from its abundant marine resources as it lacks the requisite infrastructure and human resources.^[xxvi] To build the necessary infrastructure for Somalia's fishing industry and cultivate competent labour force, the country needs substantial investment. A Somalia proverb says, "Be a Rock or Lean Against One." Hence, this is where China can be a rock against which Somalia can lean and be of great benefit to Somalia for a number of reasons.

First, China is the second largest economy in the world and some analysts estimate it will overtake the US in 15 years.^[xxvii] Second, China has the necessary technology and human resources needed to build infrastructure for Somalia's fishing industry and train its labour force. Third, China possesses immense financial reserves that could be leveraged for greater investment in Somalia. China has by far the largest foreign currency reserves in the world with over two and a half times more than the second largest reserve holder, Japan. When China and Hong Kong reserves are

considered together, the total is \$3.6 trillion.^[xxviii] Finally and perhaps most importantly, with over 1.4 billion people^[xxix] and the largest middle class in the world,^{[xxx],[xxxi]} China offers Somalia huge market for its fisheries resources.

Furthermore, China's expanding military and naval power could hypothetically be leveraged to protect Somalia's coast from illegal fishing. In fact, China's first oversea military base is in neighboring Djibouti. China's permanent seat in the United Nations Security Council may also benefit Somalia especially in areas where the interests of the two countries overlap. On the other hand, China will get access to one of the world's richest fishing grounds as well as the opportunity to strengthen its political and economic influence in Somalia which may allow it to enter into additional investment agreements in other sectors of Somalia's economy. Hence, China has in abundance what Somalia lacks and needs and Somalia has in abundance what China wants. The agreement can be mutually beneficial but similar to any trade and investment agreement, it is not risk-free.

Potential Risks of the Agreement

Somalia's constitution remains provisional and without a doubt will undergo additional revisions. This is particularly important since relations between FGS and its member states have been shaky recently in part due to the meddling of external powers.^[xxxii] One of the contentious issues between the FGS and the regional administrations centres on the control of resources. Article 54 of the provisional Constitution of the FGS states that the allocation of powers and resources shall be negotiated and agreed upon by the Federal Government and the Federal Member States (FMS) except in matters concerning foreign Affairs, national Defense, citizenship and immigration, and monetary policy.^[xxxiii] Therefore, it is probable that existing resource-based disputes between FMS and FGS may be exacerbated. In such scenario, China will be forced to choose sides.

Furthermore, it does not appear that the FGS has carried out any grassroots consultations with those most affected before it signed the agreement. This is noteworthy because in Somalia groups who traditionally have depended on fishing for their livelihood are primarily non-ethnic Somalis. These groups are marginalized and neglected as they lack armed militias and consequently are underrepresented in decision-making circles. There is also the risk that resentment over the deal could lead to anger, inter-communal competition for dwindling stocks and even the return of piracy.^[xxxiv]

Moreover, on February 14 Kenya recalled its Ambassador to Somalia and expelled Somalia's Ambassador to Kenya. It also issued a strongly worded statement which just fell short of declaring Somalia an enemy state^[xxxv]. Kenya accused Somalia of auctioning blocks in a disputed maritime border area believed to contain oil and gas deposits.^[xxxvi] Somalia and the company that performed the seismic survey, Spectrum Geo, deny the allegations.^[xxxvii] The area is claimed by both countries and is now under consideration in the International Court of Justice (ICJ).^[xxxviii] The escalation of the dispute will likely adversely affect the agreement.

Finally, will China help Somalia build capacity in its fishing industry? China has been accused of employing Chinese workers and focusing on extraction of raw materials rather than employing African workers and developing their capacity.^[xxxix] Some African countries have pushed back against China's development activities.^[xl] Grievances range from poor compliance with safety and environmental standards to unfair business practices and violations of local laws.^[xli] This has triggered fierce criticism from some leaders and African workers have also begun to fault Chinese companies for unfair labour practices, including disputes over wages and working conditions.^[xlii] Will Sino-Somalia fishing agreement face similar challenges? Only time will tell.

Concluding Thoughts

China's interest to in trade and investment in Africa should be a welcome proposition. It expands choices for African nations. The decision of the FGS to enter into a fisheries agreement with China offers plenty of benefits to Somalia as it can benefit from Chinese technology and investment. Illegal fishing has been taking place in Somalia waters for decades. The agreement with China mitigates this problem to a certain extent as it will be in China's interest to eliminate unlawful competition.

The agreement will also benefit China by giving it access to one of the richest fishing grounds in the world. Nevertheless, if the agreement is not implemented in a mutually beneficial way, it can have deleterious consequences for Somalia and the Sino-Somalia relations. For China to overcome the perception that it only cares about extraction of raw materials and employment for its citizens, it must treat African workers respectfully, develop capacity of African workers, and care about the short and long-term environmental impact of the projects it implements.

All these apply even more to the case of the Sino-Somalia fishing agreement. After nearly three decades of civil war, Somalia lacks human resources and infrastructure. China should teach Somalis to fish rather than just giving them fish. On the other hand, African leaders in general and Somali ones in particular should weigh the short and long-term risks and rewards of any major agreement with China or other countries. One way to do so is to be transparent and adopt a bottom-up decision making rather than top-down one.

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Horn of Africa: Enchained by geopolitical and transnational veto players

By Leulseged Girma



The Horn of Africa is increasingly turning into a space of rivalry and competition between rival external powers. There are perspectives that postulate this as auguring a new cold war involving military, economic and diplomatic preeminence with the key distinctions being that the current stand-off is more complex than the bipolar international system during the Cold War and the perceived absence of an ideological component .^[i] The situation in the Horn of Africa can be taken as a manifestation of the emergence of a multi-polar world order in which multiple powers compete to assert their interests and influence.^[ii]

The imperatives and interests driving the engagement of external powers in the Horn of Africa are either explicitly stated or can be inferred from their actions and statements. Despite the recent political shifts in United States (US) politics exemplified by the Trump presidency and the much anticipated contraction in US international engagement, the reality is that US foreign policy engagement is still very much defined by its self-proclaimed role as the global guardian of the liberal

world order, the 'war on terror' and increasingly a push-back against the perceived expansionism of powers such as China and Russia.

Although defined from civil war point of view, David E. Cunningham (2013) describes veto players as having the capability to unilaterally block settlement. He argues that the presence of many veto players prolongs conflicts as witnessed recently in the war in Syria. He also defines veto players as possessors of various kinds of resources such as better trained and equipped troops, technology, and more importantly funding sources.^[iii] In the contemporary Horn veto players can be interpreted as the foreign actors who have the wherewithal to influence the Horn either positively or negatively.

Synergies between the Peoples' Republic of China & the Horn region

China's engagement in the Horn is driven by its desire to see the fruition of its global project, the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and moreover sees the Horn as a strategic gateway into Africa.^[iv] Recent Russian engagement in the Horn can be interpreted as being animated by discomfort with the presence of the US and China in the region and an attempt to regain its influence that it lost three decades ago.^[v] The Gulf Arab monarchies, as emerging powers, are funneling resources to states of the Horn thereby ensuring their military, investment and preeminence interests.^[vi] It seems that the Horn is emerging as an interesting test case of the implications of the emerging multi-polar world order.

Among these foreign powers, China takes the lion's share of investment and developmental activities in the Horn. It is closely working with pivotal countries such as Ethiopia. China has transformed its relationship with Ethiopia into a strategic level taking into account the fact that Ethiopia is a critical entry point into Africa. Ethiopia has enjoyed a preeminent position in the Horn for decades due to its pivotal role in the foundation of Inter-Governmental Authority on Drought and Development (*IGADD*) in 1986 and its successor the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) in 1996.^[vii] Ethiopia's history as a founder of the African Union (AU) and its international peacekeeping role have attracted many international allies and the strategic association of China and other power centers to the country is not a surprise.

Having a population of more than 100,000,000 people, vast arable land, immense opportunities in the service and construction sectors and the prospects that may emerge with the liberalization of the financial sector, coupled with the fact that Addis Ababa is the political capital and diplomatic hub of Africa, Ethiopia has managed to attract international partnerships including the Chinese. Other countries in the Horn have also their own political, economic and cultural imperatives in attracting and attaching themselves with the powers.

China's first overseas military base is situated in geo-strategically important Djibouti which hosts several foreign military bases and coincidentally is also the BRI entry point into Africa. China's presence in the region and Djibouti in particular, has roused US suspicions.^[viii] For America and some powers, the Horn of Africa is a strategic staging point for anti-piracy, anti-terror and anti-Iran operations. Poor economic performance, internal governance and identity related conflicts of the Horn countries and conflicts among the Horn countries provide entry points for foreign powers to project their influence across the region. But China is now surpassing all other countries through facilitating a very large free trade area in Djibouti^[ix].

China's economic and military influences pose major challenges to the US and partly explain recent shifts in US foreign policy priorities where "countering China's influence" has assumed greater importance.^[x] In articulating US's Africa strategy, in November 2018, President Trump's national security adviser, John Bolton, declared that the strategy will be implemented through advancing

trade, anti-terror campaigns, and provision of efficient and effective aid.^[xi] Bolton in his statement implied that China (and Russia) are gaining competitive advantages through encouragement of corrupt practices and violations of human rights. He also criticized China's global multi-billion infrastructure-led investment and development as an instrument that makes countries submissive to China.^[xii] Fighting against corruption is a pillar for US's foreign policy but China grants it much less significance and has been accused of turning a blind eye to corruption to court the support of certain governments.

China's BRI that embraces the Horn countries and beyond may be perceived as a threat for the superpowers as it's gradually accompanied by military influences. China is more suitable to Africa as the latter has not established a market economy that is led by the private sector. Anthony Rowley, a veteran journalist specializing in Asian economic and financial affairs, explaining the almost unanimous African support for the BRI states that in a world suffering from a range of economic ills – from Brexit to the US-China trade war – the BRI may be the closest thing to a stimulus package that can kick some vigor back into the global economy.^[xiii]

The convergence of interests between Africa and China also partly explains China's growing role in the continent. For decades the goal of economic integration has been a pressing regional and continental agenda, and Chinese investment in infrastructure and other sectors is helping in this regard. IGAD, one of the building blocks of Africa's economic integration, has commended the International Free Trade Zone (DIFTZ) in Djibouti built with support from China. In an official statement, IGAD stated that this contribution of China aligns with its regional economic integration plan.^[xiv] Djibouti's president, Ismael Omar Guelleh, expressed his appreciation for the Chinese supported project by stating that the project was, "place of hope for thousands of young job seekers".^[xv] Abiy Ahmed (Ph.D.) of Ethiopia, Mohamed Abdullahi Mohamed of Somalia, Omar Al Bashir, Ex-President of Sudan, Paul Kagame of Rwanda and the Chairperson of the AU Commission, Moussa Faki Mahamat have all commended China's investment and developmental support on different occasions.^[xvi]

Africans defend China's intervention in the continent as exemplified by President Ramaphosa's remarks at the latest summit of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC), where he underlined China's importance to multilateral global trade.^[xvii] For the US, China's involvement in Africa may be perceived as a new form of colonialism but Ramaphosa decisively rejected this view and instead postulated that China was integral to Africa's future.^[xviii]

As Alex De Wall put it in his book "The Real Politics of the Horn of Africa: Money War and the Business of Power", politics is business and business is politics.^[xix] When external powers offer resources, they expect something in return. As Alex reiterates the political marketplace of the Horn of Africa is governed by the politics of give and take, which offers opportunities for veto players.^[xx] Pressed by domestic political and economic discontent, states in the Horn may become amenable to the pressures emanating from external powers. The fluctuations and shifts in the relations between states in the Horn and external powers must be analyzed in terms of their effects on governance, economic conditions and security of the region and states.

The pattern of opportunistic and transactional engagement with external actors is exemplified by the involvement of several Horn states in the war in Yemen. The Saudi-led coalition has used Eritrea's land, air and naval bases in its war with the Ansar-Allah movement (more commonly known as the Houthis). Sudan, Djibouti and Somalia too are also engaged in the Yemen war. The financial resources of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries are exerting a marked impact on the political market place in the Horn. The war in Yemen is a proxy war against Iran and therefore has

attracted the direct support of the US. The GCC countries are also key sources of financial remittances for these countries. This transactional behavior of the Horn countries is a determinant factor that governs the relationship with the powers including China and the US. Trade imbalances are observed between these powers and the Horn countries which provides additional leverage to the external powers. The war in Yemen is just the starkest manifestation of the transactional mode in regional politics.

Conclusion

From the point of view of the Horn region and its peoples, there should be greater sensitivity to the resources being provided by external powers. The loans and grants may align with current immediate economic needs or more long-term developmental strategies but also impose a burden on future generations. There must be a concerted effort in dealing with any kind of development provision including an effort to get debt amnesty from the powers. The Horn countries score the lowest in global indexes on peace[xxi], democracy[xxii], human development[xxiii], doing business[xxiv], etc. They are fragile and precautions must be taken to prevent Africa from being entangled in quagmires generated by external rivalries.

The Horn of Africa regional security complex has become more fraught with tensions as numerous geopolitical interests are being promoted by international and regional veto players with diverse positions and impact. The strategic significance of the region and the reactive nature of the Horn countries foreign policy engagements has exacerbated these dynamics. China, the United States of America (USA), Russia, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Turkey are among the main veto players on the Horn's security pattern. These players provide overlapping, incompatible and varied alliances and this in turn allowed the region to evolve into a complex and potentially conflict-prone security configuration.

The interaction of the incompatible interests of the veto players will cost the Horn of African countries dear in terms of pursuing national development agendas. Through hosting the irreconcilable interests of the veto players, the countries of the Horn will provide entry points for external powers to exploit their many unresolved domestic problems. The countries, through their regional bloc, IGAD, should seek to develop a common and optimal strategy for engagement with external powers with a view to achieving their development goals and advancing regional economic integration. Synchronization of strategies at regional level is very important. The governments in the Horn have to act like a security complex that has pragmatically included countries on the right shore of the Red Sea. The countries of the Horn must be able to develop a capacity in striking a balance between their development agendas and the costs imposed by external powers. There must be a balance between the veto players' discretionary power and the development of the region as a regional security complex.

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