



Winds of war in the Horn of Africa: Ethiopia and Eritrea on the brink of the abyss

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The Horn of Africa is in a period of extremely high geopolitical tension, with Ethiopia and Eritrea dangerously close to open conflict. The situation also risks triggering a dangerous chain reaction involving regional actors and Middle Eastern powers.

The escalation between Ethiopia and Eritrea

- **Mutual accusations:** According to the *Guardian*, Ethiopia reportedly used drones to strike Eritrean soldiers who had entered its northern territory. Addis Ababa speaks of a "large-scale invasion" and an "act of aggression" violating the right to self-defense. Conversely, Eritrea's Information Minister, Yemane Gebremeskel, denounced an "unprovoked war of aggression" by Ethiopia.

- **The issue of access to the sea:** Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed Ali has reiterated his claim to direct access to the Red Sea, fueling fears in Asmara, which accuses Ethiopia of preparing military aggression to achieve this objective. In recent weeks, the two countries have severed diplomatic relations.
- **Tensions in Tigray:** Ethiopia accuses Eritrea, Egypt, and Sudan of fomenting Tigrayan rebels in the northern region (allegations rejected by the three states).



Regional involvement (Egypt and Sudan)

- **Egypt-Eritrea axis:** Cairo views Ethiopian moves with great concern (including dam projects on the Nile) and is aligned in support of Eritrea.
- **The crisis in Sudan:** Sudanese military leaders accuse Ethiopia of backing the Forze di Supporto Rapido (RSF), the paramilitary faction that has been at war with Sudan's regular army since 2023.

International and Middle Eastern ramifications

- **Middle East and opposing alliances:** While Egypt supports Eritrea, Ethiopia enjoys the backing of Qatar and the United Arab Emirates. At the same time, the Emirates are accused of supporting paramilitary forces in Sudan, while Saudi Arabia is considered closer to the military in Khartoum.
- **The U.S. factor:** The Trump administration's decision to lift U.S. sanctions against Eritrea reportedly displeased Addis Ababa, further hardening the diplomatic landscape.

- **The Red Sea connection:** A potential large-scale conflict in this region could merge with ongoing tensions along the eastern Red Sea coast between Saudi Arabia and the Houthis (backed by Iran), further inflaming a strategically vital global theater.