

## US hands China a victory in Ethiopia

China provides winning weaponry to Ethiopian national forces while US de facto sides with the fading Tigray rebels

By [STEPHEN BRYEN](#) DECEMBER 6, 2021 (Source: ASIATIMES)

Just as Ethiopian government forces appear to have [turned the tide](#) in the country's so-called civil war, the Biden administration is [pushing for US citizens in Ethiopia to leave](#) and is providing relocation assistance to those who can't afford to buy a plane ticket.

Meanwhile, China's Foreign Minister Wang Yi has visited Addis Ababa and has made it clear that China backs Ethiopia's government fully. This, in contrast to the United States which has imposed sanctions on Ethiopia, but not on the rebellious Tigray.

As [Bloomberg reports](#): The US last month suspended duty-free access to its exports "because of gross human rights violations," which remain undocumented for the most part. The US has shown no interest in atrocities by Tigray forces, nor the theft of UN-sponsored relief supplies taken by the retreating Tigray army.

China is also supplying weapons to the Ethiopian National Defense Forces (ENDF), including armed, medium-altitude, long-endurance [Wing Loong](#) drones.

Sensing the significant vacuum left in Ethiopia, Iran [is also supplying](#) its [Muhajir-6](#) armed drones, the same weapons used by Iran's proxy Hezbollah in Syria.

The UAE had previously supplied drones and some Israeli weapons to Ethiopia, including Chinese-made Wing Loong's.

China is clearly exploiting the opening created by the UAE and jumping in, along with Iran, to push out the UAE (seen incorrectly as a US proxy) and other Western suppliers and backers. Ethiopia's war has recently turned in favor of the government, which looked nearly defeated a few weeks ago when the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) was about 209 kilometers from the capital Addis Ababa.

But in a short time, Ethiopia has rallied its army, received important political and weaponry support from China and Iran, and apparently changed the course of the war.

Meanwhile, thousands of Ethiopians in the United States, some protesting in front of the White House, [are angry that the US has sided with the TPLF forces](#) against the country's legitimate government.

The US administration claims it has supported peace negotiations between the two sides in the conflict, working through African intermediaries.

But brokering a peace deal in the middle of an undecided conflict is unlikely to gain traction, not least because Addis Ababa sees talks as a way to force it to give up territory, even legitimacy, in exchange for ending the war.

The US says it is neutral in the actual dispute, but American behavior, including Biden's imposition of sanctions first on Ethiopia on September 17 and then on Eritrea on November 12 for assisting Ethiopia has made it clear whose side the US is on.

In actual fact, the Biden administration opened the door to China and Iran by convincing Addis Ababa that there was no future with the US or its allies and partners.

The US has been speaking out of both sides of its mouth, a fact noted by [Today News Africa](#) journalist and commentator Simon Ateba.

[Ateba points out](#) that Samantha Power, administrator of USAID, has been condemning Ethiopia in tweets while others, especially the US envoy for the Horn of Africa Jeffrey Feltman, have been trying to talk to both sides – although unsuccessfully.

America's incapacity to leverage the conflict and its disingenuousness in supporting the Tigray rebels who started the war has clearly put Ethiopia's future much more clearly in China's hands, marking a major diplomatic defeat for Biden and Blinken.

While it is still not clear that the ENDF will continue its march north toward Tigray and actually defeat the TPLF, the US won't be the one to help settle the conflict.

If Ethiopia wins or at least fully contains Tigray, it will emerge as the major power in the Horn of Africa.

Before the Tigray war, Ethiopia had notched one of the world's fastest GDP growth rates, with significant investment in infrastructure and education. Ethiopia's economy has been shifting from agriculture to services and industry.

If Ethiopia can escape Egypt's downstream ire over its [Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam](#) project, it will become Africa's largest hydroelectric power source. Since 2000, China has invested \$12 billion in Ethiopian projects.

As of 2016, there were 305,800 Ethiopians in the United States, a number that may have grown closer to 450,000 by 2021. While emigrating to many US cities including Seattle, Atlanta and Minneapolis, the number in the Washington DC area grew from 10,000 in 1980 to 30,000 in 2010.

The numbers continue to rise in the US capital as does the economic and political clout of the small but industrious and active community.

Whether this will impact future US policy is unclear, but what is apparent is that the Biden administration has paid little to no attention to the overseas Ethiopian community just as it has lost almost all influence in one-time ally Ethiopia.