

Djibouti Is a Pillar of Stability

by Naguib Ali Taher,

February 2026 (Human Village 56, <https://human-village.org/spip.php?article1974>)

The analysis published on February 14 by Addis Standard [1], signed by Adam Daud Ahmed, claims to offer a geopolitical assessment of the Horn of Africa. In reality, it delivers a narrative riddled with inaccuracies, unfounded assumptions, and a condescending tone unworthy of serious debate. Portraying the Republic of Djibouti as a “crumbling rentier fortress” is not only a gross distortion of reality but also a denial of the complex dynamics shaping our region. We therefore wish to provide the necessary clarifications.

A Durable Pole of Stability in a Complex Region

The author speaks of a “Cold War in the Red Sea” and a region in flux. One must first adhere to the facts. While the post-war global order may be under strain, Djibouti remains an unquestionable anchor of stability. This is not a slogan but a tangible reality. Our country hosts numerous international military bases — American, French, Chinese, Japanese, among others — a singular fact that speaks volumes. These nations did not choose Djibouti out of charity; they chose us because we offer proven stability, strategic clarity, and an unwavering commitment to securing and calming one of the world’s most vital maritime corridors. Our geopolitical vision has always been clear and constructive: to be a guarantor of security and a platform for peace, not a source of discord.

The False Dichotomy of Port Competition

The article presents Ethiopia’s search for diversified port access as proof of Djibouti’s impending obsolescence. This is a misreading of regional economic realities and of our relationship with our neighbor. Ethiopia is a large and growing nation whose expanding trade volumes require multiple outlets. We have never regarded this logical diversification as a hostile act. On the contrary, we fully understand it. The ties binding Djibouti and Ethiopia are deep, historic, and fraternal — far beyond simple transit fees. Djibouti remains the most natural and efficient outlet for Ethiopia, a partnership forged through decades of reliability.

If new actors wish to enter the competition, we welcome transparent and fair competition. We do not fear it. Djibouti’s confidence rests on its proven track record: world-class infrastructure, operational expertise built over generations, and a professional workforce unmatched in the region. Competition is a driver of excellence, not an existential threat. Our strategy has always been to rely on our own competitiveness, long before others turned it into a slogan.

“Sovereignty Through Trade”: A Pioneering Djiboutian Doctrine

The author presents the so-called “Irro doctrine” — “sovereignty through trade” — as a novel concept emerging from Hargeisa. But where does this doctrine originate, if not from the Djiboutian model? Since independence, Djibouti has built its very existence on this principle. Transforming its geographic position into a hub of global commerce, attracting foreign investment, and building the nation through logistics and trade have formed the bedrock of our resilience. If this vision is now recognized and adopted elsewhere in the region, we see it as validation of our longstanding approach, not as a challenge.

Refuting Baseless Accusations and Easy Epithets

The article resorts to personal attacks, describing President Ismail Omar Guelleh as a “declining dictator” and suggesting a strategy of diversion. Such language belongs more to sensationalism than to analysis. A leader is measured by the stability, progress, and international respect enjoyed by his country. By that standard, President Guelleh’s leadership speaks for itself. If stable and visionary governance embodied by figures such as Lee Kuan Yew in Singapore — who built prosperity through stability and firm direction — is to be labeled “dictatorship,” then we accept that our people have prospered under such a model. We have no need for the approval of critics removed from the concrete responsibilities of governing a state in a complex regional environment.

Labeling Djibouti a mere “rentier state” is likewise reductive and inaccurate. This view ignores our substantial investments in human capital, our growing role as a regional hub for technology and services, and our continuous efforts at economic diversification — efforts all the more significant given that our economy is strategically vital to the world’s leading navies.

A Commitment to Non-Interference and Regional Brotherhood

To suggest that Djibouti fuels instability along Somaliland’s borders or acts as a proxy for foreign powers is categorically false and irresponsible. Our foreign policy is grounded in the fundamental principles of non-interference and respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of states, as enshrined in the charters of the United Nations and the African Union. Our position on the situation in Somalia is consistent and legally grounded. We have repeatedly extended a hand to all our neighbors, including the authorities in Hargeisa, in a spirit of mutual respect and shared prosperity. To claim otherwise is to willfully ignore decades of mediation and peaceful diplomacy.

It is also worth noting that the author’s sustained focus on the port of Berbera coincides with the interests of a specific multinational operator, DP World, a company engaged in well-documented commercial disputes with the Republic of Djibouti. It is regrettable that commercial disputes are sometimes repackaged as geopolitical analysis in opinion pages.

The Horn of Africa is indeed undergoing a period of transformation. But transformation does not mean collapse. Djibouti is not a besieged fortress; it is a nation confidently navigating a changing environment with clarity and consistency. We view Ethiopia’s growth and its search for multiple solutions as a positive evolution for the entire region. We believe in complementarity, not zero-sum logic. We believe in fraternity, not manufactured crises. And we are confident that the stability, professionalism, and proven experience we offer will continue to make Djibouti an indispensable partner for Ethiopia and for the world in the decades to come. The foundations of our nation are not eroding; they form the very bedrock upon which regional prosperity will continue to be built.

Naguib Ali Taher

Communications Officer

Republic of Djibouti