6	40	180	0.409	0.23	0.399	0.213	0.412	0.237
7[a]	70	120	0.402	0.173	0.399	0.171	0.388	0.164
8	100	120	0.406	0.204	0.368	0.165	0.409	0.216
9[a]	70	120	0.402	0.191	0.399	0.19	0.388	0.188
10	40	120	0.409	0.254	0.399	0.222	0.412	0.259
11	70	180	0.402	0.193	0.399	0.19	0.388	0.183

Table 12: Absorbance data for DPPH antioxidant activity of Usnea (Erica arborea)

Run	Methanol concentration (%)	Extraction time (min)	Control Absorbance	Sample Absorbance (trial 1)	Control Absorbance	Sample Absorbance (trial 2)	Control Absorbance	Sample Absorbance (trial 3)
1[a]	70	120	0.402	0.106	0.399	0.102	0.388	0.093
2	100	60	0.406	0.159	0.368	0.138	0.409	0.162
3	100	180	0.406	0.137	0.368	0.12	0.409	0.143
4	70	180	0.402	0.126	0.399	0.123	0.388	0.114
5[a]	70	120	0.402	0.108	0.399	0.096	0.388	0.092
6	70	60	0.402	0.156	0.399	0.153	0.388	0.15
7	40	180	0.409	0.182	0.399	0.173	0.412	0.185
8	40	120	0.409	0.188	0.399	0.175	0.412	0.188
9	100	120	0.406	0.131	0.368	0.112	0.409	0.142
10[a]	70	120	0.402	0.095	0.399	0.09	0.388	0.084
11	40	60	0.409	0.246	0.399	0.229	0.412	0.247

Table 13: Absorbance data for TPC assay of the optimum extraction condition

Sample Name	Absorbance (trial 1)	Absorbance (trial2)	Absorbance (trial 3)
Usnea (Hagenia abyssinica)	0.686	0.69	0.684
Usnea (Hypericum revolutum)	0.483	0.474	0.474
Usnea (Erica arborea)	0.529	0.533	0.524

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Abbreviations and Acronyms

Africa CDC	Africa Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
AFRICOM	United States Africa Command
AGOA	African Growth and Opportunity Act
ALF	Afars Liberation Front
AMISOM	African Union Mission in Somalia
ANDM	Amhara National Democratic Movement
AU	African Union
AWSP	All-Weather Strategic Partnership
BC	Before Christ
BRI	Belt and Road Initiative
BRICS	Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa
CBE	Commercial Bank of Ethiopia
CCP	Chinese Communist Party
CDRC	Center for Dialogue, Research and Cooperation
CFA	Cooperative Framework Agreement
CGTN	China Global Television Network
CMI	Chr. Michelsen Institute
CNPC	China National Petroleum Corporation
CoHA	Cessation of Hostilities Agreement
CPA	Comprehensive Peace Agreement
DoP	Declaration of Principles
DRC	Democratic Republic of Congo
DS	Developmental State
EASF	East African Standby Force
EBA	Everything but Arms
EBC	Ethiopian Broadcasting Corporation

EDU	Ethiopian Democratic Union
EEP	Ethiopian Electric Power
EFFORT	Endowment Fund for the Rehabilitation of Tigray
EIC	Ethiopian Investment Commission
EIZ	Eastern Industrial Zone
ELF	Eritrean Liberation Front
ENA	Ethiopian News Agency
ENATAD	Ethiopian National Alliance to Advance Democracy
ENDF	Ethiopian National Defense Force
EPDA	Ethiopian 3 H R SDemocratic Alliance
EPDM	(W K L R S L D Q 3 H R S O H ¶ V ’ H P R F U D W L F 0 R Y H P H
EPLF	Eritrean People's Liberation Front
EPRDF	(W K L R S L D Q 3 H R Sand Democratic Front
EPRP	(W K L R S L D Q 3 H R S O H ¶ V 5 H Y R O X W L R Q D U \ 3 D U
EU	European Union
FBC	Fana Broadcasting Corporation
FDI	Foreign Direct Investment
FOCAC	Forum for China-Africa Cooperation
GAIGI	Global Artificial Intelligence Governance Initiative
GCI	Global Civilization Initiative
GDI	Global Development Initiative
GERD	Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam
GoS	Government of Sudan
GoSS	Government of South Sudan
GPLM	* D P E H O O D 3 H R S O H V ¶ / L E H U D W L R Q 0 R Y H P H Q
GSI	Global Security Initiative
GTP I	Growth and Transformation Plan I

GTP II	Growth and Transformation Plan II
HoA	Horn of Africa
ICC	International Chamber of Commerce
IFA	Institute of Foreign Affairs
IGAD	Intergovernmental Authority on Development
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IP	Industrial Park
IPE	International Political Economy
IPoE	International Panel of Experts
IPSS	Institute for Peace and Security Studies
IR	International Relations
ISS	Institute for Security Studies
ITAR	International Traffic in Arms Regulations
JEM	Justice and Equality Movement
JIC	Joint Islamic Courts
LN	League of Nations
MEISON	All-Ethiopian Socialist Movement
MFN	Most Favored Nation
MoFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
MOFCOM	Ministry of Commerce
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
MW	Megawatt
NATO	1 R U W K $ W O D Q W L F 7 U H D W \ 2 U J D Q L] D W L R Q ¶ \
NBE	National Bank of Ethiopia
NBI	Nile Basin Initiative
NCNA	New China News Agency
NEC	Northern Ethiopia Conflict

NGO	Non-Governmental Organizations
NRBC	Nile River Basin Commission
OAU	Organization of African Unity
OLA	Oromo Liberation Army
OLF	Oromo Liberation Front
ONLF	Ogaden National Liberation Front
OPDO	2 U R P R 3 H R S O H ¶ V ’ H P R F U D W L F 2 U J D Q L V D W L
PASDEP	Plan for Accelerated and Sustained Development to End Poverty
PDRY	People's Democratic Republic of Yemen
PLA	3 H R S O H ¶ V / L E H U D W L R Q $ U P \
PMPRCUN	Permanent Mission of the People's Republic of China to the UN
PP	Prosperity Party
PRC	People's Republic of China
PSI	Policy Studies Institute
ROC	Republic of China
SAF	Sudanese Armed Forces
SALW	Small Arms and Light Weapons
SEPDM	6 R X W K H U Q (W K L R S L D Q 3 H R S O H V ¶ ’ H P R F U D W
SEZ	Special Economic Zones
SLM	Sudan Liberation Movement
SOE	StateOwned Enterprises
SPLM/A	Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army
TAZARA	TanzaniaZambia Railway Authority
TDF	Tigray Defense Force
TFG	Transitional Federal Government
UAE	United Arab Emirates
UFEFCF	United Front of Ethiopian Federalist and Confederalist Forces

UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
UNAMID	United Nations–African Union Mission in Darfur
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNECA	United Nations Economic Commission for Africa
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNHRC	United Nations Human Rights Council
UNIDO	United Nations Industrial Development Organization
UNISFA	United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei
UNMISS	United Nations Mission in South Sudan
UNPKM	UN Peacekeeping Missions
UNPKO	United Nations Peacekeeping Operation
UNSC	United Nations Security Council
US	United States
USD	United States Dollar
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
WB	World Bank
WHO	World Health Organization
WSLF	Western Somalia Liberation Front
WWI	World War I
WWII	World War II

Acknowledgements

This dissertation is the result of the generous support and encouragement of many institutions and individuals, to whom I owe my deepest gratitude.

First and foremost, I would like to express my heartfelt appreciation to my supervisor, Professor Mohamed Salih, for his unwavering support and irreplaceable role throughout the course of my dissertation. I am especially grateful for his timely, insightful, and constructive feedback, which greatly enriched the quality of my work. His mentorship has not only shaped this dissertation but will also have a lasting impact on my future academic pursuits and professional development.

I also extend sincere thanks to my co-advisor, Dr. Mossa Hussen, for his academic, technical, and administrative support throughout my PhD journey.

I am deeply thankful to the respondents and informants from various institutions, including the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Institute of Foreign Affairs, Ethiopian Investment Commission, Policy Studies Institute, Institute for Peace and Security Studies, Institute for Security Studies, Center for Dialogue, Research and Cooperation, the Chinese Embassy, Oslo New University College, the Elliott School of International Affairs, William Paterson University, and the Chr. Michelsen Institute (CMI). Their cooperation and willingness to share valuable information were instrumental in the successful completion of this dissertation.

My profound gratitude also goes to the Nordic Africa Institute, which awarded me a three-month Guest Researcher Fellowship. My time at the institute provided a conducive environment for writing, with access to a rich library, expert staff, and an intellectually stimulating atmosphere that significantly contributed to the improvement of my work. Particular thanks also go to Associate Professor Redie Bereketeab, who served as my research host at the institute and provided valuable mentorship throughout my stay.

A special thanks to Professor Aalen Lovise, Research Professor at the Chr. Michelsen Institute, for her support as an expert interviewee, which added depth to my study. I am especially grateful for her role in organizing a seminar at CMI that allowed me to present my work before a panel of leading scholars in the field. It a truly impactful moment in my research journey.

I also acknowledge Bahir Dar University for offering me the opportunity to pursue my PhD and for partially funding my research. I am immensely grateful to the Department of Political Science

and International Studies for its constant academic and administrative support. Special thanks go to the successive department heads and PhD program coordinators for their invaluable guidance and consistent responsiveness.

I further acknowledge that I used ChatGPT (OpenAI, GPT-4o) to assist with language refinement and grammar improvements. The tool was used solely to enhance clarity and readability, without altering the intellectual content or analysis. All research ideas, interpretations, and conclusions are entirely my own.

Finally, I am profoundly thankful to my beloved wife, whose understanding, patience, and moral support have been invaluable throughout this long academic journey.

Abstract

The rise of China in Africa has become a significant topic in both academic and policy circles. While much of the literature emphasizes China's economic interests, particularly access to resources, this study contends that China's engagement extends beyond economics, serving to expand its geopolitical influence and counterbalance Western dominance. This study used Ethiopia–China relations as a case study. Accordingly, the overall objective was to examine the geopolitical determinants of Ethiopia–China relations in the context of the post-1991 Horn of Africa (HoA). To achieve this, I adopted a qualitative research approach and collected data from both primary and secondary sources. The findings are as follows: 1) Diplomatic Gateway (WKLRSLD GLSORPDWLF JDWHZD\) Ethiopia's hosting key regional and international organizations acts as DVWUDWHJLF HQWU\ SRLQW IRU &KLQD¶V GLSORPDWLF DQG &KLQD¶V VXFFHVV LQ $IULFD EXW DOVR EURDGHU WDUJHWV WR VLJQDO LQIOXHQFH LQ Ethiopia through deeper bilateral ties. 2) Regional Influence (WKLRSLD¶V LQGHSHQGHQW prominent role in African diplomacy allow China to project its influence and counter adversaries in the HoA, which Ethiopia has leveraged to strengthen its internal stability and regional standing. 3) Mutual Support on Global Platforms: &KLQD EHQHILWV IURP (WKLRSLD DQG $IULFD¶V global reforms and resisting Western pressures, while Ethiopia and Africa rely on China to help mitigate external criticisms and pressures. 4) Governance Model Alignment The Ethiopian JRYHUQPHQW¶V DGRSWLRQ RI &KLQD¶V GHYHORSPHQWDO promoting its model across Africa, thereby significantly strengthening Ethiopia–China relations. 5) Strategic Partnership in Development (WKLRSLD¶V QHHG IRU UHOLDEOH SDJHQGD DOLJQV VHDPOHVVO\ ZLWK &KLQD¶V *R 2XW VWUDWHJLF Security Partnership. To protect its overseas interests, counter Western accusations of being an irresponsible global actor, and enhance its military capacity, China began partnering with key actors in the HoA and Africa. Ethiopia emerged as a key partner due to its anchor position, military strength, and stabilising role in the sub-region. 7KLV SDUWQHUVKLS WKDW DOVR DOLJQV interests, given its vulnerability as a country located at the heart of a conflict-prone region. These geopolitical factors forged a close partnership between the two states, aligning their positions on various national, regional, and international issues. The study illustrates this through two case studies: the Nile/GERD dispute and the Northern Ethiopia conflict, both of which became geopolitical battlegrounds for competing global powers. While the West backed Egypt in the first

case and the TPLF in the second, China largely supported the Ethiopian government in both instances. In conclusion, Ethiopia-China relations are shaped not only by economic interests but, more significantly by geopolitical considerations.

Keywords: Ethio-China relations; West; diplomatic gateway; regional influence; mutual support; developmental state model; geopolitics; Nile; GERD, Northern Ethiopia Conflict.

Chapter One: Introduction

1.1 Background

This study deals with Ethio-Chinese relations. The ascendancy of China in Africa in general and Ethiopia in particular has become the centre of academic and policy discourse. Scholars and SROLF\PDNHUV KDYH H[DPLQHG &KLQD¶V EDVLF GULYLQJ LQ Africa? To address this question, the bulk of studies on China-Africa relations reveal that more than anything else, &KLQD¶V ILUVW DQG IRUHPRVW LQWHUHVW LQ et al., 2008; Tull, 2006; Dollar, 2016; Nyadera et al., 2021; Pollock, 2007; Ursu and Berg, 2018; Conteh-Morgan, 2018; Hanauer & Morris, 2014). Many studies agree that China's H FRQRPLF interests are defined in terms, basically, of access to natural resources. It is undeniable that economic factors play a critical role in China-Africa relations. However, other geopolitical goals China has in Africa have received less attention, requiring further investigation. This study argues WKDW &KLQD¶V LQWHUHVW LQ $IULFD LV QRW OLPLWHG WR FRQWULEXWLQJ WKH :HVW¶V LQIOXHQFH RQ WKH FRQWLQHQW rivalry with the West, notably the United States (US). Accordingly, this study intends to use Ethiopia-China relations as a case to demonstrate this point. Given the prevailing resource-curse arguments, Ethiopia makes an interesting case to show the geopolitical dimensions of China's engagement in Africa, as it is a country with very limited identified strategic resources, such as gas and minerals, yet enjoying a higher level of partnership with China.

Many studies have been conducted on Ethio-China relations (see Venkataraman and Gamora, 2009; Cabestan, 2012; Shinn, 2014; Adem, 2012a, 2012b; Ziso, 2018, 2020; Venkataraman and Mebrie, 2015; Gamora and Mathews, 2010; Thakur, 2009). However, these studies have predominantly focused on describing the economic dimensions of Ethiopia-&KLQD¶V EL OD WH relations. Most studies focus on trade, investment, and loan relations and their resultant contributions to job creation, technology transfer, and revenue generation, among others. In so doing, many studies attributed Chinese attraction to Ethiopia to the fact that Ethiopia has a huge market, given its huge consumer population and access to the American and European markets through the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA) and Everything but Arms (EBA), respectively. However, most studies have been limited to economic considerations. I do share their LGHD WKDW HFRQRPLF IDFWRUV SDUWLFXODUO\ (WKLRSLD

alternative source of support for Ethiopia's development programs, play an important role in Ethio-China relations. However, the factors for China-Ethiopia relations are multivariate. In addition to the economic factors, geopolitical factors are also equally, if not predominantly, important.

Some of these studies (particularly, Cabestan, 2012; Adem, 2012b; Shinn, 2014; Thakur, 2009; Tesfaye, 2020) have tried to raise Ethiopia's anomaly as resource-driven China-Africa relations. These researchers mention that Ethiopia is politically and geostrategically significant for China to realise its foreign policy objectives. There is a tacit agreement that the exponentially increasing multipronged Ethio-&KLQD UHODWLRQV DUH DWWULEXWDEOH WR &KLQD¶V large population, strong military power, and the hosting of international institutions, including the African Union (AU) and the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA), with their considerable African convening power. However, these studies suffer from a very similar blemish, emanating from the inability to go beyond the mere mention of such geopolitical variables. Once indicating the geopolitical factors, these studies remain trapped by the same drawbacks encountered by studies focusing merely on the economic aspects of Ethio-China bilateral relations. Notably, Aaron Tesfaye attempted to go slightly further. He starts with a very nice framing of Ethio-China relations ,5)8(6/1- 521 7+( )250(5¶6 32/,7,&6 but culminating in the same pitfalls. Strauss (2020, 389) has rightly affirmed this by stating that although 7HVID\H¶V VWXG\ RSHQV ZLWK WKH DUJXPHQW WKDW SROLWLFDO WKDQ HFRQRPLF ‡D JRRG GHDO RI ZKDW 7HVID\H DUJXHV DURXQG &KLQD(WKLRSLD HFRQRPLF UHODWLRQV ·

It follows, therefore, that this literature suffers from at least the following limitations. Firstly, at least to the best of my reading and understanding of the literature, the prevailing studies are more descriptive and economic in nature and have failed to provide sufficient emphasis on the geopolitical factors behind the close relationship between the two countries. Therefore, there is a need for further research devoted to such an overlooked aspect of bilateral relations and to add some knowledge to this scant literature, which is where this study comes in. I argue that JHRSROLWLFDO IDFWRUV FRQVLGHUDEO\ H[SODLQ &KLQD¶V African country with very limited identified gas and mineral. Secondly, besides the lack of emphasis, those limited studies mentioned above (Cabestan, 2012; Adem, 2012b; Shinn, 2014; 7KDNXU 7HVID\H FRQVLGHU (WKLRSLD¶V SROLW

investment in Africa, thereby overlooking its importance for China to project its power and LQIOXHQFH LQ WKH +R$ $IULFD DQG FRQWLQHQW, and HVW¶V beyond. Thirdly, as many of them were conducted a decade ago, they have left various new geopolitical developments in the Horn of Africa (HoA) in general, and Ethiopia in particular, unexamined. Here, we can mention the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) controversy and the Northern Ethiopia conflict. Therefore, this study examines the differences and similarities between Western and Chinese engagement in the conflict in Northern Ethiopia and Nile/GERD geopolitics as a case study to demonstrate the geopolitical determinants of Ethio-China relations. This particular case vividly shows the rivalry of the great powers to assert their dominance in geopolitically significant Ethiopia. Fourthly, none of them has employed geopolitical theoretical lenses to provide a systematic and clear picture of how geopolitical features have influenced Ethio China relations and thus suffer from theoretical blurring.

1.2 Problem statement

China has a strong relationship with Ethiopia, similar to other HoA countries. During the Haile Selassie and Mengistu regimes, China had moderate relations with Ethiopia because of Haile Selassie's inclination toward WKH :HVW DQG VHFRQG 0HQJLVWX¶V DOOLHG foreign policy during the Cold War environment. However, Ethio-China relations entered a new phase and strengthened following the ascension WR SRZHU RI WKH (W Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) in 1991. The year 1995 was a watershed when the Ethiopian government decided to balance its relationship with the West by resorting to the East, notably to China. This was further cemented after the 2005 national election, when the EPRDF boldly declared its adherence to the Chinese developmental state model, which was warmly welcomed by the latter (Cabestan, 2012). Henceforth, Ethiopia and China managed to maintain strong economic, political, and security relations. China has a special engagement with Ethiopia, FRQVLGHULQJ (WKLRSLD ‡ D QXFOHXV IRU WKH %HOW DQG 5 WR HDUQ LWV JRRGZLOO· +HVV trading partner, bilateral (WKLRSLD creditor, and investment source. Ethiopia ranks as the third highest recipient of Chinese development aid globally (Carmody and Murphy, 2022). Ethiopia is seen as a unique partner. At the Beijing Summit, the Forum for China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC), Hu Jintao announced a number of policy measures to further co-operation with African countries, and Ethiopia was the RQO\ FRXQWU\ WR EHQHILW IURP China has also been backing the 1 N U

Ethiopian position in international forums such as the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) deliberation over the GERD issue (Saied, 2022) and the Northern Ethiopia conflict (Worley, 2022). In addition, Ethiopia enjoys the highest tier of partnership rankings called an All-Weather Strategic Partnership. ZKLF WKH KLJKHVW OHYHO RI UHODWLRQV &KL 1DQWXO\D +DLURQJ DQG 6DXWPDQ UHYHDO much affected by either the 2020 global pandemic or the WKLRSLDQ FLYLO ZDU· WKH its commitment to the level of engagement with Ethiopia.

Notwithstanding this special relationship, unlike many African countries, Ethiopia has very limited identified gas and minerals, and no seaport to attract China. Therefore, in the absence of identified strategic resources such as oil and other minerals and an outlet to the sea, the ZKDW HCSO-DLQV (WKLRSLD¶V FORVH UHODWLRQVKLS"¶ UHPDLQV D SX]]OLQJ literature discussed in the background section is confined to economic justification (huge market and cheap labour). Some of them try to make geopolitical claims, but they hardly go further to prove or explain them. Building on their claim, I contend that, in the absence of identified strategic resources that China desperately needs in Africa, there are much more important geopolitical reasons for its engagement in Ethiopia than the economic ones. This study, therefore, goes beyond economic drivers and grapples with the geopolitical determinants of Ethiopia-China relations in the context of the post-1991 HoA conundrum.

+RZHYHU LW LV ZRUWK XQGHUVWDQGLQJ WKDW &KLQD¶V H continent/Ethiopia are inextricably interlinked. Consequently, this study does not leave out the economic drivers but gives due consideration to other geopolitical variables that have received comparatively less attention in existing literature concerning China-Ethiopia relations. In this context, Ethio- &KLQD¶V HFRQRPLF HQJDJHPHQW is scrutinised from a geopolitical or power politics perspective, rather than merely focusing on its descriptive trade, investment, and aid transactions, as is commonly done in prevailing studies. Therefore, a comprehensive framework that integrates economic, political, and security dimensions offers the most accurate portrayal of China-Ethiopia relations. By so doing, it contributes to the existing scant literature on China-Ethiopia geopolitics.

1.3 Scope

China has engaged almost all African countries, with varying degrees of economic penetration. This study focuses on Ethiopia (Ethio-China relations). However, it considers the broader HoA geopolitics for comparative purposes while analysing the determinants of China's special relationship with Ethiopia. The study is limited to the post-1991 period, which witnessed the beginning of the intensification of China-Africa relations, although it referred briefly to the historic geopolitical relations which shaped and impacted present relations.

1.4 Rationale

I chose the geopolitical dimension of the Ethio-China relationship because it is an anomaly to the generally held perception that the China-Africa relationship is economic, mainly trade and natural resource-driven. Such an anomaly emanates from the fact that Ethiopia is a country with very limited identified strategic resources, yet enjoys a special partnership with China. Therefore, an integrated economic, political, and security framework informs the ambit of Ethio-China relations.

1.5 Objectives of the study

The overall objective of this study is to examine the geopolitical determinants of Ethio-China relations in the context of the post-1991 HoA. It goes beyond the economic drivers of Ethio-China &KLQD HQJDJHPHQW WR H[SORUH (WKLRSLD¶V JHRSROLWLF specific objectives of this study are to:

1. Analyse the historical development of Ethio-China relations in the context of the HoA.
2. Investigate the geopolitical factors influencing post-1991 Ethio-China relations.
3. Analyse the security drivers of post-1991 Ethio-China relations.
4. Compare and contrast the Western and Chinese engagement with Ethiopia, using the conflict in Northern Ethiopia and Nile/GERD geopolitics as cases in point.

1.6 Research questions

This study tries to answer the grand question: What are the geopolitical determinants of post-1991 Ethio-China relations? What geopolitical significance does Ethiopia have for China, and vice versa? To this end, the study addresses the following sub-questions:

1. What has the historical development of Ethio-China relations looked like in the context of the HoA?
2. What are the geopolitical factors influencing post-1991 Ethio-China relations?
3. What are the security drivers of post-1991 Ethio-China relations?
4. As a case to demonstrate the aforementioned determinants of Ethio-China relations, the study probes the allied question: what are the differences and similarities between Western and Chinese engagement with Ethiopia, notably the conflict in Northern Ethiopia and Nile/GERD geopolitics?

1.7 Methodology

Social realities are the result of our actions, which, in turn, are the result of our perceptions and attitudes. Therefore, we must examine our perceptions and attitudes in understanding the social world. The best methodology that fits this ontological assumption is the qualitative methodology. This is because, as Dawson (2007) noted, it helps us understand the attitudes, behaviour, and experiences through interviews and focus group discussions. Qualitative methodology is vital for addressing people's underlying feelings, thoughts, motives, and desires (Kothari, 2004). K H O S V ‡ X Q F R Y H U W K H P H D Q L Q J Z H J L Y H W R W K L Q J V L Q G L Y affecting our consequent actions. Given the subjectivist orientation of the research, this methodology is vital, as it enables me to explain or understand social phenomena in their contexts (Ritchie and Lewis, 2003).

0 R U H R Y H U 'what', 'how', and 'why' research questions can be best answered using a qualitative approach (Ritchie and Lewis, 2003). This study intends to address these questions on the geopolitical determinants of post-1991 Ethio-China relations. Therefore, due to the nature of the research questions and the subjectivist ontological assumption underpinning the study, a qualitative methodology is chosen intentionally as the best guide for the collection and analysis of data.

1.7.1 Methods of Data Collection

I used primary and secondary sources to gather the necessary data for this study. Hence, the methods of data collection were interviews and document analysis.

1.7.1.1 Interviews

Primary data were collected through interviews. I used semi-structured, open-ended interviews that allow for flexibility depending on the circumstances and which instrument best fits my underlying ontological assumptions. As it plays a pivotal role in exploring participants' attitudes, feelings, experiences, and behaviour and thus makes sense of the multiple realities of the issues under consideration, I conducted interviews with individuals from government institutions, think tanks, academic organisations, and diplomatic missions. These included the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA), the Institute of Foreign Affairs (IFA), the Ethiopian Investment Commission (EIC), the Policy Studies Institute (PSI), the Institute for Peace and Security Studies (IPSS), the Institute for Security Studies (ISS), the Center for Dialogue, Research and Cooperation (CDRC), the Chinese Embassy, Oslo New University College, the Elliott School of International Affairs, William Paterson University, and the Chr. Michelsen Institute (CMI).

Although all informants contributed to all research questions, those from research centres and universities primarily provided broader insights into the geopolitics of the HoA. This dimension is particularly important, as China's engagement in Ethiopia is embedded in the geopolitical context of the HoA. These informants offered perspectives on how great powers have competed over the region in general, and Ethiopia in particular. Their input was especially valuable in analysing the geopolitical dynamics of the West-China power alignment in relation to the conflict in Northern Ethiopia and the Nile/GERD issue. This is to say nothing of their role in dealing with the remaining research questions, which the rest of the informants predominantly address. Those from the MoFA, IFA, EIC, PSI, and Chinese Embassy were vital sources of data for the basic political, economic, and security drivers of Ethio-China relations.

1.7.1.2 Document Analysis

I also relied significantly on secondary data to address the research questions. I used secondary sources such as books, journal articles, reports, minutes, newspapers, and the Internet to substantiate the data gathered from primary sources. Documentary sources almost single-handedly enabled me to address the first three chapters: the introduction, the conceptual and theoretical framework, and the historical development of Ethio-China relations. They also continued to be crucial data sources, together with interviews, for the remaining chapters.

1.7.1.3 The Use of Media Sources in Academic Writing

As noted in the document analysis section, I made use of media sources such as newspapers, television broadcasts, radio programs, and news magazines. These sources were employed to incorporate recent developments not yet added in the scholarly literature, to access official statements, and to fill empirical gaps where academic sources were limited or unavailable. Moreover, media sources helped address challenges related to the accessibility of academic materials, as they are often more readily available, especially in online formats. However, I prioritised well-established and reputable media outlets over social media sources and carefully triangulated the information to minimise potential bias.

1.7.1.4 Data Analysis

7KLV VWXG\ XVHG D WKHPDWLF DQDO\VLV PHWKRG $ WKH PHDQLQJ ZLWKLQ WKH GDWD VHW· %UDXQ &ODUNH method for analyzing qualitative data that entails searching across a data set to identify, analyze, DQG UHSRUW UHSHDWHG SDWWHUQV· .LJHU 9DUSLR methods, thematic analysis is not tied to a particular theoretical or epistemological position (Braun & Clarke, 2006). I first gathered the necessary data through interviews and document analysis in order to analyse it thematically. I then familiarised myself with the collected data to identify recurring trends across the data set. After categorising the data according to relevant patterns, I conducted thematic analysis and produced the report.

1.7.1.5 Sampling Method and Sample Size

Since the aim of qualitative research is to emphasise the quality rather than the quantity of data, WKH IRFXV LV RQ VHOHFWLQJ ‡SDUWLFLSDQWV ZKRma PLJKW XQGHU VWXG\· 1LHK 5K)RACCV. Accordingly, a purposive (or judgmental) sampling technique was employed to select key informants who had a close connection to, and sufficient knowledge of, the subject matter. Hence, I interviewed individuals with extensive knowledge of, and direct involvement in, HoA geopolitics and, most importantly, Ethio-China relations. These key informants included officials from both Ethiopia and China, reflecting the strong party-to-party and state-to-state nature of their bilateral relations. I also interviewed international relations and diplomacy researchers from the IFA within the MoFA, as the Institute was established to study (WKLRSLD¶V GLSORPDWLF HQJDJHPHQWV DQG RIIHU DOWHU interviewed individuals from the Asia and Pacific Directorate at MoFA, EIC, and the Chinese

Embassy, given their direct involvement in the practical aspects of Ethio-China geopolitical relations and access to firsthand information. I also consulted experts who have written extensively on Ethio-China relations. This is an illustrative rather than exhaustive list of informants who had a close connection to the issue under investigation. While the sample size may be small, the interviewees possessed substantial and relevant knowledge. Employing a random sampling technique could have led to the selection of individuals with a limited understanding of the topic, S R W H Q W L D O O \ U H V X O W L Q J L Q W K H R P L V V L R Q R I F U L W L F D O achieve its objectives

There is no intention to generalise the findings. After all, individuals differ in their experiences, the contexts in which they operate, and the meanings they ascribe to the world. Consistent with my aforementioned philosophical stance, these differences are crucial in shaping reality. Therefore, this study does not aim to include a large sample for the purpose of generalising the results to the broader population such as the sub-region or the continent as is common in quantitative research. Instead, the number of participants was determined by the principle of data saturation.

1.7.1.6 Case Study Method

This study employed a case study and explanatory design. A case study examines one example of a particular type (Biggam, 2008). This design is preferable to closely observing a study subject (Biggam, 2008). Ethio-China relations is one example of broader Africa-China relations. As a result, a case study design is purposely chosen to investigate deeply and to analyse intensely the multifarious phenomena that constitute the realities in Ethio-China relations. Besides, as the study intends to go beyond the mere description of the pinnacle of Ethio-China relations, which many previous studies have done, and explain the key geopolitical drivers of their relationship, an explanatory design was H P S O R \ H G 7 K H H [S O D Q D W R U \ G H V L J Q S U R Y L V R P H W K L Q J K D S S H Q H G · R U ‡ W K H F D X V H V D Q G U H D V R Q V 2017:161). This best suits the crux of the study, which examines why Ethiopia and China have the level of relationship they have. Therefore, I use both case study and explanatory designs.

1.8 Significance of the Study

This study is immensely relevant to those interested in the issue under consideration. This study sheds O L J K W R Q W K H Q D W X U H R I & K L Q D ¶ V D X O W L D celled engagement in Ethiopia, focusing on

geopolitical determinants. By so doing, this study contributes to the broader engagement of China in Africa. Moreover, this study calls attention to potential research areas, thereby motivating further research on the subject. This is because this study focuses on the dimension of Ethio-China relations that previous studies have not given sufficient attention to. In addition, I am deeply convinced that the study's findings provide essential input for policymakers at the continental, sub-regional, and national levels. The study suggests mechanisms for both countries to adjust their policies to positively influence regional stability and development. It indicates possible ways to seize opportunities and address challenges in their relations. Most importantly, the study's findings suggest potential strategies to reduce possible adverse reactions from the West that could impede Ethio-China relations. It contributes to the development of well-informed policies that can positively shape their bilateral relations within the HoA, the continent, and on the global stage. In a nutshell, the study offers valuable suggestions to reinforce positive Ethio-China engagements.

1.9 Limitations and how to mitigate them

During the course of the study, I encountered challenges in obtaining consent from key informants. Some officials from government institutions were initially reluctant to share the necessary information. However, these limitations were not insurmountable. To address them, I made every effort to clearly explain the aim and purpose of the study, emphasising that the research posed no risk to them. I also assured them that their identities would be protected. Through this approach, I was able to gain their cooperation, thereby ensuring that the quality of the research was not compromised

1.10 Ethical considerations

In adherence to research ethics, I obtained informed consent from all participants. The interviewees provided oral consent without full awareness of the purpose of the study and any potential implications of their participation. To protect their privacy and ensure confidentiality, the names of some respondents are not disclosed in this report. However, the names cited in the study refer to participants who consented to be identified.

1.11 Organisation of the Dissertation

This study is organised into eight chapters. Chapter One provides an introduction, outlining the background, problem statement, scope, rationale, research objectives, research questions,

methodology, significance, limitations, and ethical considerations. Chapter Two articulates the conceptual and theoretical framework that guides the study. Chapter Three discusses the historical development of Ethio-China relations up to 1991, focusing on the Imperial and Derg era. Chapter Four examines the geopolitical drivers of post-1991 Ethio-China relations. Chapter Five analyses the security drivers influencing Ethio-China relations during the same period. Chapter Six explores the geopolitics of the Nile and the GERD, with a particular focus on the roles of Western powers and China. Chapter Seven also investigates the geopolitical dimensions of the Northern Ethiopia conflict (2020–2022), with an emphasis on Western and Chinese engagement. Chapter Eight presents the conclusions, policy implications, and recommendations for future research.

Chapter Two: Geopolitics and International Relations

2.1. Introduction

Geopolitics and International Relations (IR) have emerged as an academic field of study at different historical junctures. Geopolitics emerged earlier than IR: the former in 1899, whereas the latter in 1919, right after the end of World War I (WWI) (Criekemans, 2022). Hence, Geopolitics had been dealing with problems of international relations until the end of the First World War, together with other disciplines such as history and international law (Criekemans, 2022). Later on, it disappeared after World War II (WWII). After a period of neglect in the mainstream IR because of its association with Nazism, geopolitics was resurrected in the 1970s by American National Security Advisors, notably Kissinger, ‡ D V D V \ Q R Q \ P I R U W K H V X S H U S R Z H U power politi F V (Mallinson and Ristic, 2016, p. 9). Geopolitics and IR are highly interrelated disciplines, especially geopolitics and realism. Notwithstanding this, some have tried to maintain their distinctive nature, while others are arguing for the integration and consolidation of geopolitics and IR into a coherent single perspective. Kelly (2019) is among those who try to sustain the difference between these disciplines, arguing that IR, particularly realism, focuses on great powers, elite decision-makers, and power abundance for security, while geopolitics focuses on both great powers and small states, states than individual decision-makers, and geographic features for security, respectively. Wu (2018), Owens (1999), Criekemans (2022), Park (2023), and Gökmen (2010), on the other hand, are among those who capitalize on the similarities. They consider geopolitics as a foundation of IR that needs to be combined with the latter to make a comprehensive analysis of a given international event.

This study joins the latter camp, arguing for the integration of geopolitics and IR theories, as will be discussed later. Owing to this conviction, the study employs an integrated approach, taking the basic concepts and principles applicable to the study from Geopolitical and IR theories. Hence, the first part of this chapter deals with the conceptual aspects of geopolitics. The second part discusses geopolitical theories. The third part deals with IR theories. Lastly, an analytical framework is drawn from the discussions of the entire chapter.

2.2. Geopolitics: conceptual understanding

Geopolitics serves as the basic guiding framework of the study. Before delving into geopolitical theories, it is imperative to address conceptual nuances. This section discusses the definition of geopolitics, geopolitical variables, and globalization vs. geopolitics.

2.2.1. Definitions of geopolitics

Nature had a more deterministic impact on human life, especially during primitive society. Nature dictated the life of hunters and gatherers. Eventually, human beings tried to emancipate themselves from the impact of nature. Advances in human invention, such as science and technology, helped them master/dominate nature. The social environment became a more determinant factor than the natural one. To use Kristof (1960, p. 16) words, Man becomes less "natural" and more human and social. However, their mastery of nature is not boundless (Kristof, 1960). The natural environment still has an influence on the political life of human beings or the state. And it is this understanding that geopolitical discourses emerged, and this study employs a geopolitical perspective in examining the determinants of the post-1991 Ethiopia-China relations.

What is geopolitics, then? Originally, the term geopolitics was coined in 1899 by a Swedish political scientist named Rudolf Kjellén. As is true for other social science concepts, geopolitics has no single definition. It refers to many things for many writers. The divergence in the definition and subject matter of geopolitics has to do with the historical circumstances and its interdisciplinary nature. Various scholars define it in different ways, but all commonly associate it with the relationship between space and the state (Sidaway, 2001) or politics and geographic factors (Black, 2016). As the name indicates, the concept of geopolitics is blended with two basic terms, namely geography and politics. Accordingly, it is concerned with the influence of geography on politics. Geographical features can affect the actions and interests of states. Like Marxism and liberalism, which single out a core principle to explain the past, organize the present and predict the future of human life and subordinate all other factors to it, geopolitics also does the task of explaining, organizing and predicting, putting geography at the core (Dugin, 1997). It interprets human experience from the vantage point of geographical space. Geoffrey Parker defines JHRSROLWLFV DV ‡WKH VWXG\ RI LQWHUQDWLRQDO YLROHQFH (Cohen, 2015, p. 16). Similarly, Cohen (2015, p. GHILQHV JHRSROLWLFV DV ‡D RI WKH JHRJUDSKLFDO IDFWRUV XQGHUO\LQJ LQWHUQDWLRQDO

is devoted "to investigate the relationship of political events to a significant part of the earth's VXUIDFH · & DKDSWHU S ' TQ This is because geographic features, such as the significant ones, can determine how states make their foreign policy and act towards other states. In relation to this, Kegley and Raymond (2010, p. GHILQHG JHRSROLWLFV DV ‡D VFKRRO IRUHLJQ SROLFLHV DUH GHWHUPLQHG E\ WKHLU ORFDWLRQ Similarly, Filt (2006) defines geopolitics as the practice of states controlling and competing for territories and resources within them. For instance, we can take the two World Wars due to *HUPDQ\¶V WHUULWRULDO H[SDQVLRQ DQG DOVR WKH (XUR their voracious need for African resources. Therefore, as Black (2016, p. 8) wrote, geopolitics ‡FDOOV DWWHQWLRQ WR WKH UHODWLRQVKLS EHWZHHQ V JHRJUDSK\ IRU VWDWHFUDIW·

Geopolitics is an aspect of power politics. Geopolitical competitions all over the world boil down to the struggle for power. Sprout (1954, p. ULJKWO\ SXW LW WKDW JHRSRO expression for the relationship between geographical and other factors in the distribution of power LQ WKH ZRUOG · , Q UDSK\ KDV WR GR ZLWK WKH SRZHU RI the state. Therefore, JHRSROLWLFV IRFXVHV RQ ‡WKH VWUDWHJLF 6E GLDORJXH WR augment the power and agency of the state and serve its foreign policy objectives. Dugin (1997, p. 18) boldly put how geopolitics is entwined with power politics, stating that:

> *HRSROLWLFV LV D ZRUOGYLHZ RI SRZHU D VFLHQFH R WRGD\¶V ZRUOG LW LV D ‡UXOHU¶V TXLFN UHIHUHQFH gives a summary of what should be considered when making global (momentous) decisions such as making alliances, starting wars, implementing reforms, restructuring society, imposing massive economic and political sanctions, etc.

Owens (1999, p. DOVR YLYLGO\ VWDWHG WKDW ‡JHRSROLWLFV and strategic relevance of JHRJUDSK\ WR WKH SXUVXLW RI LQWHUQDWLRQDO FRQVLGHUV JHRSROLWLFV DV SDUW RI WKH 5HDOLVW WUDGLWLRQ SROLWLFV¶ 7KH IROORZLQJ SDUDJUDSK GHPRQVWUDWHV WKLV ¶V power politics.

> Geopolitics makes certain claims: there is an international pecking order, determined by who has power and who does not; power is rooted in the physical nature of the world itself; the power of the modern state has some relation to the territory that it occupies, controls, or influences; resources and strategic potential, the sources of state power, are unequally distributed worldwide; and power is ephemeral - possession is no guarantee of its permanent retention, and therefore states must take steps to ensure its retention (Owens, 1999, p. 62)

This vividly tells us that to dominate the world order, the state needs to have power, which derives from the geographical space it controls or influences. Hence, controlling or creating alliances with strategically important territories is a source of power. In a word, competition for territory (geopolitics) is competition for power. For instance, we adduce how the Cold War superpowers were and dominance and enhance their own. The US's support for autocratic governments in South Korea, South Vietnam, and Nicaragua was more geopolitical than ideological; it was done so to counterbalance the Soviet Union's supremacy and impact on the US strategic interests, not because it rejected democracy and freedom (Sampa, the installation of nuclear-armed Soviet missiles there to a strategic reason to counterbalance the US. We can also mention the North Atlantic Treaty Organization by allowing membership to several Eastern European countries as a strategic competition over foreign places to contain the Russian resurrection. The Ukraine war in Ukraine is a notable example of competition over strategic places for power and dominance.

7R VXP XS IURP WKH DERYH GLVFXVVLRQ ZH FDQ XQGHUVW ways: as an activity or practice, and as a discipline or field of study. As an activity, it refers to competition over significant geographical entities and their resources, whereas as a discipline, it studies such competition over spaces and the influence of geography or space on politics and state power. The above discussion shows how entwined geopolitics is with power politics.

2.2.2. Geopolitical factors/variables

As indicated above, geography influences international relations, power distribution, and the state's strategic relevance. Thus, which geographical factors/features/variables have such an influence?

Listing all variables is quite difficult, let alone explaining each of them. These are numerous, PXWXDOO\ LQWHUDFWLQJ IDFWRUV 7KHUHIRUH QR RQH ID geopolitical significance. According to Csurgai (2022), geographical configurations, natural resources, boundaries, geopolitical representations, the geography of populations, historical factors, economic factors, and the strategy of actors are the main geopolitical features determining interstate relations. For many geopoliticians such as Mackinder, Mahan, and Spykman, location, topography, population size, territorial size, climate, and distance between states determine states' power, foreign policy, and geopolitical significance (Kegley and Raymond, 2010). Reynaud and Vauday (2008) also stated the number of borders, reflecting the centrality of the state, as an important variable determining the geopolitical importance of countries. Furthermore, Wilson (1950, p. DOVR H[SODLQHG WKDW ‡VSDFH UHODWLRQV ORFD land content (soils and minerals), and native vegetation are geographical conditions which VWUHQJWKHQ VRPH VWDWHV DQG ZHDNHQ RWKHUV· 7KHVH of geographical features that influence international relations and the distribution of power. These geographical factors are further explained by the classical geopolitical theoreticians discussed below, with practical historical examples and insights into Ethiopia's geopolitical significance. These geopolitical features are unevenly distributed, so that states have no equal degree of geopolitical significance. States may be rated according to this difference, ranging from those seen as important allies to those seen as immediate threats (Dodds, 2007). Hence, the place that a state occupies or influences has an impact on its external behaviour as well as how other states see it and act towards it.

By the geopolitical determinant of Ethio-China relations, this study implies these geographical variables mutatis mutandis. The study selectively uses those features applicable to the subject XQGHU FRQVLGHUDWLRQ $ QRWH PXVW EH WDNHQ WKDW L in its loose sense, not a rigid and fixed deterministic one, to mean almost the same as an influencing conditioning or affecting factor. As Sloan & Gray (1999, p. 2) argue, ‡ JHRJUDSK\ RU JHRJUDSKLFDO FRQILJXUDWLRQV SUHVHQW R, but do not GHWHUPLQH foreign and domestic policy objectives and strategies. Spykman (1938, p. 30) also VWUHVVHG WKDW ‡WKH JHRJUDSK\ RI D FRXQWU\ LV UDWKH Hence, the interaction of geographic factors with human agency and technology is important.

Furthermore, as regards the geopolitical agents, the Ethio-China state-level relation dominates the core of the study.

2.2.3. The continuing relevance of geopolitics in a global world

Globalisation is the interconnectedness of the world. Thanks to information and communication technology, actors across the world can easily interact and influence one another without their physical presence. Therefore, boundaries are no longer strict barriers. Accordingly, a strong challenge has come, partly from critical geopolitics, to the geopolitical school of thought that is underpinned by geographical relevance in international politics. Some argue that the advancement of technology, airpower, nuclear weapons, and cyberspace has rendered geography a less relevant determinant factor in the foreign policy-making process or pursuit of international power. There is QR QHHG IRU H[DPSOH WR GHSOR\ WURRSV DEURDG WR unmanned drone can do, launched from its own country. Owing to this, some could declare the end of geopolitics 2 ZH ZH, 1999, p. 60).

Nevertheless, numerous scholars express scepticism towards accepting this assertion wholeheartedly. Dodds (2007, p. 1) argues that despite globalisation DWLRQ ‡WKH UHOHYDQFH international boundaries, and claims to sovereignty remains DV SUHVVLQJ DV HYHU· continue to determine the foreign and security policies of states. Similarly, Cohen (2015, p. 11) PDLQWDLQV WKDW ‡JOREDOL]DWLRQ GRHV QRW VSHOO WK argued. Rather, it makes for DP XFK PRUH FRPSOH[JHRSROLWLFDO V\VV technology brings a plethora of geopolitical actors into competition over a given geographical space. Owens (1999) and Wu (2018) also argue that technological advancements, economic development, and the infusion of capital can alter but not disregard the significance of geographical space. Though both lines of argument have their own truth, it would be naïve to declare that geography is no longer an important determinant in international relations. It indeed has a huge importance. The fact on the ground also shows why Why are European, American, Chinese, and $UDE FRXQWULHV¶ WURRSV LQ WKH +RUQ RI $IULFD" 7KH DQ geography. States still compete for territory and power.

Geopolitics is a dynamic perspective (Filt 2006; Cohen 2015; Owens, 1999; Dodds, 2007; Spykman, 1938). Globalisation shows this dynamic nature of geopolitics rather than the end of

geopolitics. The strategic significance we attribute to geographical spaces can be changed by various factors from time to time. As stated above, advances in science, information technology, and economic cooperation can modify it, but not negate it. Spykman (1938, p. 40) rightly put it W K D W ‡ W K H I D F W V R I O R F D W L R Q G R Q R W F K D Q J H 7 K H V L J in the means of communication, in routes of communication, in the technique of war, and in the F H Q W H U V R I Z R U O G S R Z H U (1999, p. D O V R P D L Q W D L Q W K D W ‡ W factors which influence politics are a product of policymakers selecting particular objectives and D W W H P S W L Q J W R U H D O L V H W K H P E \ W K H F R Q Y H Q L H Q F H V I R U P X of geographical spaces is partly socially constructed, so that it changes over time as circumstances change. The reason why the US and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) abandoned their satellites in Africa right after the end of the Cold War is the fact that the latter was no longer that much strategically significant as the war was over. Geopolitics, therefore, is not based on a rigid geographic determinism. And, globalization shows this dynamism. This study envisages this understanding of geopolitics.

2.3. Geopolitical Theories

Having explored the conceptual issues above, this section also delves into theoretical underpinnings. Geopolitical theories can be broadly categorized into two main groups: classical geopolitics and critical geopolitics. Classical geopolitics, as extensively discussed earlier, is rooted on the traditional understanding of geopolitics, emphasizing the influence of geography on state power and foreign policy. In contrast, critical geopolitics emerged as a critique of this mainstream perspective, questioning the impact of geographical factors on human and state behavior and advocating for the empowerment of marginalized voices in geopolitical discourse. The upcoming discussions aim to elaborate on these general descriptions. While these theories may not directly address the specific issue under investigation, they offer valuable insights. These insights, along with the previously discussed conceptual issues and forthcoming examination of the theories, contributed to constructing an analytical framework for the study.

2.3.1. Classical/conventional geopolitics

Broadly speaking, classical geopoliticians agree on the fact that geography influences human and state behaviors, as is made apparent in the above conceptualization of the term. Geography influences international relations, power distribution, and the state's strategic relevance. In a word,

they advise states to control strategic territories that enhance their power and influence in the world. After all, classical geopoliticians emerged in the context of imperialism, advocating for WKHLU UHVSHFWLYH VWDWHV WHUULWRULDO H[SDQVLRQ (Tuathail, 1998). However, as should become apparent, the type of territory they advise states to control varies. One early imperialist geRSROLWLFLDQ ZDV 5DW]HO D *HUPDQ JHRJUDSKHU ZKR GHYHORSHG KLV LGHDV KDYLQJ been highly influenced by social Darwinism. According to Ratzel, international politics is a never ending struggle for survival, and for a state to survive, it requires power, which is derived from the VL]H RI WKH WHUULWRU\ LW FRQWUROV 2ZHQV $FFRUGLQJ WR 5DW]HO VWDWHV VKRXOG FRQWURO seeks to cover the most important regions for its development: coasts, river basins, valleys and generally all rich territories· ’XJLQ S 7KHVH DUH ZKDW SROLWLFLDQV· WKDW KHOS H[SHGLWH WKH VWDWH¶V IXUWKHU VWUHVVHG WKH VLJQLILFDQFH RI WKH VHDSRZHU IRU FRQWURO RI WKH VHDV DQG Ethiopia is landlocked, Ratzel's concept of controlling river basins and valleys is relevant. As the water tower of the HoA, Ethiopia controls the Blue Nile and local water bodies, which together with its role and centrality in the continent, make it strategically crucial (Mesfin, 2012). This attracts great powers seeking influence in the HoA and the continent at large.

Ratzel's idea of developing sea power has been taken up with greater emphasis by Alfred T. Mahan, an American professional Naval and geopolitical thinker who understood international relations DV ‡D G\QDPLF FRQGLWLRQ RI D FRQWLQXLQJ EDWWOH EHWZHHQ VWDWHV· &ULHNHPDQV S $FFRUGLQJ WR 0DKDQ control is the determinant that builds national power is the control of the sea because sea transportation and communications are the most efficient and copious than land (Sprout, 1954; Kaplan, 2012). His variables that determine the sea power are divided into two broad categories, namely geographical factors and human or social factors (Sprout, 1954). Geographical factors include the concepts of location (central position), defensive strength (insularity from attack), and resources (Sprout, 1954). The human or social factors include the size of the population, national character, and the nature of the regime 7KH VL]H RI WKH SRSXODWLRQ ‡LV QRW RQO\ following the sea, or at least readily available for employment on shipboard and for the creation RI QDYDO PDWHULDO· 0DKDQ S 7KLV LV PLOLWDU\ JHQHUDOO\ ‡D JUHDW SRSXODWLRQ IROORZLQJ 49 OLQJV National character refers to the customs and habits (such as aptitude for commercial pursuits) of a

people and the relations of those habits and customs to national power. Finally, the nature of the government, which is, inter alia, whether or not it exercises intelligently power, which is wise, energetic, and persevering also matters (Mahan, 1890). Though not a coastal state, these variables provide some insights into Ethiopia's central position in the Hoa and Africa, its military prowess compared to its neighbors, and its history of heroic warriors. Together, these factors elevate Ethiopia's geopolitical significance for great powers vying for influence in the region.

A departure from the aforementioned sea power geopoliticians discussed above is Mackinder, a British geographer who advocated for land power. He did not downplay the role of sea power; however, he emphasised the superiority of land power and developed his heartland theory (Sprout, 1954). In his three concentric circles of the planet, which is at the heart of the world landmass and identical to Russia, helps the state to control the whole world (Hagan, 1942; Sidaway, 2001). This is because the heartland passes the three conditions of power that Mackinder identified: 1) comparative productivity of the primary base, which comprises manpower, resources, equipment, and organization 2) the security of the primary base 3) and the strategic opportunities for bringing pressure or force to bear upon potential enemies from the territorial positions which one held (Sprout, 1954). The latter two are heartland is a vast and uninterrupted plain conducive to mobility, expandable to marginal land without significant water body barriers, and impenetrable to sea power (Sempa, 2002). Mackinder argued that the heartland is the key to dominating the world because of the superiority of rail over sea transportation in terms of the predicted the ascendancy of land power, arguing that the favourable position of the heartland, or the land power, would be further enhanced by technological advances such as railways and motorcars (Sempa, 2002), which Mahan did not seem to have imagined. The fact that Ethiopia is at the heart of the HoA, is productive, insulated from sea power threats, and has a better railway compared to its neighbors, enhances its power and geopolitical importance for great powers vying in the area.

Mackinder's thinker deeply concerned with restoring German power after the defeat in World War I. To this end, he developed his theory by using ideas from Ratzel, Mahan, Mackinder, and others. Their

ideas were in agreement with the Germans' long-established aspiration of establishing an empire in Mitteleuropa (Granieri, 2015). Haushofer developed Geopolitik ZKLFK IRFXVHV RQ LPSRUWDQFH RI FRQTXHVW DQG GRPLQDWLRQ RI DQ DXWD ultimate goal of Geopolitik was to ensure German global dominance (Owens, 1999). Haushofer's and the Germans' desire for Eurasian expansion was particularly entwined with Mackinder's claim that capturing the heartland would result in unassailable world dominance (Granieri, 2015). Like all other geopoliticians discussed above, he reiterated the need to control strategically important geographical areas that can help Germany achieve global power. Building on other geopoliticians OLNH WKRVH GLVFXVVHG DERYH +DXVKRIHU¶V DSSURDFK L and domination. He had personal contact with Hitler and advised the latter (Cohen, 2015). As stated in Kaplan (2012), ‡ WKH 1D]L ZDU PDFKLQH LV WKH instrument of conquest. Geopolitik is the master plan GHVLJQHG WR WHOO WKRVH ZKR ZLHOG WKH LQVWU FRPIRUWDEOH ZLWK +LWOHU¶V LQYDVLRQ RI 5XVVLD LQ U as a strategic move toward controlling the heartland. However, the ultimate result was a vast and disreputable tragedy, which may have been WKH FDXVH RI +DXVKRIHU¶V DQG KLV ZLIH¶V GHFL,VLRQ WR therefore, that like the aforementioned theories, he advised the control of strategically significant places, especially the heartland, providing some guide to the study.

In between sea power and land power discussed above is Spykman, a US international relations scholar who GLVFXVVHG SRZHU SROLWLFV HYHQ ENIRUH 0RUJHQ Politics Among Nations. He argues that international relations are all about power relations. He stressed the need to have power in the struggle for survival and the realisation of foreign policy objectives (Sempa, 2002). He made all other normative values, such as justice, fairness, and tolerance, subordinate to the attainment of power. The important variables that make a state powerful take us to his geopolitical perspective, where he argues that the nature of geographical territories, such as size, natural resources, SRSXODWLRQ GHQVLW\ HFRQRPLF VWUXFWXUH ORFDWLRQ foreign policy and the relative strength of the state in the struggle for power (Spykman, 1938), QIOXHQFHG E\ ERWK 0DKDQ¶V VHD SRZHU DQG 0DFNLQGH developed a Rimland theory, which is a buffer zone between land power and sea power. Spykman claims that the crucial strategic region of the world is the Rimland, which contains maritime (XURSH WKH 0LGGOH (DVW ,QGLD 6RXWKHDVW $VLD DQG because of their populations, their rich resources, and their use of interior sea ·ORDQHV· &RKHQ

p. 26). In view of this, Spykman advised WKH 8 6 ¶ V SRVWZDU DOOLDQFH ZLW
DQG HVSHFLDOO\ D ULVLQJ &KLQD ¶V GRPLQDWLRQ RI WKH
6S\NPDQ¶V LGHDV LPPHQVHO\ LQIRUPHG WKH 8 6 ¶ V &ROG :
Cohen, 2015). His advocacy for the control of the Rimland is, however, without losing sight of the fact that the Rimland is vulnerable to both land and sea power attacks (Cohen, 1999: 68; Peterson, 2011). $OWKRXJK (WKLRSLD LV QRW D 5LPODQG VWDWH 6S\NPD
LQWR LWV JHRSROLWLFDO LPSRUWDQFH 6S\NPDQ¶V LGHDV
objectives and the sources of power such as size, location, population, economic structure, and climate† KHOS H[SODLQ (WKLRSLD¶V VWURQJ Jurable Dawn RQVKLS
Ethiopia attract great powers, which are engaged in competition for global dominance.

In summary, the aforementioned leading classical geopoliticians focus, inter alia, on economic might, national military prowess with effective striking power, alliance formation to defend national interests and preventing other powers from gaining a competitive strategic advantage, and the nation-VWDWH¶V SUHHPLQHQFH LQ LQWHUQDWLRQDO DIIDL emphasises the geographical significance in shaping foreign policy, international relations, and power distribution. It views international politics as a continuous struggle for power and dominance, with a focus on the spatial dimensions of this power struggle. This aligns with the focus of this study: the geostrategic significance of Ethiopia and China for each other in achieving WKHLU IRUHLJQ SROLF\ REMHFWLYHV 0HDVKHLPHU HYDOXDWHV WKH JHRSROLWLFDO JRDOV RI TXDGUDWLQJ WKH 3RZHU and & KLQD influence in the HoA, Africa, and beyond, countering Western/US dominance, and asserting its global power. Therefore, my focus is not on the specific geographical regions deemed geopolitically significant by these authorities, but rather on the broader insights they provide regarding the geopolitical significance of any state, in this case, Ethiopia.

2.3.2. Critical geopolitics

In the previous discussion, we explored classical or conventional geopoliticians' arguments about how geography influences the politics or foreign policy of a state, and more broadly, how the environment influences human behaviour. However, this mainstream understanding of geopolitics has recently come under critical scrutiny. This section focuses on critical geopolitics, highlighting leading figures such as Gearoid O Tuathail, John Agnew, Simon Dalby, Klaus J. Dodds, Merje Kuus, and J. P. Sharp. The term "critical geopolitics" was first coined by Simon Dalby in 1990,

though the ideas predate this (Kuus, 2017). Critical geopolitics emerged in the late 1980s and early 1990s as a challenge to the underlying assumptions of classical geopolitical thinking. It draws on Marxism, world systems approaches, poststructuralism, feminism, critical international relations theory, postcolonial theories, and psychoanalysis (Dodds, 1998; Kuus, 2017; Sharp, 2009). However, its origins are most fundamentally rooted in poststructuralism (Sharp, 2009; Kuus, 2017). As Kuus (2017, pp. 3-4) states, critical geopolitics is characterised by its ‡LWV H[SOLFLW)RXFDXOGLDQ XQGHUSLQQLQJV ·

Critical geopolitics challenges classical geopoliticians' taken-for-granted understanding of geopolitics, treating it as a discourse ± a culturally and politically varied way of describing, representing, and writing about geography and international politics (Toal & Ó Tuathail, 1998, p. 3). 7XDWKDLO DQG $JQHZ S DVVHUW WKDW WKH ‡JHRJUDSKHQRPHQRQ ZKLFK LV VHSDUDWH IURP (1993, p. 71) reinforces and routinises this by arguing, ‡There is no ' natural' or ' prediscursive ' geography of international relations, DQG thus it is ± policy makers and academic experts through linguistic practices represent places and peoples in the practice of *HRJUDSKLFDO (Toal & Ó Tuathail, 1998). Critical geopolitics, therefore, emphasises ‡KRZ SODFHV DQG SHRSOHV DUH VFULSWHG E\ IRUHLJQ SROLF\ GLVFRXUVHV set of representations, a collection of descriptions, attributes, and scenarios deemed necessary to GHILQH D SODFH · ’RGGV S ’RGGV UHIHUV WR W SUHYLOHJHG VWRU\WHOOHUV · ’RGGV S ZKLOH 7X RI VWDWHFUDIW · 7KHVH SHRSOH DUH DVVXPHG WR KDYH D VSHFLDO UROH LQ DVVLJQLQJ LGHQWLWLHV WR RWKHUV DV .XXV S H[SODLQV ‡VWDWH LGHQWLW\ DQG LQWHUH WKURXJK IRUHLJQ SROLF\ GLVFRXUVHV · 7KLV SHUVSHFWLYH LPSOLHV WKDW FULWLFDO JHRSROLWLFV GLVFRXUVHV rejects the notion of pregiven identities of places and people, viewing them instead as the outcomes of GLVFRXUVHV ‡&ULWLFDO JHRSROLWLFV GRHVQ¶W VHH SODFHV DQG SHRSOHV DV JLYHQ VXEMHFWV rather, it investigates the processes by which political subjects and places are formed in the ILU (Dodds, Kuus, and Sharp, 2016, p. 9). To identify and name a place is to trigger a series of narratives, subjects and understandings. For example, to designate an area DV µ, VODPLF¶ µHVWHUQ¶ not only to name it, but also to brand it in terms of its politics and the type of foreign SROLF\ LWV µQDWXUH¶ (Agnew & Corbridge, 1995, p. 48). Not all political elites have equal influence over how a space is represented (Agnew & Corbridge, 1995, p. 49). Intellectuals of VWDWHFUDIW LQ FRUH JUHDW KHJHPRQLF VWDWHV ‡KDYH

LQWHUQDWLRQDO SROLWLFDO VSDFH LV UHSUHVHQWHG·
geopolitical reasoning (Tuathail and Agnew, 1992, p. 195). For example, elites in the US or China
can sway developing countries to subscribe to their respective representations of a given place.

,Q H[DPLQLQJ WKH IRUHLJQ SROLF\ RI D VWDWH LV HV
backgrounds, interests, and identities RI WKH LQGLYLGXDOV ZKR DFWXDOO\ DUWLFXO
in foreign policy practices (Kuus, 2017, p. 12). Sharp (2009, p. 359) similarly argues that the
FRQYHQWLRQDO JHRSROLWLFLDQV¶ GLVFRXUVH RI REMHFW
geopolitician has his
RU KHU RZQ SRLQW RI YLHZ DQG OR\DOWLHV« <HW WKH)RX
WKDW QR JHRSROLWLFLDQ FDQ EH LQQRFHQW RI is LQWHUH
ontologically subjectivist and has methodo ORJLFDO LPSOLFDWLRQV IDYRULQJ
methods that enable more agent-FHQWHUHG RU SHRSOHG DFFRXQWV RI SRO
and Sharp, 2016, p. 10). Accordingly, critical geopolitics considers the personal backgrounds,
interests, and identities of a wide range of geopolitical practitioners and agents (Dodds, Kuus, and
Sharp, 2016, p. 10).

&ULWLFDO JHRSROLWLFV DV LQGLFDWHG DERYH LV SURIR
of the power/knowledge relation. Foucault (1980, S QRWHG WKDW ‡7KH H[HU
SHUSHWXDOO\ FUHDWHV NQRZOHGJH DQG FRQYHUVHO\ NQ
+H IXUWKHU DGGHG ‡,W LV QRW SRVVLEOH IRU SRZHU WR
for knowledge not R HQJHQGHU SRZHU · 7XDWKDLO S DUJXI
operation of discourse and power/knowledge, and it is also about how intellectuals, institutions,
DQG LGHRORJ\ FUHDWH VWUXFWXUHV RI SRZHU ZLWKLQ VW
discourse create knowledge that reinforces their power and perpetuates the marginal rational and silencing of others.
In view of this, Critical geopolitics challenges classical geopolitics for its statist understanding.
Tuathail (1998) asserts that geopolitics has traditionally been a militaristic practice monopolized
by statist elites, conservative politicians, and geopolitical experts, thereby marginalising dissenting
voices and alternative perspectives. Tuathail (1998, p. 11) argues that it is imperative to consider
QRW RQO\ ‡GLVFRXUVHV IRUJHG E\ WKH SRZHUIXO WKH K
counter-hegemonic discourses of those who are marginalized, ignored, and silenced by dominant
GLVFRXUVHV · $JQHZ S ics is increasingly driven by non-state VWDWHV WKDW ‡ZRUOG S
actors, from credit-UDWLQJ DJHQFLHV WR SKLODQWKURSLF 1*2V D

7KHUHIRUH ’RGGV .XXV DQG 6KDUS S DUJXH WK
analysis of geopolitics from sta actors located in formal institutions, such as government
ministries, universities, or think tanks, to non-VWDWH DFWRUV DQG HYHU\GD\ OLI
HPHUJHG WR DPSOLI\ WKHVH VXSSUHVVHG YRLFHV DQG ‡W
NQRZOHGJH· 7XDWK&DUL WLFDO SJHRSROLWLFV ‡FKDOOHQJHV
JHRSROLWLFV DQG WKH VWUXFWXUHV RI SRZHU SROLWLFD
1998, p. 10).

Unlike classical geopoliticians'rigid territorialization of politics, critical geopolitics views
spatiality as extending beyond territoriality. Consequently, state power is not confined to its
territory and can be exercised over spaces spanning networks (Kuus, 2017, p. 6). Dodds, Kuus, and
Sharp (201 S DVVHUW WKDW ‡WKH ILHOG DGYDQFHV WKH
understandings of politics toward more nuanced understandings of the complex spatialities of
SRZHU · +RZHYHU WKLV JHRJUDSKLFDO WXUQ LQ (KXXV, 201 7, ORQJHU
p. 6). The key point is that the state is no longer the sole actor and locus of geopolitics. Otherwise
put, ‡WKH VWDWH LV QR O-Bivand Jurd of Mark Is S (Dodds, Kuus, and Sharp,
S 7KHUH DUH ‡PXOWLSOH VRXUFHV RI SRZHU DQG
p. 7), which have come with globalization and information and communication technology

Critical geopolitics focuses on critiquing geopolitical claims and foreign policy practices.
However, it has been criticised for not going beyond deconstructing mainstream assumptions:
‡There is critique but no positive alternative 6 K D U S p. 361-362). S ^Critical geopolitics did
not seek to develop a theory of how space and politics intersect but was rather concerned with
developing a mode of interrogating and exposing the grounds for knowledge production and of
seeking to analyze the articulation, objectivization and subversion of hegemony Power &
Campbell, 2010, p. 243).

To sum up, critical geopolitics offers some insights into the role of the dominant discourses on
China-Africa in general and China-Ethiopia relations in particular. These include discourses on
Third World solidarity, South-South cooperation, the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence,
efforWV WR UHIRUP WKH SUHYDLOLQJ ZRUOG RUGHU DQG (WK
independence. This critical perspective is particularly important for highlighting suppressed issues
such as human rights, democracy, and labour rights, often overshadowed by the discourse of

development. Although critical geopolitics is relevant to the study, it largely on classical geopolitical theories, and how geopolitical considerations can influence interstate relations. This study considerably relies on a geopolitical perspective. However, since every theory has inherent limitations, geopolitics is by no means sufficient to explain Ethio-China relations. As discussed in the aforementioned sections and subsections, geopolitics considers geography as its analytical core. Though this by no means implies geopolitics is limited to geographic factors only as it also considers human factors (Park, 2023), there is still a need to see other explanatory factors of interstate relations, which is where the significance of International Relations (IR) theories comes in. Combining the non-geographic factors that IR theories emphasis such as soft power, complex interdependence, absolute and relative gains, identity and interest, and capitalism with the geographically embedded factors of geopolitics gives a comprehensive understanding of international relations, including Ethio-China relations. These factors are not completely outside the view of geopolitics, but they are not its primary focus. Therefore, the use of IR theories offsets the limitations of geopolitics in adequately explaining interstate relations, in the same way that geopolitics fills the incompleteness of IR that emanates from its failure to properly deal with territorially embedded factors (Cherkaoui, 2022).

This subsection, therefore, also deals with the main IR theories underpinning international relations and geopolitical competition in the HoA in general and Ethiopia in particular. Accordingly, Realism, Liberalism, Constructivism, and Marxism are discussed.

2.4. International Relations Theories

2.4.1. Realism

The intellectual origin of realism dates back to the works of Thucydides, Niccolò Machiavelli, and Thomas Hobbes. The contemporary realist theory in the field of IR emerged partly as a critique of the failure of idealist prescriptions to preserve peace following the end of WWI (Rourke, 2008). This is true in The Twenty Years' Crisis, 1919-1939 (1939) and Hans J.

Morge Q W K P Politics Among Nations 7 K H \ E H O L H Y H X Q O L N H O L E H U D
international relations are a struggle for power and dominance.

How do realists see the international system? Realists argue that the international system is anarchic and conflictual. Anarchy means the absence of a world orderer or world government. There is no higher authority above the state to enforce laws and regulate the behaviour of states. In the absence of a neutral arbiter of conflicting interests and 911 to call in times of emergency, states rely on their own power to achieve their interests and ensure their survival (Rourke, 2008; Mearsheimer, 2001). This is what realists call a self-help system. Realists disregard the role of international law, institutions, and regimes in preventing war and ensuring state security (Islam, 7 K H \ Y L H Z L Q W H U Q D W L R Q D O U H O D W L R Q V K H U H ‡ D Q D W L R
L Q W H U H V W V ¶ F O D V R K O G Q G L W R U D H V F O D V L) Owing to this, realists S
perceive the international system as a Darwinian world where only the fittest can survive (Rourke, 2008). As Mearsheimer (2001, p. 30) noted, ‡ V W D W H V D U H S R W H Q W L D O O \ G D
D O W K R X J K V R P H V W D W H V K D Y H P R U H P L O L W D U \ P L J K W W K
This, according to Walt (2022), compels states to worry about their security and compete for power. Hence, the overriding goal of the state in this dangerous, country-eat-country world is security or survival. W K D W L V D F K L H Y H G R Q O \ E \ R Q H ¶ V R Z Q P H D Q V
G H I L Q H G ‡ P D L Q O \ L Q W H U P V R I Z K D W H Y H U I Q K D Q F H V R U S U
P L O L W D U \ D Q G H F R Q R P L F S R Z H U · 5 R X U N H 5 H D O L V W V
constraints in pursuing these interests. Morgenthau argues that the cardinal virtues of political ethics do not preclude evil actions (Jackson & Sørensen, 2013). Political leaders can engage in spying, lying, cheating, stealing, conspiring, and so on if the situation demands so (Jackson & 6 ¡ U H Q V H Q 7 K L V L V E H F D X V H K ‡ L W S Z R U V G R E H D V H C K H L V
p. 33). Thus, the international system is inherently conflictual.

What is the underlying cause of the conflictual nature of the international system? This takes us to the two broad categories of realism: classical realism and neorealism. They all agree that th international system is a conflictual and tragic environment. However, they disagree on the underlying causes of the tragedy. Classical realists believe that the conflicts in the international system are attributable to flawed human nature. Accordingly, they are referred to as human nature
U H D O L V W V $ F F R U G L Q J W R 0 - R U J H Q W K D X V ‡ K X P D Q V Z H U H V H

H D V L O \ U H V X O W L Q D J J U H V V L R Q (p. 40). He, therefore, maintains that conflicts in the international system are the projections of the bad nature of human beings. In a word, Classical realists believe that the reason why states need power is found in human nature (Mearsheimer, 2013). Classical realists argue that because human nature is unchangeable, the international system inevitably remains conflictual. Neorealists, namely Kenneth Waltz and John Mearsheimer, on the other hand, argue that the underlying cause of war is not human nature but the anarchical structure of the international system. They are also called structural realists. Mearsheimer (2013, p. 6) asserts that the anarchic

P D L Q W D L Q V W K D W ‡ , W L V W K H V W U X F W X U H V \ V W H P W K D W I R U F H V V W D W H V z (2001, p. 232) asserts that the anarchic

L P L O D H Q Y L U R Q P H Q W L V ‡ D S H U P L V V L Y H R U X Q G H U O \ L Q J F D X V H R

on the fact that there is no chance of escaping conflict because classical realists believe that human nature is immutable, and neorealists are sceptical about the ability of interdependence or international organisations to promote cooperation (Rourke, 2008). Simply put, both believe that world government is unachievable. This study relies on realism in general as they share many aspects.

How likely is cooperation among states? States do not have equal power. Great powers dominate the tragic, competitive world. The weakest come to an alliance to withstand the challenge of the stronger. This is a balance of power. Realism

W V P D L Q W D L Q W K D W ‡ E D O D Q F L Q J S R I R U P R I F R R S H U D W L R Q (Islam, 2009, p. 7). W H V D U J X H W K D W ‡ V W D W

condition of anarchy that compels them to seek and to balance power to ensure their survival and

V H F X U L W \ , 2017, p. 7). It is possible to ensure power equilibrium in world politics through,

D P R Q J R W K H U W K L Q J V ‡ E X L O G L Q J X S \ R X U R Z Q V W U H Q J W K R S S R Q H Q W V · , p. 22). Hence, the argument that the international system is a self-help system does not preclude the possibility of cooperation or alliance. However, cooperation is difficult to achieve and much more difficult to sustain because states remain concerned with relative gains and the risk of cheating by other parties (Mearsheimer, 2001). According to Walt

V X F K F R R S H U D W L R Q F D Q E H H Q G X U L Q J D Q G H I I H F W L Y H V S H F L D O O \ ‡ S H U F H S W L R Q V R I I R U F R P H R Q L V K U V H D W V · H U W W

states is short-lived, need-based and is subject to

F K D Q J H R Y H U W L P H (p. 862). Unlike liberals and constructivists, they disregard the role of institutions in promoting cooperation because they are a reflection of state interests.

Ultimately, the discussions made above boil down to the importance of power. Power is the currency of international relations. What constitutes power for realists, then? Since they are preoccupied with the desperate need of states for power, security, and survival, realists believe that military might is the most important power resource in world politics (Keohane & Nye, 1987). Mearsheimer defines power in military terms; however, he argues that latent powers such as wealth and the size of the population are the foundations of military power. A state without wealth and a huge population cannot have a giant military power and thus be a great power. This argument is of paying immense military power. This is the reason why the US is striving to contain Chinese economic engagement in Africa. Also, among the various types of power, namely sea power, strategic a U S R Z H U O D Q G S R Z H U D Q G Q X F O H D U the dominant form of military power in the mode Z R U O G · 0 H D U V, p. 83). This goes L Q O L Q H Z L W K 0 D F N L Q G H U ¶ V K H D U W O D Q G W K H R U \

The question of how much power is enough takes us to the two strands of neorealism: defensive realism and offensive realism) R U G H I H Q V L Y H U H D O L V W V X U L W D W H U µS (Heywood, 2011, p. 61). This means in the anarchic international system, the state should maximise its power to ensure its security and survival. Waltz is a defensive realist. He argues that it is possible to ensure one's security and survival without dominating the world. He maintains that ‡ H [F H V V L Y H S R Z H U L V F R X Q W H U S U R G D W H V · (Jackson & Sørensen, 2013, p. 84). The amount of power the state accumulates should be commensurate with what is needed for its security and survival. Put differently, power should be neither too little nor too much, rather, K H D G Y L V H V W K H V W D W H W R S R V V H V V (Waltz, 1990, p35).

For offensive realists, the primary motivation of states is the acquisition of power (Heywood, 2011). Mearsheimer is an offensive realist. As already indicated above, Mearsheimer (2001, p. 2) outlines the following basic assumptions about international politics: 1) there is no central authority that sits above states and can protect them from each other, 2) states always have some offensive military capability, and 3) states can never be certain about other states' intentions. Based on these assumptions, he argues that the interest of the states is not limited to security and survival; they also seek global hegemony (Jackson & Sørensen, 2013). D U J X H V W K D W ‡ W K H L U to be the hegemon W K D W L V W K H R Q O \ J U H D W S R Z H U, 2001, p. 2) because

‡KHJHPRQ\ LV WKH EHVW ZD\ IRU DQU YLYDWH WR JXDUDQWH
+RZHYHU ‡WKHRSOEDLJHMRUL J, and thus only regional hegemony is possible
(Jackson & Sørensen, 2013, p. 384). The only successful regional hegemon in modern history is the
US. Regional hegemons do not want to see any peer competitors in any other regions of the world.
This is exactly what the US has been doing in Europe and East Asia. Mearsheimer (2022) reiterates
that the real cause of the Ukraine crisis is the West QRWDEO\ WKH 86¶V PRYH WR LQ
into NATO to make the balance of power in its favour so that it can contain Russia. This is due to
WKH IDFW WKDW ‡WKH LGHDO VLWXDWLRQ IRU DQ\ JUHDW
ZRUOG· 0HDUVKHLPHU 42). To this end, states try to increase their share of world power
and change the balance of power to their advantage using various strategies, including economic,
GLSORPDWLF DQG PLOLWDU\ RQHV 0HDUVKHLPHU)
prosperity invariably means greater wealth, which has significant implications for security,
EHFDXVH ZHDOWK LV WKH IRXQGDWLRQ 46). This can perfectly
epitomis H &KLQD¶V DJJUHVVLYH HFRQRPLF HQJDJHPHQW LQ $IU

To sum up, the above discussion shows how interlinked the realist and geopolitical perspectives
are. Hence, I argue that realism considerably explains the Ethiopia-China relations like the
geopolitical theories. The geopolitical rivalry between the West and China in the HoA is a struggle
over power and dominance. They compete to ally with regional states to change the power balance
in their favour. Ethiopia has been the preferred linchpin in the region, especially by the
:HVW 86 IRU VWDELOLW\ DQG VHFXULW\ h7KHLH &KLQ
SDUW RI WKH IRUPHU¶V VWUDWHJ\ WR FRQWDLQ WKH SRZH
ascendance in the sub-region, the continent, and beyond. Its economic engagement can also be
intended to accumulate wealth that, when necessary, will be converted into military power so that
it can realise its ambition for world power.

2.4.2. Liberalism

The intellectual roots of liberalism go back to the thinking of Montesquieu, Immanuel Kant, and
Woodrow Wilson, among others. Liberal thinking predominantly underpinned the discipline of
IR, which was established out of the ashes of WWI to suggest mechanisms to prevent a similar
catastrophe in the future. The theory gained predominance in the interwar period. Realism took
the ascendancy due to the outbreak of WWII and the Cold War. In the 1970s and 1980s, liberalism

re-emerged in a neoliberal form. Post-Cold War developments also enhanced the liberal arguments on international relations and the possibility of achieving cooperative arrangements.

Liberals have a positive view towards human nature. Human beings are good and capable of achieving progress. They argue that individuals act badly because of bad or corrupt social institutions (Mingst et al., 2017). Individuals have mutual interests, or their competing interests complement one another (Heywood, 2011). Because individuals are rational, they are capable of achieving mutually beneficial cooperation both domestically and internationally (Jackson & Sørensen, 2013). The same is the case with states by extension. Owing to this, liberals believe that conflict is not inevitable. Liberals agree WKDW WKH LQWHUQDWLRQDO V\VWHP I assumption that international politics is always a struggle for power and dominance, and therefore inherently conflictual.

Why do states cooperate in an environment of anarchy? Liberals, particularly neoliberals who emerged in the 1970s and 1980s, argue that although competition among sovereign nations in anarchic systems can lead to violence, achieving cooperation is not as difficult as realists claim. Liberals have three basic arguments about how states cooperate under anarchy. First, free trade creates economic interdependence so that conflict becomes mutually destructive. The benefits of trade outweigh those of military competition (Kauppi and Viotti, 2020). Otherwise put, a free-market economy creates common interests so that states need each other's peace and prosperity for their benefit, and waging war will be very expensive and disastrous for all of them. Only cooperation ensures mutual advantage. An imbalanced gain, such as a trade imbalance, does not DIIHFW FRRSHUDWLRQ RU FDXVH FRQOLFW DV WKDW HV IRF this contrasts with realists' argument that trade imbalance and the ensuing asymmetric interdependence create conflict as VWDWHV IRFXV RQ µUHODWLYH JDLQ¶ ’HPLU\RO .HRK µFRPSOH[LQWHUGHSHQGHQFH¶ ZKLFK PHDQV LQWHUGHSH climate change, development and poverty reduction, and human rights (Heywood, 2011). Complex LQWHUGHSHQGHQFH PHDQV ‡FRXQWULHV DUH WLHG WRJH VRFLDO DQG RWKHU H[FKDQJHV WKDW ERWK LQFUH Wukkel, 2008, p. 24). Second, democracies never go to war against each other; war occurs out of the autocratic nature of the regime. If they go to war, it is in the form of self-defence against aggression from illiberal or authoritarian states (Miller, 2009; Kauppi and Viotti, 2020). They do not fight against

one another because they interact on the basis of democratic principles such as compromise, the rule of law, and respect for human rights. For liberals, since governments act with the consent of the people and people are inherently peace-loving, the likelihood of war remains limited. This, however, does not seem to be workable for the Ethio-China case, given their long-established authoritarian tendencies. Third, international organizations (IRQV FDQ DOVR KHOS FUHDW inter QDWLRQDO V\VWHP·65) + States can design their foreign policy in conformity with international institutions, international regimes, and ethical standards. Neoliberals argue that institutions are important in creating mutual understanding (information exchange) and reducing transaction costs (Jervis, 1999). Institutions have an independent impact on the behaviour of states and thus promote cooperation and mitigate the conflictual effect of anarchy.

Though optimistic about peace and cooperation in an anarchic environment, liberals did not preclude the significance of power in international politics. Keohane & Nye (2012) noted that to argue that military force is obsolete and economic interdependence benign is to commit grav HUURUV 7KH\ DUJXH WKDW ‡SRZHU« UHPDLQV (Keohane & Nye, 2012, p.5). And they have a broader understanding of power. They are not limited to military power, unlike realists, but rather advocate for soft power. For Nye (2023; 1990), soft SRZHU LV DV JRRG DV KDUG SRZHU %\ VRIW SRZHU KH PHD \RX ZDQW· 1\H RUS‡&R soft power is the ability of a country to structure a situation so that other countries develop preferences or define their interests in ways consistent ZLWK LWV RZQ· 1\H +H DUJXHV WKDW ‡SRZHU LV E and less tangible (Nye, 1990, p.167). Cultural attraction, ideology, economic performance, and international institutions are ingredients of soft power. For instance, the fact that China has lifted 800 million people out of poverty in just four decades attracts many countries. Miller (2009) calls WKLV VWUDQG RI OLEHUDOLVP ZKLFK DVVHUWV OLEHUDOLVP and a free PDUNHW HFRQRP\ IRU ZRUOG SHDFH 12 ,Q\H OLEH on the other hand, allows for the spread of liberal ideas through military force/hard power. Note that in this study, power is used in its broader conception to include soft power.

To conclude, some tenets of liberal theory can be applied to China-Ethio relations, especially the principle of free trade and the ensuing interdependence. I argue that China and Ethiopia are politically and economically interdependent, though the degree of dependence may differ.

Inas PXFK DV &KLQD LV (WKLRSLD¶V ODUJHVW WUDGLQJ SD
LQYHVWPHQW (WKLRSLD LV FRQVLGHUHG LQWHUQDWLRQDO D
in the sub-region and a gateway to (and a diplomatic hub of) the continent. It follows that if either of them provokes conflict, the result is disastrous for both of them, though it may be to different degrees. This can be one explanation for their cordial relations. &KLQD¶V V reflected in its ideology and remarkable economic performance. +HOSV H[SODLQ (WKLRSL attraction to China compared to the West, which relies primarily on coercive power, as well as &KLQD¶V involvement in Ethiopia.

2.4.3. Social Constructivism

Social constructivism is one of the contemporary theories that emerged as a challenge to mainstream IR theories, namely realism and liberalism. It is the most influential post-positivist approach to international theory, gaining greater attention since the end of the Cold War (Heywood, 2011). Unlike realists and liberals, as the name indicates, social constructivism argues that the social world is socially constructed. 7KH \DUJXH WKDW WKLV±SHY LV\RFLDO DWLRQ 2UOD Q G,Lp 156). Social reality has no objective, independent existence outside our NQRZOHGJH RI LW -DFNVRQ 6¡UHQVHQ 7KH LQWHUQD LW LV D KXPDQ LQYHQWLRQ (Jackson & Sørensen, 2013, p. 209). As a result, Constructivists advise the study of international relations to emphasi‡LGHDV DQG EHOLHIV WKDW DQG ‡WKH VKDUHG XQGHUVWDQGLQJV EHWZHHQ S construFWLYLVWV IRFXV RQ WKH ‡LQWHUSODY RI LQWHUHVWV FXOWXUH DQG LQVWLWXWLRQV (Steans et al., 2010). However, they dis SROL nothing to be taken as pre-given, thereby contrasting with the mainstream IR theories that have a positivist ontological stand.

Constructivism takes the middle ground between those structure and agent-centred theories (Steans et al., 2010). Structuralists such as Neorealists focus on the structure of the international system, Marxists on the world capitalist system, and Liberals on the complex web of economic interdependence to explain the behaviour of states (Heywood, 2011). In contrast, agency-centred theories, such as classical realism, emphasise that states are the primary actors pursuing self interest, while liberals focus on whether states are democratic or authoritarian (Heywood, 2011). Constructivism instead acknowledges the flaws in such dichotomy and argues that structure and

agency are mutually conditioned. They influence one another. Agents/actors (individuals, groups, and social structures, including states) create structures (treaties, laws, international organisations, and other aspects of the international system), and structures in turn influence the actions and behaviours of agents (Rourke, 2007). Unlike realists who argue that international organisations and international laws are the instruments of the powerful states and play no significant role in regulating states and advancing mutual benefit and cooperation, constructivists argue that they can play an important pacifying role in international politics. Constructivists argue that international institutions not only regulate the behaviour of the state but also create the identity of the states, which K L Q W X U Q G H I L Q H V W K H V W D W H V ¶ S U H I H U H Q F H V D Q G I capable of exercising power over states. As I indicated above, institutions themselves can also be created and modified by states. Unlike structure and agency focused theories, constructivists claim W K D W ‡ L Q W H U D F W L R Q V E H W Z H H Q D J H Q W V L G H D W L R Q V I D mediated E\ µL G H D W L R Q V I D (beliefs, values, theories) Q G D V V X P S W L R Q V · 72 H \ Z R R G S

Constructivists agree with realism and liberalism on the anarchic nature of the international system. However, they differ on the effect/nature of anarchy. For neorealists, anarchy is inherently conflictual and self-help, while constructivists argue that there is nothing to be taken as given. Anarchy is neither necessarily conflictual nor cooperative (Weber, 2001). Alexander Wendt argues W K D W ‡ $ Q D U F K D W L H V Z K D W H R I L 395). The effects of anarchy depend on how the states behave towards each other or what the states do. What the state is, in turn, dependent on the identity and interests of the states. Thus, Constructivists challenge the neorealists' L G H D W-help and competitive power politics are simply given exogenously by the structure of W K H V W D W H V \ V W H 396). : H Q G W S

Identity is very important for constructivists in international and domestic politics to ensure a degree of predictability and order (Hopf, 1998). Hopf (1998, p. 175) underlined such importance, V D \ L Q J W K D W ‡ $ Z R U O G Z L W K R X W L G H Q W L W L H V L V D Z R U O G X Q F H U W D L Q W \ D Z R U O G P X F K P R U H G D Q W H U R X V W K D Q W \ D Q D L P S O L H V L W V S U H I H U H Q F H V D Q G I R Q V · Hopf, 1998, p. 175). This shows that if you know the identity of actors in international politics, you can possibly know their interests and attendant actions, thereby helping you adjust yourself and act accordingly. Wendt (1992, pp. 397-398) P D L Q W D L Q V W K D W ‡ S H R S O H D F W W R Z D U G R E M H F W W L Q F O X of the meanings that

WKH REMHFWV KDYH IRU, oWhsw-state 7ikDs tlowDtes L-oQnstLruV\ WKH 86 KDV LGHQWLILHG &KLQD DV WKH µQXPEHU RQH VH identity, it is working tooth and nail to contain the influence of China. Contrary to neorealists and neoliberals who argue that states have a given self-LQWHUHVWHG LGHQWLW\ RU interests of agents as H[RJHQRXVO\ JLYHQ · 392), constructivists argue that identities are socially constructed and are changeable, therefore, the interests and behaviours of actors as well as the effects of anarchy also change.

Like neorealism and neoliberalism, constructivism believes in the importance of power in world politics +RZHYHU XQOLNH QHRUHDOLVP¶V DQG QHROLEHUDO capability, economic and other resources), constructivism believes in the significance of both PDWHULDO DQG GLVFXUVLYH SRZHU PHDQLQJ LGHDV DQG SRZHU ODQJXDJH DQG 7KH\ DUJXH WKDW ‡,GHDV WKXV GHILQH W (Jackson & Sørensen, 2013, p.) RU LQVWDQFH ‡µ %UL WLVK QXF threatening to the United States than 5 North Korea QXFOHDU ZHDSRQV ¶ EHFDXVH friends and the North Koreans are QRW ¶ -DFNVRQ 6 ØUHQVHQ 2013, p. 212). He also adduces how the Chinese ideology has influenced many African countries. This, of course, somehow FRQFRUGV ZLWK tion of power. WKH ¶V QR

7KH IDFW WKDW &KLQD LGHQWLILHV LWVHOI ZLWK $IULFDQ SDUWLFLSDWH LQ µWKH VFUDPEOH IRU $IULFD¶ EXW UDWKH D UHDVRQ IRU &KLQD¶V relations with many African countries, including Ethiopia. The reiteration that its relationship with Africa is based on mutual benefit, mutual respect, respect of sovereignty, and noninterference, among others, also plays an important role. On account of these IDFWRUV , DUJXH WKDW PDQ\ $IULFDQ FRXQWULHV KDYH D RSSRVHG WR µSDWURQ¶ ZKLFK ZRUNV IRU WKH :HVW ,Q R µIULHQGV¶ WKDW D µIRH¶ WR $IULFDQV 7KH PHDQLQJ DQG influence the way they behave towards one another. Therefore, these characters can tell something about the Eth-China higher-tier relationship.

2.4.4. Marxist Political Economy

Political economy denotes the interplay between economics and politics. International Political Economy (IPE) specifically delves into the examination of how economic interests and political processes interact to shape government policies (Oatley, 2010). The political economy perspective H P H U J H G D V ‡ D F U L W L T X H R I W K H Y L H Z W K D W H F R Q R P L F V R W K H U · & K D Q G K R N H 15). This is because treating economics and politics as distinct and independent disciplines results in an inadequate comprehension of the social world (Chandhoke, 1994). Various theories offer diverse explanations of the connection between politics and economics. One such theory is Marxism, which this section focuses on.

Political economy was established as an independent science by William Petty and later developed by Adam Smith and David Ricardo (Otani, 2018). The subject matter of these classical political H F R Q R P L V W V Z D V W K H F D S L W D O L V W P R G H R I S U R G X F W L R Q 5). Liberals advocate for a free market perfect form of V R F L D O S U R G X F W L R Q · 2 W D Q L S 5). Marxists reject this argument, D V V H U W L Q J W K D W F D S L W D O L V P ‡ V H U D V V H U W L Q J W K D W F D S L W D O L V P ‡ V H U D Q R W K H U F O D V V · & K D Q G K R N H 19). The system perpetuates wealth disparity, with the rich getting richer and the poor getting poorer. Those who own the means of production exploit those who live by selling their labour by paying the latter less than the value their labour generates and forcing them to work extended hours in hostile working conditions. It creates inherently irreconcilable class interests. Marx, therefore, understands capital O L V P ‡ Q R W D V benevolent, but as anarchic, crisis-prone, and subject to a unique trajectory R I G H Y H O R S P H Q W (Patnaik, 2002, p64). He, however, considered capitalism a necessary stage that cannot be skipped. It provides the material and social base to move to the next and last stage of human history, which is communism (Lim, 2014). Like all its preceding stages, capitalism carries the seeds of its own destruction, destined to be overthrown by revolutionary proletariats.

Marxian political economy understands the connection between economics and politics in that the economically dominant class also dominates politics. Otherwise put, the dominant class becomes the ruling class. As opposed to realism and liberalism, Marxists argue that the basic actors in the international system are classes (Buecker, 2003 Q R W V W D W H V Z K L F K P H U H O \ ‡ H L Q W H U H V W V (Lim, 2014 S13). The state acts as an agent of the capitalist class (Oatley, R U ‡ D Q D J H Q W R I F O D V V R S S U H V V L R Q Q R W D V D Q H

(Heywood, 2003). Large corporations, therefore, determine how states should make foreign policy decisions. All the policies and strategies the state formulates are designed to serve the interests of the capitalist class. Q G W R S H U S H W X D W H W K H F D S L W D O L V W \ V W H P illustrates their view of the connection between economics and politics. According to Marx, the Base (means of production) conditions the Structure (political system, legal system, culture, etc.) (Hobden and Jones, 2005; Buecker, 2003+ H D U J X H G W K D W ‡W K H L Q I U D V W U X of society) and the division of labor would determine the superstructure and the behavior of classes and states (Buecker, 2003, p. 52). The Superstructure also maintains and legitimizes the Base (Lim, 2014). Accordingly, interstate conflict arises from class conflict rather than the realists' conception of the anarchic structure of the international system (Buecker, 2003). Otherwise put, M D U [L V W V E H O L H Y H L Q ‡W K H S U H S R Q G H U D Q F H R I H F R Q R P contrast to realists who emphasize W K H ‡V W U X J J O H I R U V H (Buecker, 2003, Q G P L G p. 55).

Capitalism is not limited to a domestic level and is inherently conflictual. Marxists posit that the international system is exploitative, drawing parallels between how capitalists exploit domestic labour and how affluent countries exploit less prosperous ones in the global economic system (Oatley, 2010). Capitalist states engage in conflicts with each other due to their intense drive for profit (Walt, 1998). Patnaik (2002) aptly affirmed this by stating that capitalism operates as a Darwinian system, where large capitalists drive out smaller ones (Patnaik, 2002). Luxemburg contended that, driven by the pursuit of profit, capitalism would seek to eliminate any barriers to interactions and aim to "conquer the whole earth for its market" (Heywood, 2011, p. 68). Lenin applied 0 D U [L V P W R L Q W H U Q D W L R Q D O F D S L W D O L V P ZKHUH FDSLWDOLVW QDWLRQV H[SORLW WKH QDW (Newmann, 2016, p. 18). This exploitation was evident in his work Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism Z K H U H / H Q L Q D V V R F L D W H G W K H P D M R U F D S L W D O L in Africa and Asia, among others (Heywood, 2011). Capitalism's constant need for raw materials and markets inevitably leads to international conflict. Unlike Marx, who argued that a U H Y R O X W L R Q D U \ R Y H U W K U R Z R I F D S L W D O L V P ZRXOG GV QDW / H Q L Q D U J X H G L W Z R X OR G Q K D DS S H Q \ W L P H D Q 1 9 H Z P D Q Q S

The transnational character of capitalism was also further developed by neo-Marxists to explain global poverty and inequality (Heywood, 2011). They associate uneven development across the

world with the exploitative global capitalist system. For instance, Dependency theory claims that advanced capitalist states exploit the less developed states and get richer by making unholy alliances with the ruling class in the latter (Walt, 1998). Advanced capitalist countries export expensive manufactured goods and import cheap raw materials, while developing ones do the opposite, placing them in a disadvantageous position (Hobden and Jones, 2005; Newmann, 2016). The system generates development for developed countries and underdevelopment and poverty IRU GHYHORSLQJ FRXQWULHV -DFNVRQ DQG 6¡UHQVHQ capitalism is evil. It is because capitalism needs to be more regulated so it will be more MXWW-nn, 2016, p. 19). Put otherwise, dependency theory aims to reform capitalism rather than overthrow it (Newmann, 2016). Dependency theory, therefore, emerged to defend the less developed countries by severely limiting their relations to the capitalist world market (Jackson and Sørensen, 2013). World-systems theorist Wallerstein similarly argues that the capitalist world economy is characterised by unequal exchange, transferring economic surplus from the periphery to the core (Jackson and Sørensen, 2013). Thus KH DGYRFDWHV IRU ‡D SROLW promote a new world system that is more equitable and just than the current QW RQH · +REGHQ Jones, 2005, p. 146). Although neo-Marxists accept the liberal view of the state as an arbiter, they still assert that WWKH VWDWH ‡-Term interests of capitalism and therefore perpetuates a system of unexQ DO FODVV SRZHU · 81). H\ZRRG S

Though Marx did not explicitly address issues of international relations and foreign policy formulations, it is possible to infer some implications pertinent to the subject under investigation. Marxists, therefore, maintain that international events such as wars, treaties, and international aid operations result from the global capitalist system (Hobden and Jones, 2005), which works to the advantage of advanced countries. Marxist theories argue that the effects of global capitalism are to ensure that the powerful and wealthy continue to prosper, at the expense of the powerless and the poor (Hobden and Jones, 2005, p. 7 KLV VXJJHVWV WKDW &KLQD¶V UH is an exploitative relationship that serves the Chinese interest at the expense of Ethiopia. This may be the case, as Dependency theory argues, by making unholy alliances with political elites in (WKLRSLD ZKR DGYDQFH WKHLU SULYDWH LQWHUHVWV % engagement in the HoA/Ethiopia can be intended to drive out Western capitalists in the sub-region DQG HQVXUH &KLQHVH FDSLWDOLVWV¶ FRQWLQXHG SURILW sation. In a word, the intrusive nature of capitalism has influenced the Ethio-China relations.

To conclude the aforementioned conceptual and theoretical discussions, it is obvious that no single theory adequately explains a given phenomenon. Similarly, it is difficult to get a single theory tailored to address my research questions. Accordingly, I employ a hybrid of tenets of the aforementioned theories and concepts. An eclectic approach that incorporates useful insights (as outlined in Matrix 1 below) from each of these (Geopolitical and IR) theories best explains how and why Ethio-China relations have reached the current level. Each theory addresses different aspects of this study. However, realism and geopolitical theories and concepts largely underpin the study, while other theories substantiate them.

2.5. Analytical framework

Based on the above-discussed theories, I came up with the following analytical framework. The following matrix shows the Geopolitical and IR theories and their respective insights on the possible factors affecting Ethio-China relations. For the sake of convenience, I just merged the Geopolitical theories and concepts and put them in one category/column in the matrix below because they have a great deal of resemblance in their essence, unlike the IR theories.

Accordingly, the second column in the matrix (Geopolitical Considerations) illustrates how geographically embedded factors make Ethiopia geopolitically significant for China in achieving its foreign policy objectives: China's relationship with Ethiopia, the diplomatic center of Africa, facilitates access and influence across the continent; Ethiopia's central position in the HoA enables China to reach and engage with surrounding countries effectively; Ethiopia's military capabilities help China stabilize the HoA, ensuring a secure environment for conducting business; the realization of the GERD reinforces China's investments and power projection in the region; (WKLRSLD¶V YDVW SRSXODWLRQ FUHDWHV D VXEVWDQWLDO growing economy necessitates and permits increased Chinese engagement, serving as a model for China's broader influence in Africa; China's membership in the UNSC assists Ethiopia in resisting Western pressures; the emergence of China as an alternative source of support to Ethiopia.

The third column in WKH PDWUL[5HDOLVP KLJKOLJKWV KRZ &K competition with the West makes Ethiopia, an anchor state in the region, an important ally. This indicates that: the Ethio-&KLQD UHODWLRQVKLS LV LQIOXHQFHG E\ & the anarchic international system; China seeks to tip the balance of power in the Horn of Africa in LWV IDYRU DQG LWV UHODWLRQVKLS ZLWK (WKLRSLD LV S

driven by a desire to counter Western influence in Ethiopia, the HoA, and the broader African FRQWLQHQW (WKLRSLD¶V VWUDWHJLF SRVLWLRQ HQDEOHV power.

The fourth column (Liberalism) illustrates how complex interdependence and China's soft power compel a positive relationship between Ethiopia and China. The complex interdependence between China and Ethiopia fosters friendship; China's soft power attracts Ethiopia; their pursuit of absolute gains, despite having asymmetric relations, promotes bilateral relations.

The fifth column (Constructivism) shows how China's identity creates a positive view among African countries, including Ethiopia. It demonstrates how the identities that Ethiopia and China attribute to each other influence their relationship; Ethiopia's view of China as a 'Partner' rather than a 'Patron,' or as a 'Friend' rather than a 'Foe,' fosters amicable relations; China's self-identification as a Third-World country like Ethiopia positively contributes to their bilateral relations; China's discursive power attracts Ethiopia.

The sixth column (Marxist political economy) shows how the global capitalist economy brought China to Ethiopia. It highlights how the global capitalist economy increased China's need for markets and resources in Africa; Chinese capitalists' drive for profit led them to Ethiopia; the Ethio-China relationship is influenced by Chinese capitalists' desire to outcompete Western capitalists in Ethiopia and the HoA; Chinese capitalists have allied with Ethiopian elites to exploit local resources; this relationship involves elements of exploitation.

However, the following categorisation of theories by no means seeks to draw a strict distinction between geopolitical and IR theories. They all complement each other, especially Rosen and classical geopolitical considerations, in that the former advises states to maximise their power to survive in the anarchic system, while the latter shares this idea and shows geographical features that maximise state power and help ensure survival and attain world dominance. By so doing, they DOO VXSSRUW WKH VWXG\ ZKLFK FRQVLGHUV &KLQD¶V HQ region and Ethiopia as an aspect of its broader project of countering the West and projecting its power and influence in the sub-region, the continent, and beyond. The table also indicates the implications of China-Ethio relations to the HoA.

Matrix 1: Analytical framework

Assumptions	Geopolitical considerations	International Relations Theories			
		Realism	Liberalism	Constructivism	Marxist political economy
Possible factors affecting Ethio-China relations	x & K L Q D ¶ V U H O D W L R (the diplomatic hub of Africa) help it access and influence the continent x Ethiopia's position (at the heart o the HoA) helps Chi na reach the surrounding countries x (W K L R S L D ¶ V P L O L W China to stabilise the HoA and do business x The realisation of the Nile River/GERD project reinforces & K L Q D ¶ V L Q Y H V W P projection in the area x (W K L R S L D ¶ V K X J H S creates a huge market for Chines products x (W K L R S L D ¶ V U D S L G economy requires/allows Chines engagement and can be a good P R G H O I R U & K L Q D ¶ Africa. x All the geopolitical assets of Ethiopia help China in the East West rivalry in the HoA/Africa. x & K L Q D ¶ V 8 1 6 & P H P Ethiopia defend against Western pressures. x The emergence of China as an alternative source of support attracts Ethiopia	x Ethio-China relation has to G R Z L W K & K L Q D ¶ power in the anarchic system. x Ethio-China relation has to G R Z L W K & K L Q D ¶ making the balance of powe in the HoA in its favour x Ethio-China relations can be G U L Y H Q E \ & K L Q containing the Western influence in Ethiopia/ HoA/Africa. x Ethiopia can contribute to & K L Q D ¶ V D V S L U hegemony given its strategic position.	x The complex interdependence between China and Ethiopia promotes friendship x & K L Q D ¶ V V attracts Ethiopia. x Their need for absolute gain though they have asymmetric relations promotes amicable relations	x The identity that Ethiopia and China attribute to each other influences their relations x The fact that Ethiopia views China as a µ3 D U W Q H U µ3 D W U R Q ¶ 2 U D V D , µ) U L H µ) R H ¶ contributes to their amicable relations. x The fact that China identifies itself as a Third-World country like Ethiopia positively contributes to their bilateral relation. x & K L Q D ¶ V ¶ L V F power attracts Ethiopia.	x The global capitalist economy enhanced & K L Q D ¶ V Q H markets and resources in Africa. x & K L Q H V H F D drive for profit brought China to Ethiopia. x Ethio-China relation has to do with the & K L Q H V H F D desire to drive out Western capitalists in Ethiopia/HoA. x Ethio-China relation has to do with & K L Q H V H F D alliance with Ethiopian elites to exploit resources in the latter

The Relevance of Ethio-China Relations to the Horn of Africa	x Partnering with Ethiopia can help China influence the HoA.	x & K L Q D ¶ V S U H V H U H G X F H V W K H : H manipulation of states in the sub-region. x Other great powers can brin various incentives to win the hearts of the states in the sub-region. x Oversecuritization of the sub-region due to the great S R Z H U V ¶ L Q O X H Q F H.	x Ethio-China engagement in infrastructural facilities can promote economic integration among states, which in turn can bring peace to the sub-region	x Chinese norms and ideology diffusion to the HoA x China influences the identity, preferences, and behaviours of state in the HoA.	x Exploitation

Source: Developed by the Author

2.6. Conclusion

To conclude the aforementioned conceptual and theoretical discussions, it is obvious that no single theory adequately explains a given phenomenon. Similarly, it is difficult to get a single theory tailored to address my research questions. Accordingly, I employ a hybrid of the aforementioned theories and concepts. An eclectic approach that incorporates useful insights from each of these (Geopolitical and IR) theories best explains how and why Ethio-China relations have reached the current level. However, realism and classical geopolitical theories and concepts largely underpin the study, while other theories substantiate them. Geopolitics and realism have a lot in common in terms of their ontological assumptions and analytical characteristics (Criekemans, 2022, p. 103). Similarly, Wu (2018, p. 790) articulated that classical geopoliticians, notably Mahan, Mackinder, and Spykman, share the same WKHRUHWLFDO DVVXPSWLRQV ZLWK PDLQVWUHDP UHDOLVP XQLW RI DQDO\VLV DQG SRZHU SROLWLFV· +HQFH KH DUJXHG WKDW realism based on the influence of the natural environments defined by geography and WHFKQRORJ\· 79X). Gökmen (2010) also argues exactly the same thing. They are highly interrelated and complement each other. While realism advises states to maximize their power to survive in the anarchic system, classical geopolitics shares this idea and shows geographical features that maximize state power and help ensure survival and attain world GRPLQDQFH %\ VR GRLQJ WKH\ VXSSRUW WKH VWXG\ Z sub-region and Ethiopia as an aspect of its broader project of countering the West and projecting its power and influence in the sub-region, the continent, and beyond.

Chapter Three: The Historical Development of Ethio-China Relations in the Context of the Horn of Africa

3.1. Introduction

This chapter explores the historical development of Ethio-China relations, focusing specifically on the periods of Haile Selassie's reign and the Derg regime. The analysis is framed within the broader geopolitical context of the Cold War, highlighting the involvement of great powers in Africa, particularly in the Horn of Africa (HoA). The role of the United States and the Soviet Union is central to understanding how their relationships with China and Ethiopia shaped Ethio-China relations. The study also situates Ethiopia-China relations within the broader context of China's engagement with Africa and the HoA. The first part examines Ethio-China relations during the imperial era, analyzing both the pre-diplomatic and diplomatic phases, with particular attention to the factors that delayed and eventually facilitated formal diplomatic ties. The second part discusses the trajectory of Ethio-China relations during the Derg regime, focusing on the factors that led to initially cordial relations, their subsequent deterioration, and the eventual revitalization of bilateral ties. The last part presents the conclusion.

3.2. Ethio-China Relations during the Imperial Era

3.2.1. Pre-diplomatic interactions (until 1970)

To comprehend the historical evolution of Ethio-China relations, it is essential to consider a broader context by examining the relations between Africa and China, as well as the geopolitical factors that influence them. The precise origins of Africa-China and China Ethiopia connections remain unclear in many sources. However, historical evidence suggests that China-Africa relations have deep historical origins, dating back to the remote successive Chinese dynasties in ancient times. Reports indicate that there were interactions as early as the B.C. era. For example, around 166 BC, the Roman emperor, who was ruling Egypt at the time, presented gifts to the Han emperor, some of which originated from Northeast Africa (Shinn and Eisenman, 2012). During the reign of the Egyptian Queen Cleopatra (51-30 BC), she was also reported to have worn silks that likely originated in China (Shinn and Eisenman, 2012). Adem (2012) also notes that during the Song Dynasty (960-1276), there was maritime trade with Ethiopia, characterized by the Axumite civilizations at that time. Ethiopia exported animals, including rhinoceros, to China, while China's principal export to Ethiopia was green tea, which is still consumed by Ethiopians today (Venkataraman and Gamora, 2009). Additionally, there was some degree of linguistic resemblance observed between Ge'ez and

Hough Chih, the respective languages of Ethiopia and China at the time (Gamora and Mathews, 2010). These historical instances highlight the exchange of goods as the earliest form of contact between China and Africa. Connecting various regions, Horn and East Africa played an LPPHQVH UROH LQ KHOSLQJ ‡VSUHDG WHFKQRORJLFDO L influences" (Ylönen, 2020, p. 3). However, these historical interactions were mainly indirect, facilitated by Arab merchants (Alden and Alves, 2008).

The historical Sino-Africa/HoA relationship reached its climax in the first quarter of the fifteenth century during the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644) (Alden and Alves, 2008; Shinn, 2019; % H V D G D 2 ¶ % U L J K W 7 K H the advanced shipbuilding technology W D W H G the time, allowing the renowned Admiral Zheng He to visit the East African coast, including Mogadishu, Brava, Juba, and Malindi (the former three in present-day Somalia, the latter in Kenya) (Jinyuan, 1984). Zheng He commanded three of the seven maritime expeditions, F R P P R Q O \ N Q R Z Q D V W U H D V X U H Y R \ D J H V < O | Q H Q (W K L R S L D Z H U H I U H T X H Q W O \ Y L V L W H G E \ & K L Q H V H P H U F K & K L Q D ¶ V U H O D W L R Q V Z L W K (W K L R S G ‡ D K L V W R U L F H Y H Q E H W Z H H Q W K H & R Q I X F L D Q F X O W X U D O F L U F O H D Q G W K H & Admiral Zheng He, on behalf of the Chinese government, established contact with local kings in East Africa, who reciprocated by sending official envoys to China with gifts, including animals and traditional goods (Jinyuan, 1984; Alden and Alves, 2008). This era saw an exchange of Chinese goods with African local products (Jinyuan, 1984). Contrary to Europeans, the Chinese respected and traded with Africa, not trying to enslave, colonize, or proselytize them (Alden, 2008), though some could argue otherwise. Some maintained that these continuous expeditions were aimed mainly at consolidating the Yongle Emperor's G R P L Q D W L Q J W K H , Q G L D Q 2 F H D Q P D U L W L P H W U D G H D Q G V \ V W H P < O | Q H Q , W L V I X U W K H U V W D W H G W K D W Y R political and cultural hegemony by forcing foreign rulers to become S D U W R I 0 L Q J ’ \ Q D Z R U O G R U G H U · < O | Q H Q S ’ H V L W H W K L V S X U S R recorded in China treating Africa in general and Ethiopia, in particular, the way colonial powers treated it. In any case, the aforementioned Sino-Africa/HoA interactions, particularly those between China and Ethiopia, came to an abrupt end for two fundamental reasons: 1) a change in Ming court policy forbidding any overseas contact due to, inter alia, an internal power struggle and 2) the European incursions into both Asia and Africa (Jinyuan, 1984; Alden and Alves, 2008).

The Qing Dynasty (1644-1911), the last Chinese dynasty, followed a closed-door policy that was later shattered by British imperialism (the Opium Wars) in the 19th century, which SDYHG WKH ZD\ IRU WKH LPSHULDOLVWV ‡WR KDYH D IUHH SHRSOH· -LQ\XDQ The French and British brought Chinese labourers to Mauritius, Madagascar, and the Reunion during the 19th century to work on plantations (Jinyuan, 1984). The White colonialists also imported from 70,000 to 100,000 Chinese labourers to South Africa in the early 20th century to work in mining (Jinyuan, 1984). This made Chinese and Africans share a common fate, both being victims of colonialism. Despite a large number of Chinese in Africa, especially in South Africa, there were no official, direct China-Africa relations during the Qing Dynasty. Official contacts became private, and direct trade became indirect ones. Ethiopia is no exception; it lacked official, direct relations with China.

A revolution erupted in 1911, resulting in the establishment of the Republic of China (ROC) LQ &KLQD¶V 52&¶V UHODWLRQV ZLWK $IULFD IURP $ ILL-Following to its internal turmoil and the Japanese invasion (Alden and Alves, 2008). Following the -DSDQHVH LQYDVLRQ RI 0DQFKXULD LQ WKH 52& FRQ LQYDVLRQ &RPPXQLVW XSULVLQJ Office of the Historian, 2017). Ever LQ VXUU since its establishment in 1921, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) had been in intermittent FRQIOLFW ZLWK WKH 1DWLRQDOLVW *RYHUQPHQW ZKLFK war ally and as the sole option for prevent LQJ &RPPXQLVW FRQWURO Office of the RI &KL Historian, 2017). The conflict escalated into a full-scale, costly civil war after the end of World War II (Office of the Historian, 2017), making the country too busy to have a direct relationship with Africa/HoA. Therefore, Zheng He's 15th-century trip to Africa for trade and diplomatic objectives remained the sole direct contact with Africa until 1949 (Alden and Alves, 2008). This holds true for Ethiopia as well. However, Ethiopia and China supported each other politically on the international stage due to the common threat of external invasions they both faced. China vehemently opposed the Italian invasion of Ethiopia (1936-1946) (Shinn, 2014; Venkataraman and Gamora, 2009; Gamora and Mathews, 2010), saying 'the cruel threat towards them is an indirect threat towards us' (Venkataraman and Gamora, 2009, p. 11). In UHWXUQ (WKLRSLD EDFNHG WKH 52&¶V FODLP WR EH D Gamora, 2009; Gamora and Mathews, 2010).

The civil war in China concluded with Mao Zedong's declaration of the establishment of the People's Republic of China (PRC) in 1949, leading to Chiang Kai-shek and his Kuomintang

party being confined to Taiwan, with both claiming legitimate authority over the entirety of China. However, during this period, PRC's relations with Africa remained negligible as the new regime focused on consolidating its power, while many African countries were still under European colonization (Shinn, 2019). Those independent states—Ethiopia, Liberia, South Africa, and Egypt—were all pro-West, with Ethiopia and South Africa positioned against China during the Korean War. Besides, South Africa had a racist policy, and Egypt had no interest (Jinyuan, 1984). Ever since 1949, Mao Zedong leaned towards the Soviet Union for ideological (as a manifestation of the solidarity of Chinese and Soviet communist parties) and practical dependence on the Soviet Union as evident in the Sino-Soviet Treaty of Friendship, Alliance, and Mutual Assistance," and China's subsequent relations with African countries, in particular, must be understood within these contexts, including the broader Cold War dynamics and the necessity of African support to counter Western imperialism. This takes us to the first major contact between China and Africa/Ethiopia at the Bandung conference in 1955, held basically to counter Western imperialism.

The first phase of meaningful China-Africa relations started at the 1955 Asian-African Bandung Conference, which was attended by 29 countries, 6 of which were African countries, including Ethiopia. It was the first-ever broader platform where the attendees agreed not to take a side in the Cold War and to make a concerted effort, South-South cooperation, to decolonize the Global South and reform the unjust, West-dominated international order. The conference agenda was: colonialism, imperialism, and the hegemonic position of the Western powers (Uchehara, 2009). China needed to take the leadership role in such anti-imperialism move, and it was cognizant of the imperative to have a strong geopolitical relationship with Africans. China used this platform to start its diplomatic offensive in Africa. Accordingly, in such a historic conference China and African countries agreed on (1) mutual respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity; (2) mutual non-aggression; (3) non-interference in each other's internal affairs; (4) equality and mutual benefit; and (5) peaceful coexistence (Looy, 2006, p. 2). Based on the understanding reached in this conference, China began supporting African countries economically, technically, and militarily in their fight for national liberation. It supported liberation movements in Ghana, Tanzania, Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia, Mozambique, Angola, and Zimbabwe, among others, in various ways (Tull, 2008; Jinyuan, 1984; Shinn, 2019). This was also a move taken by the Soviet

Union, with whom China advanced such an anti-imperialist policy (Alden and Alves, 2008). China also started establishing diplomatic relations with African countries. It established its first diplomatic office in Egypt in 1956, which served for several years as a centre to reach out to the liberation movements on the continent and establish relations with other newly liberated countries such as Morocco (R $ O J H U L D 7 X Q L V L D D Q G 6 X G D Q 6 K L Q Q 2017). China intensified its relations with newly independent African countries and fought against the West, notably US imperialism, in the subsequent years.

Ethiopia was a participant in this historic conference and adherent of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM). Venkataraman and Gamora (2009) state that the conference was attended by Yilmaa Deressa of Ethiopia (Ambassador in Washington). Adem (2012), however, indicated that it is Endalkachew (Z 0 H N R Q H Q L Q W K H 0 R) $ Z K R P H W & K L Q D at Bandung and exchanged gifts. Hess and Aidoo (2015), on the other hand, wrote that Haile Selassie represented the country. Be that as it may, the event marked the first major meeting of the two countries, leading to numerous subsequent visits. In 1956, a Chinese cultural delegation visited Ethiopia. This visit marked the initiation of people-to-people cultural exchanges, which later evolved into a trade relationship the following year (Shinn, 2014). During their stay for more than two weeks, they carried out many performances in the presence of high-ranking (W K L R S L D Q R I I L F L D O V D Q G R W K H U F R X Q W U L H V ¶ G L S O R P D carried out despite Ethiopia still having ties with Taiwan. Up until 1958, Ethiopia favoured 7 D L Z D Q ¶ V S R V L W L R Q L Q U N W K H United Nations (UN). However, in 1959, it abstained, and subsequently, it supported Beijing (Adem, 2012; Shinn, 2014). Since 1960, Ethiopia has been R Q H R I W K H V W U R Q J V X S S R U W H U N R I & K L Q D ¶ V admission to the UN, together with Albania and Cambodia (Xiaoguang, 2014). By 1961, Ethiopia sent its cultural mission to Beijing for three weeks of performance. Accordingly, these performances took place in China's major cities, including Beijing, Shanghai, Hangzhou, and others (Xiaoguang, 2014). This cultural exchange was soon followed by an exchange of journalists. Representatives from the Ethiopian (F R Q R P L F 5 H Y L H Z D Q G (W K L R S L D Q + H U D O G Y L V L W H G & K official news agency (Xinhua) visited Ethiopia, establishing an office in Addis Ababa (Xiaoguang, 2014; Shinn, 2014).

Moreover, the conference paved the way for a Chinese delegation led by Prime Minister Zhou Enlai in 1964 to visit several African countries, including Ethiopia. The purpose was to V W U H Q J W K H Q & K L Q D ¶ V U H O D W L R Q V Z L W K $ I U L F D Q F R X Q W African voices in international platforms, including its quest for admission to the UN (Shinn,

2014; Venkataraman and Gamora, 2009). Prime Minister Zhou Enlai visited Ethiopia; however, he was invited to Asmara, not Addis Ababa, and was received by Prime Minister Aklilu Habte-Wold instead of the Emperor himself (Adem, 2012). Tesfaye (2018) associated WKLV ZLWK (WKLRSLD¶V SHUFHLYHG PLOLWDU\ VXSSRUW DW WKH 8 1 1RWZLWKVWDQGLQJ &KLQD DW DUP¶V OHQJWK partners in their struggle to liberate African countries from Western imperialists (Tirusew, 2022). Ethiopia's independent role in the fight for the liberation of fellow Africans, and its resultant position as the diplomatic capital of Africa (Organization of African Unity, OAU) are among the factors that attracted China, despite ideological differences and the absence of warm diplomatic relationship. This also highlights Haile Selassie's skill in playing one great power against another and underscores that China's engagement with Africa was driven not only by ideological but also by geopolitical imperatives.

Despite the aforementioned exchange of visits and evolving relations, in the 1950s and 1960s, there was no formal Ethio-China diplomatic relation, mainly due to various interrelated factors associated with Cold War politics. Therefore, discussing those factors for the absence and eventual establishment of formal diplomatic relations helps show the dynamics of Sino-Ethiopian relations. There are several interrelated factors. The primary reason for the delay in GLSORPDWLF UHODWLRQV Z DQG (WKLRSLD¶V WUDQVLWLRQV Z was Ethiopia a close ally to the US? During this period, Emperor Haile Selassie had external and internal challenges compelling him to seek a powerful international protector (Clapham, 1999; Keller, 1987). Although Britain restored the Emperor to his position in 1941 by helping evict Italian forces, Haile Selassie, suspicious of British dominance in Ethiopia and the surrounding countries, turned to the US as a powerful international ally (Hess and Aidoo, 2015; Keller, 1987). In addition, the need for political support over issues such as Eritrea and Ogaden was also a crucial factor drawing Haile Selassie to the US (Shinn, 2018). These calls for support DJDLQVW LQWHUQDO DQG H[WHUQDO WKUHDWV Z presence in the geopolitically significant HoA (Keller, 1987). As a result, the US responded SRVLWLYHO\ DQG H[WHQGHG LWV SROLWLFDO VXSSRUW federation with Ethiopia, which happened in 1952. With the US¶ decision to withdraw of British military support in 1952 (Keller, 1987), the year 1953 marked a watershed in US-Ethiopia relations when they signed two basic agreements on Mutual Defense Assistance and WKH HVWDEOLVKPHQW RI WKH %LG¶V station in Eritrea to closely observe Eastern Europe and the Middle East (Schwab, 1978; Tekle, 1989; Chaliad, 1978). This

VWUDWHJLF SRVLWLRQLQJ LQ WKH +R$ FRXQWU\ ZDV DJD
(Venkataram DQ DQG *DPRUD 7KH 86¶V FRQVLGHUDEOH P
played an indispensable role in stifling opposition groups (Schwab, 1978; Chaliad, 1978;
Keller, 1987). Mengistu Haile Mariam, who later participated in toppling the Emperor along
wLWK RWKHUV ZDV WUDLQHG LQ WKH 86 IRU PRQWKV
WKH 86 ZDV VR VWURQJ WKDW E\ RI WKH ODWWHU¶
Aidoo, 2015). According to Tesfaye (2018, p. 271), the US responded to the famine in Ethiopia
E\ ‡VSHQGLQJ RYHU PLOOLRQ DQG GHOLYHULQJ RYHU
his part, "wanted to appear to be a champion of freedom and anticommunism" (Keller, 1987,
p. 83) by aligning with the US on various international issues, as demonstrated below, in an
effort to win the hearts and minds of the West, particularly the US. China did not welcome
Ethiopia's strong relationship with the US, as the US was actively containing the spread of
communism and providing military and diplomatic support to Taiwan during its conflict with
the PRC over strategic islands in the 1950s. Consequently, China considered Ethiopia
HQHP\¶V IULHQG DV ZHOO DV LWV LGHRORJLFDO DQWDJRQ

The second factor is much related to the first one, which is the Korean War (1950-1953), where
China and Ethiopia stood on the opposite side supporting North Korea and South Korea,
respectively. Ethiopia sent military contingents in 1951 to the Korean War, involving direct hostility
WLHV EHWZHHQ WKH 8QLWHG 6WDWHV DQG &
&KLQD ORVW D WRWDO RI VROGLHUV -LH (W
DORQJVLGH WKH $PHULFDQ WURRSV WR FRQWDLQ FRPPXQ
the US, EHVLGHV LWV DGKHUHQFH WR WKH SULQFLSOH RI FR
non-1$72 PHPEHU LQ WKH XSURDQL:QJ WKH 86¶V HIIRUW WR
*HWDFKHZ S ZKLFK SDUWO\ H[SODLQV +DLOH 6
the hearts and minds of the US and garner its support in dealing with his internal and external challenges
discussed above. This divergent positioning in international affairs also happened in the Congo
War (1960-1963), where Ethiopia contributed more than 3000 troops to the UN-authorised
intervention to support the newly established government against a separatist group
(Xiaoguang, 2014; Debeche, 1987) that had less direct support from China (Adem, 2012).
$FFRUGLQJ WR *HWDFKHZ S LVXFK WDQJLEO
(WKLRSLD ZDV D GHSHQGDEOH DOO\ DJDLQVW &RPPXQLVW
Ethiopia as aligning with Western imperialists, contributing to the delayed diplomatic relations.
Lejeune (2017, p. 123) has rightly affirmed that the main factor determining the Ethio-China

ELODWHUDO UHODWLRQV KDG EHHQ ‡ERWK VLGHV¶ UHOD
and how they positioned themselves along the principal contradictions in the international
V\VWHP·

Despite China's growing diplomatic engagement with Africa following the Bandung conference, it was also supporting anti-government rebel groups, or so-called revolutionaries, in conservative states like Burundi, Malawi, Kenya, Cameroon, and the Congo, which had resulted in the expulsion of its representatives from many African countries (Zeleza, 2014; Alden and Alves, 2008). In view of this, the third factor for delaying the Eritrean China
GLSORPDWLF UHODWLRQV ZDV &KLQD¶V VXSSRUW RI GLVV
pia, such as the ELF and Somali insurgents. Following the abrogation of the Eritrean federation, the ELF was
HVWDEOLVKHG LQ ZLWK UHOLJLRQ DV DQ LPSRUWDQW
by identifying itself as a Muslim and even Arab
HVLVWDQFH WR WKH &KULVWLD
(Clapham, 1999, p. 89). Accordingly, Muslim countries such as Egypt, South Yemen, Algeria, Syria, and Iraq stood in support of Eritrean fighters (Kendie, 1990). Similarly, China had also provided training and a large number of arms for ELF fighters from 1969 to 1970 (Abir, 1974; Venkataraman and Gamora, 2009; Gamora, and Mathews, 2010; Adem, 2012; Shinn, 2014)
DQG UHSHDWHGO\ DWWDFNHG WKH UHJLPH ‡LRU,VXEMHF
Debeche, 1987, p. 924). Chinese and the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen (PDRY) trained guerrillas, along with substantial quantities of Soviet, Czech, and Chinese light arms, were
URXWHG WKURXJK 6\ULD DQG WKH 3'5< WR (OLWH D VLJ
ideological and operational capacity and extending its control over vast areas (Lyons, 1978; Abir, 1974). In interview with Aaron[1]
FRQILUPHG WKLV QRWLQJ WKDW ‡,W LV
Isias Afeworki had gotten his military training in China and such training was very important in the ideological and military capabilities of the liberation Front (EPLF) in the 1960s and
RQZDUGV·
In his recent meeting with Xi Jinping, Isaias Afwerki underscored the immense contribution of Chinese support extended to the struggle of the Eritrean people for independence (CCTV Video News Agency, 2023). China also supported the Arab ruling
JRYHUQPHQW LQ .KDUWRXP ZKLFK KRVWHG WKH (/) WR
Ethiopia reciprocated by supporting the southern Sudanese separatist group (Shinn, 2014). Besides supporting the ELF, China also assisted the Western Somalia Liberation Front (WSLF)

[1] ,¶P JUDWHIXO WR $DURQ 7HVID\H $VVRFLDWH 3URIHVVR
University, for the exchange of views on this matter during an email interview on October 27, 2024.

(Abir, 1974), which had long sought to join Somalia, thereby realizing the Greater Somalia project, a development that put Ethiopia and Somalia at odds. Apart from these subversive DFWLYLWLHV &KLQD¶V FDOO IRU SHRSOH DOO RYHU WKH create fertile ground to have strong diplomatic relations with the Ethiopian monarchy. Hence, WKH GHHSHQLQJ RI &KLQD¶V UHODWLRQ VKLP with such dissident groups (Adem, 2012), coupled with (PSHURU +DLOH 6HODVVLH¶V IHDU WKDW 0DRLVW GRFWUL urban poor, thereby intensifying uprisings (Hess and Aidoo, 2015), hindered the establishment of Ethio-China diplomatic relations.

The fourth factor for the absence of formal relations was Ethiopia's preference for the Japanese model of modernization over the Chinese one. China had the aspiration to introduce its Revolutionary Model (Venkataraman and Gamora, 2009), which Haile Selassie was reluctant to accept, instead longing for the Western model of modernization, and from Asia, for the Japanese model (Adem, 2012). Emperor Haile Selassie was inspired by the Japanese model, which was designed to preserve the traditional system and thus the ruling elite while importing Western science and technology (Kebede, 1997). This inclination towards Japanese modernization can be traced back to the efforts of Haile Selassie's predecessors, including Emperor Tewodros and Emperor Menelik, who similarly sought to modernize while retaining traditional elements (Kebede, 1997). Emperor Haile Selassie was more enthusiastic about the history of Japan, which, like Ethiopia, has a long history of dynastic rule, victory over the Western powers, the unity of the political and the religious, hierarchical authority, traditional type of patriotism (Kebede, 1997). China, on the other hand, was viewed as "Other" for ideological and historical reasons (Adem, 2012b, p. 144). Japan's model was reform-based modernization, while China's is a revolutionary approach, which entails a radical change in the entire system. Haile Selassie, who oversaw a traditional, feudal society, was worried that Chinese diplomats would disseminate this revolutionary communist ideology throughout his nation (Garoma and Mathews, 2010). Hence, he was rather fascinated with Japan, as evidenced by his 1931 first modern written constitution and his historic visit to postwar Japan in 1956, which made him the first African head of state to do so. The fact that Ethiopia scaled up its relationship with Japan to an ambassadorial level in 1958 also underscored its preference for Japan and, at the same time, ZDV ‡D GLVJUDFH IRU &KLQHVH LQWHU DGYHUVDUL (Duang, 2014, p. 36). Hence, the lack of interest on the part of Ethiopia to adopt the Chinese model was another obstacle delaying their diplomatic relations.

Fifthly, China established diplomatic relations with Egypt, a historical adversary of Ethiopia. Egypt was the first African country with which China established diplomatic relations, serving as a central hub to engage with other newly independent countries and liberation movements. For this, China provided an aid commitment of US$4.7 million in 1956 (Fernando, 2007). The strong relationship with Egypt, a country that supported Ethiopian insurgent groups such as the (/) 6RPDOLD¶V LUUHGHQWLVP DQG FODLPHG KLVWRULF U the sluggish development of formal diplomatic relations between Ethiopia and China (Adem, 2012).

3.2.2. Diplomatic relations (1970-1974)

For the reasons mentioned above, official contacts between Ethiopia and China were established in the absence of diplomatic relations. They formalized their contacts an established diplomatic relations long after many other African countries, in 1970. They established their formal diplomatic relations at an ambassadorial level. Accordingly, China appointed Yu Peiwen as its first ambassador to Ethiopia, while Ethiopia reciprocated by appointing Makonnen Kibret as its first ambassador to China. The development of their relations to a diplomatic level can be attributed to several interrelated factors. The first, and perhaps the most important, factor is the détente between the US and China (Venkataraman and Gamora, 2009). Due to the Soviet-China border dispute and the US's concerns about Soviet expansion in Asia, the US began normalizing its relations with China, prompting Emperor Haile Selassie to follow suit (Tesfaye, 2018). In an interview (2024), Aaron QRWHG WKDW ‡ opportunity improved during the Sino-Soviet split over a border issue, making it smooth for &KLQD DQG (WKLRSLD WR HVWDEOLVK GLSORPDWLF UHOD On China's part, the UDSSURFKHPHQW ZLWK WKH 86 ZDV DOVR LQWHQGHG WR attack, gain recognition of the legitimacy of the PRC, and ease the eventual reunification of Taiwan with China (Panda, 1997). The Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia on August 20, 1968, SOD\HG D GHFLVLYH UROH LQ VKDUSHQLQJ &KLQD¶V FULW its policy toward the US, inclining toward rapprochement (Panda, 1997). This illustrates that ‡ERWK FRXQWULHV KDG VWDUWHG Viewing each other in geopolitical/strategic rather than ideological WHUPV· 3DQGD S *LYHQ WKH VXEVWDQWLDO DV quashing rebels, it was hard to imagine Ethiopia having a strong relationship with the US' rival, communist China. This time, however, with the US-China rapprochement, Ethiopia was no longer hindered by the fear of offending the former as it approached the latter. This fact

underscores how dependent Ethio-China relations were on the prevailing 8KLQD DQG (WKLRS
relations with superpowers.

7KH VHFRQG IDFWRU FORVHO\ WLHG WR WKH ILUVW LV
8QLRQ¶V LQIOXHQFH LQ WKH +R$ DQG DGMDFHQW ZDWHU
To counter Western powers, the Soviet Union was expanding to the strategic locations of the Red Sea, the Gulf of Aden, and the HoA. In the HoA, the Soviet Union was strongly involved in Somalia, where it had strategic strongholds. In return, the Soviet Union provided significant support to Somalia, contributing to the buildup of one of the largest armies in Africa, particularly after Siyad Barre came to power in 1969 with a socialist ideology. The Soviet Union also helped Somalis in advancing the project of establishing Greater Somalia. Given the
UDSSURFKHPHQW ZLWK WKH 86 &KLQD¶V PDLQ FRQFHUQ
the Soviet Union as the leader of imperialism, with whom it had already started hostility in the 1960s over competition for influence on the developing world (Yuan et al., 2022) and fought actual combat along their common border in 1969. China strived to contain Soviet
H[SDQVLRQLVP DQG OHDG WKH ZRUOG VRFLDOLVW UHYR
diplomatic relations with Ethiopia was QINHG WR FRXQWHULQJ WKH 6RYLHW
HoA and projecting its own ascendance. The coming of China to counter the Soviet Union was
DOLJQHG ZLWK (WKLRSLD¶V LQWHUHVWV DV ZHOO (PSHU
growing association with Somalia, a country antagonistic to Ethiopia, especially following Siad
%DUUH¶V DFFHVVLRQ WR SRZHU Debeche, 1987). Somalia had long been supporting the WSLF and inciting nationalist sentiment among the Oromo and Afar people, exacerbating social and
SROLWLFDO XQUHVW LQ V (WKLRSLD =iKR tN 7
supports Somalia was also in Ethiopia's interest.

&KLQD¶V UHODWLRQVKLS ZLWK $IULFD ZDV SUHGRPLQDQW
factor for establishing JGLSORPDWLF UHODWLRQV LV (WKLRSLD¶V SR
(Abir, 1974; Venkataraman and Gamora, 2009), which can help China achieve its foreign policy objectives, such as fighting imperialism, gaining admission to the UN, and reunifying Taiwan. Ethiopia was never colonised and hence considered the symbol of African independence. Ethiopia has also served as a diplomatic hub, hosting continental and international organizations such as the OAU since 1963 and the ECA since 1958. Besides hosting these important institutions, Haile Selassie was also a prominent figure in African as well as world affairs (Tekle, 1989). He had an immense role in supporting the liberation of African countries through providing military training, as well as a diplomatic voice to the

voiceless on international platforms. Therefore, the country had immense diplomatic clout emanating from its independence, geopolitical positioning, as well as its prominent leader (this geopolitical significance will be discussed in great detail in Chapter Four). This attracted China to have diplomatic relations with Ethiopia. Considering such geopolitical significance, Debeche U L J K W O \ V W D W H G W K D W & K L Q D ¶ V U H O D W L R Q V Z support China received to join the UN from conservative and anti-communist African states. This assessment appears justified, considering the number of countries that established diplomatic relations with China between the formalization of Sino-Ethiopian relations and & K L Q D ¶ V D G Dmission to the UN† five countries in just one H \ H D U $ V $ D U R Q For Q R V China, Ethiopia was key to Africa, as it was a founding member of the OAU, and a relationship with it provided access to the organization and to votes in the UN at the height of Cold War. · By 1971, African countries provided the PRC with 34 per cent of UN votes to replace Taiwan (Shinn, 2019), which is 26 votes out of the 76 favourable votes (Gamora and Mathews, 2010). The role they played was acknowledged by Mao Zedong, who V D L G ‡ , W L V R X U $ E U R W K H U V Z K R K D Y H F D U U L H G X V L Q W R W K H 8 1 - interest in 6 K L Q Q normalizing its relations with China also helped the latter join the UN. In a nutshell, Ethiopia was a pivotal African state, attracting China to decide to have formal relations.

Fourthly, the pledge for mutual support for territorial integrity helped them establish formal relations. Both Ethiopia and China faced challenges from separatists. In China, separatists had de facto seceded, while in Ethiopia, separatists were actively striving for secession with support from various countries, including China. With this shared concern in mind, Ethiopia backed the "One China Policy" and urged China to reciprocate, a move that, according to Venkataraman and Gamora (2009) and Adem (2012), played a pivotal role in the establishment R I G L S O R P D W L F U H O D W L R Q V (W K L R S L D V R X J K W W R V H H to reciprocate regarding Eritrea and Ogaden. This is affirmed by Debeche (1987) that one of W K H I D F W R U V E H K L Q G (W K L R S L D ¶ V V X S S R U W I R U & K L Q D ¶ Z L W K G U D Z L W V V X S S R U W W R W K H (/) D Q G U H V S H F W (W Ethiopia's decision to recognize the PRC in 1970, China moved to withdrawing its backing for the ELF and leveraging its influence within the PDRY to the same effect (Abir, 1974). The Taiwan issue remains a constant determining I D F W R U L Q & K L Q D ¶ V U H O D W L R Q V including Ethiopia. All diplomatic ties and assistance were contingent upon the recipient F R X Q W U \ ¶ V Z L O O L Q J Q H V V W R U H M H F W 7 D L Z D Q ¶ V V R Y H U H

mainland China. Ethiopia and China, therefore, forged diplomatic relations with the pledge of refraining I U R P V X S S R U W L Q J H D F K R W K H U ¶ V V H S D U D W L V W V

Moreover, the fifth factor for establishing Ethio-China diplomatic relations was the US (W K L R S L D J U D G X D O G L V W D Q F L Q J D Q G (P S H U R U + D L O H 6 H This emanated basically fro P W K H 8 6 ¶ V F O R V H W L H V Z L W K (W K L R S L D ¶ interest in Ethiopia. The US had strong relations with Egypt. Its promise to support the Aswan Dam in Egypt, a country that has long been in dispute with Ethiopia over the Nile River, in 1957 F R Q W U L E X W H G W R (W K L R S L D ¶ V J U D G X D O G L V W D Q F L Communist bloc (Tirusew, 2022). The Emperor was also displeased with the US's support for the unification of British Somaliland and Italian Somalia, which he interpreted as pro-Greater Somali irredentism (Shinn, 2018). Besides cozying up to Ethiopia's foes, the US showed dwindling interest in Ethiopia by reducing aid and attention to Emperor Haile Selassie. This S U R P S W H G W K H (P S H U R U ¶ V Y L V L W to W R Lyons, 1978, p. V H F X U 9). By the late 1960s, the US was also looking for an alternative base for Kagnew (Shinn, (P S H U R U + D L O H 6 H O D V V L H R E V H U Y H G W K D W G X H W search for an alternative base, the communication station in Asmara (Kagnew) would be less useful to the US, diminishing its interest in Ethiopia (Adem, 2012). Hence, Haile Selassie realized that relying only on a single superpower was not a prudent strategy, (Adem, 2012). Eventually, such a gradual distancing and a need for additional external support resulted in the establishment of diplomatic relations with China in 1970.

Furthermore, the sixth factor would be the fact that Haile Selassie was also aware that China was increasingly being welcomed by African countries. A number of African countries had forged diplomatic relations with China. Up until 1970, 15 African countries established diplomatic relations, including East African countries such as Sudan, Kenya, Somalia, Uganda, and Tanzania (Fernando, 2007). Besides, China was generously providing financial support for various development projects in Africa, such as the TAZARA project (Fernando, 2007). The J H Q H U D O D W P R V S K H U H V H H P H G W R I D Y R X U & K L Q D ¶ V G L S the Third World in general. It follows that Emperor Haile Selassie did not want to be left behind and lose his leadership role in Pan-Africanism (Tarekegn, 2024). In essence, aligning with the West while claiming leadership of the African independence struggle is contradictory. This pushing factor, together with the above-V W D W H G J U D G X D O G H F O L Q H , R I W K H forced the Emperor to conclude such a formal diplomatic relationship with China and diversify his international allies and sources of support.

Following the establishment of a diplomatic relationship, Haile Selassie visited China at the invitation of the Chinese government on October 5, 1971. He was received by high RIILFLDOV ZLWK ‡D JUDQG ZHOFRPH (Peking Review, 1971, p. 5). DW WK Chinese officials believed that this historic visit would not only strengthen China-Ethiopia relations but also advance the broader Asian cause of unity against imperialism, colonialism, and neocolonialism (Peking Review, 1971). The New York Times (1971) reported it by saying, ‡7KH YLVLW UHSUHVHQWV D PDMRU PRYH LQ 3HNL E\ HQWHUWDLQLQJ LWV PRVW 7KH SUHPLHU URXVHG EHLQ ‡V,W that in the days ahead China and Ethiopia will cooperate more closely to further the cause of SHDFH DQG SURJUHVV· 3HNLQJ 5HYLHZ S ’XULQ technical, and aid agreements. Based on the agreement, China gave an interest-free loan of $210 million to Ethiopia, the largest loan agreement next only to the TAZARA project agreement. A protocol to this agreement was also signed on 20 February 1973 for the construction of four rural development projects in Ethiopia (Venkataraman and Gamora, 200 7KH SURMHFWV ZHUH ‡D URDG IURP :RGLD WR :RUHWD system for provincial towns, a veterinary station, and eight diesel power stations for the same WRZQV · 7KH\ DUH FODLPHG WR EH Hailed in the country with WFK R Chinese support (Venkataraman and Gamora, 2009).

Following the establishment of diplomatic relations, the improvement of their relations was observed in different ways. Despite being limited in scope, Ethiopia experienced a positive trade balance with China from 1971 to 1973 (Xiaoguang, 2014). During the drought time, China provided Ethiopia with 20,000 tons of maize (Xiudong, 2010). Furthermore, the 1972 aviation agreement for two-way passenger and cargo transportation has played a crucial role in facilitating bilateral economic and political relations (Xiaoguang, 2014). This agreement PDUNHG D PLOHVWRQH DV ‡LW ZDV WKH ILUVW $IULFDQ D 2014, p. 157). An exchange of visits by sports, scholars, and medical teams at different times was carried out. The relationship continued until the mid-1970s of the military regime.

To sum up, from the above discussion, one can deduce that Ethiopia-China relations had been significantly influenced by Cold War politics in general, and by Ethiopia's and China's relations with the US in particular. Ideological as well as geopolitical balance of power arrangements had a significant influence on their bilateral relations. China's efforts to counter the influence of the West/US and later the Soviet Union in Asia, Africa, and HoA had a profound impact on Ethiopia-China relations.

3.3. Ethio-China relations during the Derg regime

3.3.1. Cordial relations (1974-77)

On 12 September 1974, a military regime came to power, bringing the long monarchical system to an end in Ethiopia. The new military regime declared Ethiopia a socialist state on December 20 of the same year, after executing 60 officials of the former regime a month before. Despite the ideological difference, there was no severance of diplomatic relations with the West, notably the US. The regime neither openly opposed the US nor formally commit to socialism (Debeche, 1987). Leading figures of the regime constituted two groups: moderates who were sympathetic to the West and radical socialists. Keller (1987) also notes the regime did not try to alter the foreign policy of the country fundamentally during its initial period, still adhering to the principles of non-alignment. Despite socialist rhetoric, ‡ QRWHG UHDO progress was made in the V W U H Q J W K H Q L Q J R I U H O D W L R Q V Z L W K F R P P X Q L V W p. 296). As a result, the US continued its engagement in Ethiopia and supported the regime for the initial few years until 1977, believing in the possibility of rolling back Soviet influence in Ethiopia (Woodward, 2002). Between 1974 and 1977, the US provided Ethiopia with around $180 million in arms to counterbalance Soviet support to Somalia and to strengthen moderates within the new military regime (Mesfin, 2004). The fact that the US maintained its relations with the new regime had implications for China-Ethiopia relations.

China, also interested in countering the Soviet Union and benefiting from the China-US strategic rapprochement, maintained friendly relations with Ethiopia, sharing the same hope as the US. The military regime was also sympathetic to China, as evident in its congratulatory message to the PRC on the occasion of its 25th Anniversary on October 1, 1974 (Xiaoling, 2010). In fact, Ethio-Soviet relations were not strong enough to undermine the prevailing Sino-Ethiopian relations (Debeche, 1987). China warmly welcomed the military regime's overthrow of the old imperial system, the adoption of socialism, and the introduction of reform programs, particularly land reform. After a brief transition period, China assigned Yang Shouzheng as its Ambassador to Ethiopia, while Ethiopia reciprocated by appointing Ambassador Fantaye Biftu. The diplomatic conversations continued on the possibilities of cooperation on political, economic and military issues. Accordingly, China showed its cooperation with Ethiopia in the agricultural sector (Tesfaye, 2018). It also agreed to renegotiate the economic aid agreement signed with the Haile Selassie regime (Reid, 1976, p. 8). They maintained the ongoing trade

relations, WKRXJK (WKLRSLD¶V H[SRUWV WR &KLQD UHGXFHG from 1974 to 1977, due to turmoil across Ethiopia (Xiaoguang, 2014). Besides, although not comparable with superpowers, during this initial period of the Derg rule, China provided $5 million in military assistance to Ethiopia (Yalew, 2023). The smooth relationship was further evident in, like the previous regime, the exchanges of several visits by students, medical personnel, agricultural experts, and sports teams between Ethiopia and China. Moreover, condolence messages sent to China upon Mao's death in 1976 and the One Hundred Thousand Ethiopian People's demonstration in mourning for Chairman Mao underscored the friendly relations (Xiudong, 2010). Nevertheless, this amicable relationship with both China and the US was short-lived.

3.3.2. Strained relations (1977-1982)

The brevity of Ethio-China and Ethio-US smooth relations can be attributed to internal and external threats that preoccupied the regime since taking power. At that time, Ethiopia faced turmoil due to insurgencies like the Ethiopian Democratic Union (EDU), the Ethiopian 3HRSOH¶V 5HYROXWLRQDU\ 3DUW\ (353 (3/) :6/F) $IDUV There was also an external threat from Somalia. Somalis claimed not only Ogaden but also Djibouti, posing a threat to Ethiopia, given the fact that more than 60 per cent of Ethiopian trade passed through the Port of Djibouti (Mesfin, 2004; Mengistu, 1978). Emperor Haile Selassie had previously urged France to maintain a presence in Djibouti for this reason (Schwab, 1978). With the impression that Ethiopia was in chaos, Somalia launched its attack on Ethiopia on July 23, 1977 (Mengistu, 1978). Due to blockades by these insurgencies in the North, East, South, and South-(DVW ‡WKH FRXQWU\ KDGOLQNHGHFW (Andargachew, 1990, p. 285). In addition to Somalia, regional threats also emanated from Sudan, Egypt, and generally from Arab nations. These countries supported domestic insurgent groups, including those mentioned above, to fulfil their respective objectives, which included gaining control over border territories and the Nile River (Mesfin, 2004). In his address to the people, Lt. Colonel Mengistu Hailemariam pointed out that Sudan had been launching invasions into the Northern and Western parts of Ethiopia, including Tessenei, Om Hager, Nacfa, Afabet, Setit-Humera, Abderafi, and Metema, with support from Arab states and Imperialist forces (Ministry of Information and National Guidance, 1977). With a mutual defence agreement signed, Sudanese and Egyptian troops were deployed to the Ethio-Sudanese border (Ministry of Information and National Guidance, 1977). Accordingly, the foreign policy of the regime was aimed at, inter alia, ensuring internal stability/regime legitimacy and

defending the country from external aggression (Tekle, 1989). Surrounded by internal and external threats, the regime had to build a formidable armed force, leading it to seek VLJQLILFDQW H[WHUQDO VXSSRUW 7KH SUHGLFDPHQW V VXSSRUW WKDQ WKH ROG LPSHULDO RQH· &ODSKDP better bidder.

In the polarized Cold War environment, the UHJLPH FRQWLQXHG WKH LPSHU Alignment foreign policy orientation to garner as much support as possible from multiple powers to withstand these internal and external challenges. Despite the regime's high demand, the US hesitated to provide the required level of support. This reluctance may be attributed to WKH 86¶V SHUFHSWLRQ RI WKH ’HUJ UHJLPH¶V JURZLQJ L diminishing strategic value of the Kagnew base due to satellite development and the establishment of a communications centre in Diego Garcia (Mesfin, 2004). At the beginning of 1975, the Derg regime asked the US for $25 million in arms to prevent Eritrea's secession. However, after extensive policy deliberations within the Departments of State and Defence, the US declined the full request and provided $7 million in aid instead, signalling the beginning of $PHULFDQ¶V UHGXFWLRQ RI its aid program to Ethiopia (Schwab, 1978). Neither was China FDSDEOH RI PHHWLQJ WKH PLOLWDU\ support. China itself was largely dependent on Western support for its own interests in the region. It relied on emphasising the anti-European, anti-U.S. nature of the Soviet campaign in Africa" to encourage the West to counteract Soviet influence in the HoA (Shelton, 1979, p. 84). Unlike the US and China, the Soviet Union's stronger presence in the Horn of Africa, along with its increased access to Red Sea ports following the collapse of South Vietnam in 1975, positioned it favourably for enhanced military support to Ethiopia (Schwab, 1978; Clapham, 1999). By December 1976, the Soviet Union concluded an arms agreement with Ethiopia estimated at $100 million 6KHOWRQ 8665 DGYDQFHG WKH +R$ ‡WR H[HUW the development &KLQHVH LQIOXHQFH LQ WKH DUHD· /\RQ 6RPDOLD DQG WKH 3’5< DOVR ‡VHUYHG DV D ZDUQLQJ WR the US and China were unwilling and unable, respectively, to provide the required level of support marked the beginning of disappointment for the Derg regime.

With the coming to power of Lt. Colonel Mengistu Hailemariam, such friction with the US and China further intensified. In February 1977, Lt. Colonel Mengistu Hailemariam assumed the chairmanship of the Derg by eliminating his rivals, notably moderates like Brigadier General Aman Andom (November 1974) and Brigadier General Teferi Benti (February 3, 1977),

thereby consolidating power in his hands (Mesfin, 2004). General Andom's tiex stemmed from his belief in seeking a negotiated settlement for the Eritrean issue and maintaining relations with the US (Schwab, 1978). On November 13, 1977, Mengistu also executed Atinafu Abate, a key obstacle to Ethiopia's ties with Moscow, thus paving the way for Mengistu to firmly align his country with the Soviet camp (Shelton, 1979). The years 1976 and 1977 were also characterised by the Red Terror waged on the opponents, resulting in the loss of thousands of lives. This centralisation of power by the execution of pro-West individuals and other oppositions at large put Ethiopia at odds with the US and China. As indicated above, their continued support (though not enough) stemmed from the belief that the moderate group within the Derg regime would prevail over the radical ones, but the contrary happened. As a result, the US government announced its decision to further reduce the support it provides to Ethiopia on February 24, 1977 (Mesfin, 2004; Keller, 1987), aligning with the 1975 decision by the Ford administration to limit aid to Ethiopia. This in turn resulted in the Derg regime forcing the US to abandon its Kagnew base and evict its military personnel from Ethiopia in April 1977 & K D O L D G 0 H V I L Q . H O O H U , D J Q H Z ¶ V L P S R E H F D X V H $ P H U L F D ¶ V F R P P X Q L F D W L R Q I D F L O L W L H V R Q ’ L H (Lefebvre, 1992; Shinn, 2018). Eventually, the US suspended its military assistance to the military regime, signifying a rupture in the Eth-US relations. The Soviet Union stepped in to fill the military aid vacuum. In September 1977, it began delivering approximately $385 million worth of arms, including 48 MIG jet fighters, 200-54 and T-55 tanks, several SAM-3 and SAM-7 anti-aircraft missiles, and anti-tank missiles (Schwab, 1978, p. 17). The withdrawal of the US and the entrance of the Soviet Union affected China's relations with Ethiopia because China was aligned with the US in its fight against its number one enemy, the Soviet Union.

As indicated above, China, not being inherently powerful, leveraged its ties with the West/US to counter the Soviets, its immediate number one threat. It is to be recalled that this time, especially the year 1978, marked a new era in China-Africa relations, as China became pragmatic and retreated from Africa, turning its face to the US, Western Europe, and Japan to get access to capital, technology, and experience like what the newly industrialized states namely, Singapore, Taiwan, and South Korea did (Zion, 2018; Alden, 2019; Yuan et al., 2022; Venkataraman and Mebrie, 2015; Taylor, 1998). Especially with the US, an agreement was reached in 1978 requiring the US to sever diplomatic ties with Taiwan and nullify the 1954 mutual defence treaty, whereas China was to resolve the Taiwan issue peacefully and

DFNQRZOHGJH WKH 86¶V ULJKW WR VHOO DUPV WR 7DLZD this remarkable agreement, they established full diplomatic relations in 1979, and the US agreed to grant China's Most Favored Nation (MFN) status, expert-import bank credits, and LQYHVWPHQW JXDUDQWHHV DPRQJ RWKHUV, notably 6XWWHU the US, were further strengthened by the deteriorating Soviet-China relations, with the former invading Afghanistan in late December 1979. It follows that due to its close ties with and deep reliance on the Western powers/US, China followed a path similar to that of the US as regards its relations with Ethiopia. Consequently, its relationship with Ethiopia underwent considerable strain, particularly during the period from 1977 to 1982. As an illustration of this, in the 1970s and 1980s, China offered only minimal foreign aid to Ethiopia, primarily in the form of emergency food assistance, with the majority channelled through multilateral organisations like UN agencies (Broich, 2017). The radical-leftist military government of the Mengistu regime, which replaced reform-minded military personnel, considered China an ally of a reactionary West (Shinn, 2014). Hence, Mengistu took aggressive measures against China, including the closure of the New China News Agency (NCNA) office in Addis Ababa, accusing it of broadcasting adversarial news against Ethiopia.

Alliance configuration changed in the HoA. Dissatisfied with the Soviet Union's growing relations with Ethiopia, Somalia terminated its ties with the USSR in November 1977, leading to the expulsion of Soviet and Cuban advisors and the withdrawal of Soviet access to strategic naval facilities in Berbera (Chaliad, 1978; Schwab, 1978). China regarded this move as daring due to its view of the USSR as the main danger to world peace, a social-imperialist or social-colonialist power (Lyons, 1978; Shelton, 1979). Consequently, both China and the US shifted their support to Somalia, notably in its fight against Ethiopia in the Ogaden War (1977-78), which was a costly war that concluded with the defeat of Somalia. In an interview with AFRICA magazine /W &RORQHO 0HQJLVWX +DLOHPDULDP QRWHG WK members of her regular army were busy destroying railway lines, bridges, industrial HVWDEOLVKPHQWV IDUPV VHWWOHPHQW SURMHFWV DQ Mengistu, 1978, p. 13). ’HVSLWH WKLV &KLQD VWDWHG WKDW LW VWDQGV ‡ILUPO WR VDIHJXDUG QDWLRQDO LQGHSHQGHQFH DQG VWDWH V p. 18). Accordingly, it was reported that China developed a warm relationship with Somalia and provided the latter with military and economic assistance to fight against Ethiopia, by and extension, &KLQD¶V HQHP\ WKH 6RYLHW 8QLRQ 7KLV IRUFH consolidate its relations with Ethiopia and provide rapid and large-scale support to help

(WKLRSLD ZLWKVWDQG 6RPDOLD¶V SUHVVXUH %HWZHHQ
support provided to Ethiopia amounted to around $13 billion (Photius.com, n.d). This support was hiJKO\ LQVWUXPHQWDO LQ (WKLRSLD¶V YLFWRU\ RYHU Hailemariam expressed his gratitude in an interview with Boris Asoyan, a Nova Times correspondent, stating, "The Ethiopian people thank the Soviet Union for its staunch suppor and militant solidarity" (Mengistu, 1979, p. 15). A decade later, he reaffirmed this sentiment in an interview with John Anderwood for the British Television Company Channel Four, saying, "The Soviet Union has given us all-round help and support at a critical time when we were threatened both by external aggression and by internal secession" (Mengistu, 1989, p. 21).

On the contrary, Lt. Colonel Mengistu Hailemariam expressed his discontent with China's, together with international imperialists, collaboration with Ethiopia's internal insurgencies and H[WHUQDO DGYHUVDULHV &KLQD¶V VXSSRUW ZDV QRW O $UDE FRXQWULHV DQG ORFDO LQVXUJHQFLHV 2QH FDQ D DIUFUDI Wto Egypt in 1979 (Wren, 1979), which was another adversary of Ethiopia supporting its external threats (Sudan, Somalia) and internal insurgents, further souring Ethio China relations. Besides, in his speech at the 4th Anniversary of the Ethiopian Revolutio Colonel Mengistu noted "When a few reactionary Arab regimes claimed the Red Sea to be an ‡$UDE /DNH· DV D SUHWH[W IRU WULJJHULQJ RII KRVWLOL China fully supported that conspiracy" (Ministry of Information and National Guidance, 1978a, p. 21). He added, "China trains mercenaries and separatists who infiltrate from neighbouring countries and fight against us. She arms them as well" (Ministry of Information and National Guidance, 1978a, p. 22). China participation destabilizing Ethiopia by "arming the so-called EPRP and separatists in collusion with the CIA" (Ministry of Information and National Guidance, 1978a, p. 21) or the US, which also suspended the supply of arms that Ethiopia had paid for, mirroring its and its allies' actions during the Italian invasion in 1931 when an arms embargo was imposed on Ethiopia, rendering it defenceless (Ministry of Information and National Guidance, 1978b). Mengistu's accusation against China extends beyond its actions against Ethiopia; he vehemently denounces China's activities worldwide as reactionary, anti-people, and pro-invasion and massacre. This was evident in the tens of thousands of Ethiopians who marched to the Chinese Embassy in Addis Ababa on February 21, 197 protesting Chinese aggression against Vietnam (Xiudong, 2010). This clearly shows how deteriorated Ethio-China as well as Ethio-US relations were. However, despite the political tensions, they continued to maintain diplomatic and trade relations.

We can understand that &KLQD¶V VXSSRUW RI 6RPDOLD GXULQJ WKH 2JDGHQ ZDU along with its backing of other surrounding adversarial Arab countries and internal insurgencies, reflects the extent of the deterioration in Ethio-China relations, short of severing diplomatic ties. The above discussion also illustrates how the geopolitical significance of HoA countries invited foreign interference and thus perplexed the situation in the region.

3.3.3. Revitalized cordial relations (1983-1991)

Once again, the Cold War politics, together with other local compelling factors, brought Ethio-China relations back to normal. Despite the aforementioned normalization of China-US relations, they did not agree on the issue of Taiwan. 6DOH RI $5 :LWK &KLQD¶V right to sell arms to Taiwan. This was later aggravated by U6¶ failure to honour its commitments to extend EXIM credits and ease technology transfer restrictions, coupled with &KLQD¶V PRXQWLQJ JHRSROLWLFDO DQG HFRQRPLF WLHV ZLWK 7DLZDQ (Chen and Hammond, 1986). This strained their rapprochement. The USSR seized the Sino-US friction in 1981 as an opportunity to initiate the improvement of its relations with China. The goal was to restore Soviet influence on China and encourage China to distance itself further from the US or, at the very least, "reestablish a more balanced Sino-Soviet-US triangular relationship" (Director of Central Intelligence 1984, p. 13). The USSR took this initiative in mid-1982. In response, China had watered down the tone of its criticism of the USSR. China's shift in rhetoric can be attributed to two factors: 1) the Sino-US friction in 1981 and 1982 raised suspicions in China that the US might not be willing to make sacrifices for China in the event of a crisis with the Soviets, and 2) China aimed to leverage the US, particularly regarding its relationship with Taiwan and its policy on transferring advanced industrial technology to China. A successful leverage on the US would also help China elicit concessions from the Soviets (Director of Central Intelligence, 1984). Consequently, Sino-Soviet mutual trade doubled, although the USSR did not distance China effectively from the US since it did not make the required military concessions.

What does this mean for Ethio-China relations then? As previously mentioned, Ethiopia's UHODWLRQV ZLWK &KLQD ZHUH VWUDLQHG EHFDXVH (WKLRSLD ZDV DOLJQHG ZLWK the Soviet Union. It follows, therefore, that the Sino-Soviet rapprochement led to the improvement of Ethio-China relations. In a significant gesture, a high-level Chinese delegation led by the Minister of Communication visited Ethiopia on December 27, 1983, to deliver a completed highway project, revitalising their previously strained bilateral relations (Xiaoguang, 2014). According to Shinn (2014), despite political tensions, the bilateral economic development cooperation between the two nations remained intact. In response,

Ethiopia reciprocated by sending a delegation of its ministries, headed by the Minister of Finance, in January 1984. The two countries further solidified their relations by agreeing to a trade protocol in 1984, which allowed Ethiopia to sell gum, coffee, pulses, and hides, while China could export textiles, tea, metals, building supplies, and farm equipment (Xiaoguang, 2014). As a demonstration of solidarity, China also provided practical assistance during times of drought, sending at least 25,000 metric tons of maize, 1,000 blankets, and 20 metric tons of insecticide diazinon to Ethiopia (Xiaoguang, 2014).

The massacre/incident in China and its aftermath played a role in further strengthening the relationship between China and Africa in general and China and Ethiopia in particular. Following the 1989 pro-democracy protest in Tiananmen Square, the Chinese government harshly suppressed the demonstrators, resulting in the Tiananmen Square Massacre (some prefer to say just an incident), where hundreds to thousands were killed (History.com, Ed 2022). As a result, the regime encountered a harsh response, such as sanctions from Western states (Yuan et al. 2022; Tull, 2008; Shinn, 2019). However, African countries, including Ethiopia, responded differently, with many remaining silent and some (Angola, Burkina Faso, Egypt, and Namibia) even expressing official support for the Chinese government's actions against the protest (Shinn, 2019; Taylor, 1998; Brault, 2021). Taylor (1998) identifies three factors contributing to African countries' reluctance to join Western criticism: 1) fear of the precedent affecting African elites, 2) Third World solidarity against Western interference, and 3) concern that criticising China could lead to the end of Chinese developmental aid. This stance facilitated China's re-engagement with Africa (Tull, 2008; Shinn, 2019; Taylor, 1998). It is therefore true that the fact that Ethiopia, along with other African countries, gave protection to China against Western criticisms of human rights abuses has contributed to the betterment of Ethio-China relations. That the Derg regime, with an abysmal human rights record, went along with other African countries to defend China against the West should come as no surprise. Besides the political support against the West, Ethiopia's huge market was also an important factor at this historical juncture since China was also looking for resources and markets for its growing industrial production following the inward-looking policy employed as of 1978.

In addition to the atrocities discussed above, with the collapse of the Soviet Union, China found itself increasingly isolated by the West as the remaining communist power (Besada & O'Bright, 2017). Therefore, China's engagement in Africa in general and Ethiopia in particular can be attributed to its efforts to align with non-Western nations to counter Western condemnations

and the post-Cold War uncontested U.S. hegemony, which was perceived to undermine China's ambitions for global power (Tull, 2008). Despite the West/U.S.'s attempts to induce economic and political liberalisation in China, thereby shaping China in the image of the West, there was little support from the Chinese population due to the regime's remarkable economic performance (Monyae, 2018). It follows that China needed an African voice in the effort to change the prevailing U.S.-dominated, unjust world order. It was in this general atmosphere that Ethio-China relations had been evolving and revitalized.

Moreover, it became apparent that the Soviet Union was collapsing while the Mengistu regime was still under strong pressure from TPLF and EPLF, not to mention those less active groups operating locally and abroad such as Oromo Liberation Front (OLF), ALF, WSLF, Gambella 3HRSOHV¶ /LEHUDWLRQ 0RYHPHQW RI WKH 3HRSOH RI (WKLRSLD ¶V ' H Movement (EPDM), All-Ethiopian Socialist Movement (MEISON), The Ethiopian Peoples Democratic Alliance (EPDA), KITET, and Ethiopian National Alliance to Advance Democracy (ENATAD) (Dawit, 1989). As a declining power, the Soviet Union decided to cut its military assistance to the military regime and to press for political solutions to the domestic turmoil (Photius.com, n.d.). 0HQJLVWX¶V UHJLPH DOVR IDFHG DQ XQIDYRUDEOH which further ignited the opposition. Consequently, the regime took desperate measures, seeking new allies, including China, to sustain itself (Shinn, 2014; Adem, 2012b). In light of this, Mengistu Hailemariam visited Beijing in 1988 to strengthen bilateral relations and secured an RMB¥100 million interest-free loan (Xiaoguang, 2014). In 1990, they also concluded economic, technical, and long-term interest-free loan agreements. However, it was too little too late to prevent the regime's demise. The regime was overthrown in 1991 by a group of insurgents, but Ethio-China relations persisted and became even stronger.

To sum up, like the Haile Selassie regime, Ethio-China relations during the Derg regime were affected by both countries' relations with superpowers. Most importantly, Ethio-China relations were influenced by China's foreign policy goal of countering Soviet expansion in Asia and Africa/HoA. China perceived the threat from the USSR as real, especially because the latter deployed missile forces and military personnel along its borders (Levons, 1978). Given the rapprochement with the US, China skillfully leveraged the US's concerns about Soviet expansion to advance its geopolitical interests, including projecting power in the Third World and the Horn of Africa (Tarekegn, 2023). Its subsequent rapprochement with the Soviet Union was also utilized as leverage against the West, resulting in the revitalization of Ethio-China relations.

3.4. Conclusion

The relationship between Ethiopia and China has ancient origins. However, the significant contact began at the 1955 Bandung Conference. Ever since, the preceding discussion has made it clear that Ethio-China relations were largely shaped by geopolitical considerations within the broader context of Cold War politics. Despite ideological differences, China engaged with imperial Ethiopia on strategic issues, both with and without formal diplomatic missions, due to (WKLRSLD¶V LPSRUWDQFH DV $IULFD¶V GLSORPDWLF KX leadership in international affairs, and its pivotal role in the Horn of Africa in resisting Western LPSHULDOLVP $V WKH 6RYLHW 8QLRQ¶V LQIOXHQFH JUH concern, China shifted from a largely ideological to a more geopolitical foreign policy. This FKDQJH LPSURYHG &KLQD¶V relations with the West and strengthened its ties with Ethiopia to counter Soviet influence and expansion. However, as Ethio-6RYLHW UHODWLRQV GHHS relationship with the Derg regime deteriorated from 1977-1973, despite their ideological similar LW\ 7KLV EUHDNGRZQ DORQJ ZLWK &KLQD¶V DOLJQ counter Soviet prominence in Ethiopia and the Horn of Africa, further illustrates the power politics and geopolitical forces driving Ethio-&KLQD UHODWLRQV the US and &KLQD¶V IULF rapprochement with the Soviet Union, combined with the Soviet Union's waning support for the Derg regime amidst growing insurgencies, ultimately revitalized Ethio-China relations, which continue to flourish today. The post-1991 period witnessed &KLQD¶V ULVH DV D power and an increase in geopolitical rivalry with other major powers, further emphasizing (WKLRSLD¶V †ULJQLILFDQFH this will be explored in greater depth in subsequent chapters of the dissertation.

Chapter Four: Post-1991 Geopolitical Factors Influencing Ethio-China Relations

4.1. Introduction

The international system is undergoing a structural shift, with the United States no longer an undisputed hegemon. As a revisionist global power, China seeks to reshape an international order it views as favouring the West. A recent illustration of this ambition is L - L Q S L Q J ¶ V F D for China to lead global governance reform and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' report, Hegemony and Its Perils (Hart and Johnson, 2019; MoFA, 2023 ; L ¶ V I R U H L J Q S R prioritizes both global order reform and national rejuvenation, facing strong U.S. resistance. The U.S. has labeled China its top national security threat and is counteracting its rise through alliances like Five Eyes, the Quad, AUKUS, and the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework. This strategy extends to Africa, as outlined in the U.S. Strategy toward Sub-Saharan Africa (2022), which seeks to curb China¶V DQG 5XVVLD¶V LQIOXHQFH 7KH :KLWH +

However, China has actively expanded its presence in Africa and the Global South, potentially pursuing one or more of the following three goals: (1) global hegemony (Pillsbury, 2016; Dijk, 2009; Thompson, 2023; Hodzi, 2020; Gashaw[2], 2024), (2) superpower status without assuming the role of world policeman (Brown, 2018), or (3) anti-hegemonism, global governance reform, and multipolarity (Jinping, 2017; Anshan, 2020; Dams, 2024; Mjenga, 2024; Taylor, 2006; Nye, 2023; Balew[3], 2024). This study aligns most closely with the third perspective while acknowledging elements of the first two. At a minimum, China is actively working both unilaterally and multilaterally to challenge Western hegemony, reclaim its perceived rightful position, and ensure no power dominates it.

It is within this broader context of great power competition that this chapter examines Ethio-China relations. Building on the historical context discussed in Chapter Three, this chapter delves deeper into the geopolitical factors that have influenced post-1991 Ethio-China relations. Since the chapter is about geopolitics, a wide range of issues at global, regional, sub-regional, and national levels are discussed to give a clear picture of Chinese geopolitical interests and Ethiopia¶V VWUDWHJLF VLJQLILFDQFH LQ PHHWLQJ WK

[2] , ¶P JUDWHIXO WR *DVKDZ $\IHUDP UHVHDUFKHU DW WK (IFA), who affirmed the plausibility of this analysis during an interview conducted on November 13, 2024, in Addis Ababa.

[3] , ¶P JUDWHIXO WR %DOHZ ’HPLVVLH &RPPXQLFDWLRQ D Studies Institute (PSI) and faculty member at Addis Ababa University, for the exchange of views on this matter during an interview conducted on November 12, 2024, in Addis Ababa.

has dominated the world, particularly Africa and the AU, how China is struggling to counter this to establish its rightful position, and how Ethiopia is geopolitically significant to achieve this objective are the core themes of the chapter. Following this introduction, the next section explores the geopolitical drivers of post-1991 Ethio-China relations. Accordingly, the first sub-section FRYHUV (WKLRSLD DV $IULFD¶V JDWHZD\ DQG 6KRZFDVH WR WKH [illegible] second sub-section GLVFXVVHV (WKLRSLD¶V GLSORPDWLF LQIOXHQFH LQ Africa and China¶V VWUDWHJLF QHHG WR HVWDEOLVK and the broader [illegible] continent. The third sub-section examines Ethio-China mutual defense and support on international platforms. The fourth sub-section addresses the convergence of interests in the Chinese governance model. The fifth sub-section addresses the strategic development partnership between Ethiopia and China. The third section covers changes under the current administration (2019-present). The last section concludes the chapter.

4.2. The Geopolitical Determinants of Ethio-China Relations

7KH IRORZLQJ GLVFXVVLRQV HPSKDVL]H [illegible] (WKLRSLD¶V JHRS versa. It is important to note that the explanatory factors discussed below are highly interrelated and mutually reinforcing. While these determinants primarily reflect the EPRDF era (1991-2018), some have persisted and are therefore considered in the discussion to avoid repetition. Only changes specific to the current administration (2019-present) are addressed separately in a later section of the chapter.

4.2.1. Ethiopia: Africa's Diplomatic Hub and China's Gateway and Showcase

4.2.1.1. International and regional diplomatic and business entities

As with the West, China¶V UHODWLRQVKLS ZLWK VWUDWHJLFDOO\ LPSRUWDQW for expanding its influence on the continent. Several factors contribute to Ethiopia's strategic significance for any power, including China. 2QH VXFK IDFWRU LV (WKLRSLD¶V geographic centrality, particularly in the Horn of Africa. The fact that Ethiopia hosts the AU has attracted many other institutions. The city hosts numerous international and regional institutions, including the AU, UNECA, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), and the Delegation of the European Union (EU). While the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD)'s headquarters is located in Djibouti, most of its key offices are based in Addis Ababa, including the Peace and Security Division, the Conflict Early Warning and Response Mechanism office, the IGAD) DFLOLWDWRU¶V 2IILFH IRU 6RP Parliamentary Union, and the Livestock Office (Kidist, 2014; Kassahun, 2021). Additionally,

the headquarters and logistic base of the East African Standby Force (EASF) are situated in Ethiopia, with some offices in Kenya. The presence of these institutions attracts a large number RI GHOHJDWLRQV %\ YLUWXH RI LWV GLSORPDWLF FHQV UHSUHVHQWDWLRQ WKDQ RWKHU $IULFDQ FDSLWDOV · 'H countries and institutions, such as the U.S. and the EU, maintain two separate delegations to Ethiopia and the AU (Mehari, 2013, p. 23). China has maintained a large permanent delegation to the AU since 2015 (Dittgen and Abel, 2017). Ethiopia hosts 137 embassies, including 53 IURP $IULFDQ QDWLRQV DQG LQWHUQDWLRQDO DJHQF ODUJHVW QXPEHU RI GLSORPDWLF PLVVLRQV LQ WKH ZL (Ethiopian Investment Commission, 2018; FBC, 2024; allafrica.com, 2024). The institutions mentioned above form an enumerative list, not an exhaustive one.

Thus, Ethiopia serves as a diplomatic hub for the continent. Ziso (2020, p. 313) aptly notes, ‡$V WKH VHDW RI WKH $IULFDQ 8QLRQ $GGLV $EDED LV VRPHWLPHV FDOOHG (WK Belgian Ambassador Stefaan Thijs also notes that "Addis Ababa and Brussels have a lot in common," highlighting how Ethiopia's role as host to the AU headquarters has drawn numerous diplomatic missions from across the globe (Kingdom of Belgium Foreign Public Service,) XUWKHUPRUH LW LV DOVR ZRUWK PHQWLRQLQJ (W HoA, which is crucial for great powers to access regional states and control critical supply chains. As Berouk (2012, p. 88) right\ QRWHG ‡(WKLRSLD LV JHRJUDSKLF RU EHWWHU DW WKH KHDUW RI WKH +R$ · , W-region DUHV S except Uganda. Due to its geographical location and the hosting of multiple institutions, Ethiopia ‡VHUYHV DV D UHJLRQDO FHQWHU IRU WKH +RUQ RI powers have prioritized politically, economically, and in terms of security.

It possesses both diplomatic and geographic centrality. This positioning naturally attract external powers interested in engaging with Africa. What benefits does this hold for Beijing?

4.2.1.2. Diplomatic and business entry point

What does it signify for China that Ethiopia hosts such a plethora of institutions and diplomatic missions? Many agree that, as the host of African regional organizations, including the African Union, Ethiopia serves as a strategic gateway for China's engagement in regional cooperation

across the continent (Hackenesch, 2013; Ziso, 2020; Anonymous 1[4], 2024; Dareskedar[5], 2024; Dawit[6], 2024; Abdi[7], 2024; Balew, 2024; Melaku[8], 2024; Yonas[9], 2024). Similarly, by drawing an analogy between Addis Ababa and Brussels, Ziso (2020, p. 139) asserts that Addis $ E D E D ‡ Ch in a's diplomatic gateway into Africa through which the Chinese state and private capital seek continen ZLGH LQYHVWPHQW RSSRUWXQLWLHV · ,W China relations cannot be viewed in isolation from the broader African context, as Ethiopia is regarded as a gateway to the continent rather than a destination in its own right (Anonymous 1, 2024). It serves as a strategic gateway to Africa's strategic resources. However, Ethiopia's strategic importance extends beyond economics to include China's political and security engagements across the continent. The critical role of Ethiopia was further emphasized by Chinese President Hu Jintao, who stated that "Ethiopia could play a pivotal role in enabling China to consolidate its cooperation with other African countries" (Seifudein, 2012b, p. 148).

All major African issues are discussed in Addis Ababa, providing China with a strategic platform to reach out to other African countries (Aklilu[10], 2024). African leaders converge in Addis Ababa each year to address issues of common concern. According to the AU's rules of procedure, the organization holds two summits annually: the January and July sessions. The January session of the Assembly take place in Addis Ababa, while other member states can request to host the July sessions (AU, 2002). However, for a member state to hold the July

[4] , ¶ P JUDWHIXO WR $QRQ\PRXV IRUPHU VHQLRU UHVHDU
Affairs (IFA), for the exchange of views on this matter during an interview conducted on November 21, 2024, in Addis Ababa.

[5] , ¶ P JUDWHIXO WR 'DUHVNHGDU 7DUHNH[a senior researcher at the Ethiopian Institute of Foreign Affairs (IFA), for the exchange of views on this matter during an interview conducted on November 21, 2021, in Addis Ababa.

[6] , ¶ P JUDWHIXO WR ’DZLW <RKDQQHV Senior Researcher at the Institute for Q D J H U
Security Studies (ISS), for the exchange of views on this matter during an interview conducted on November 19, 2024, in Addis Ababa.

[7] , ¶ P JUDWHIXO WR $EGL =HQHEH YLFH GLUHFWRU RI WKH
for the exchange of views on this matter during an interview conducted on November 13, 2024, in Addis Ababa.

[8] , ¶ P JUDWHIXO WR 0HODNX he Ethiopian Institute of Foreign Affairs U DW
(IFA), for the exchange of views on this matter during an interview conducted on November 11, 2024, in Addis Ababa.

[9] , ¶ P JUDWHIXO WR <RQDV 7DULNX RI WKH ,QVWLWXWH IR
exchange of views on this matter during an interview conducted on December 17, 2024, in Addis Ababa.

[10] , ¶ P JUDWHIXO WR $NOLOX 7DGHVVH &KLQHVH $IIDLUV ’
(MoFA), for the exchange of views on this matter during an interv conducted on November 20, 2024, in Addis Ababa.

VHVVLRQV LW PXVW SURYLGH DOO QHFHVVDU\ itiDs DUUDQJHI
DQG D FRQGXFLYH SROLWLFDO DWPRVSKHUH · 7KH DSSO
expenses incurred by the Commission as a result of the session being held outside the
+HDGTXDUWHUV· $8 S 7KLV RSSRUWXQLW\ ZDV
se to the claims of
affluent states, particularly Libya and the personal ambitions of its leader, Colonel Gadhafi
(Mehari, 2013). This onerous responsibility highlights the practical challenges of hosting AU
sessions outside the headquarters. According to 0HKDUL S ‡$GGLV $E
many ministerial and presidential conferences, and the AU summit attracts an average of 7,000
GLSORPDWLF GHOHJDWHV RI ZKRP PRUH WKDQ DUH KH
a diplomatic hub also enable it to host numerous other conferences and discussions. A recent
example is the launch of "Geopolitical Conversations" in Addis Ababa by the Belgian
Embassy. This forum promotes open debate and dialogue on pressing global issues, aiming to
foster empathy and understanding among diplomats from diverse nations (Kingdom of
Belgium Foreign Public Service, 2024). This underscores Ethiopia's convening power.
Consequently, Ethiopia provides a one-stop service for China to engage with African leaders
and business enterprises, as well as other international delegations. It creates opportunities for
states and non-state actors to hold side meetings, making Ethiopia an essential stop for Chinese
leaders visiting Africa. $DURQ XQGHUVFRUHG WKDW ‡SROLWLFD
Ethiopia was important to China because it offered a one-VWRS VKRSSLQJ FHQWHU WR LQ

Given Ethiopia's diplomatic centrality, China has concentrated its entities in Addis Ababa.
DHIIQHU DQG 3VDWKD S QRWHV WKDW ‡ZHWKLQ WK
China¶V FW ‡ZH DOLQ WK
as a host of Chinese diplomatic and economic activity in Sub-6DKDUDQ China¶V FD ·
decision to designate Ethiopia as one of the five African countries hosting its overseas trade
and technical cooperation zones reflects the recognition of Ethiopia's diplomatic value
(Seifudein, 2012b). For the same reason, the Chinese Commerce Ministry and the China-Africa
Development Fund maintain independent representation in Addis Ababa, separate from the
HPEDVV\ &DEHVWDQ 0RUHRYHU ‡WKH ;LQKXD 1HZ
(WKLRSLD KDV LWV UHJLRQDO KHDGTXDUWHUV IRU WKH +
p. 55). The African division of China Global Television Network, CGTN Africa, is based in
Kenya. Media serves as a strategic tool for China in its geopolitical competition with the West,
helping to win the hearts of Africans, cultivate a positive image, and promote the discourse of
South-South cooperation (Bolin et al., 2022). Ethiopia provides them with a convenient
platform to achieve this.

The presence of various types of representation in Ethiopia enables China to access diverse African stakeholders effectively and efficiently, aligning with the views of geopoliticians like Mackinder and Mahan, who emphasize the importance of central position (WKLRSLD LV $IULFD¶V FHQWUDO SRVLWLRQ DQG LWV UROH DV D PHHWLQJ SRLQW DQG UHSUHVHQWDWLYH *LYHQ WKH FRXQWU\¶V LPPHQVH UHOHYDQFH 6HLIXGHLQ E S ZHQW VR IDU DV WR VXJJHVW WKDW &KLQD VHHNV WR JDLQ D GRPLQDQW SRVLWLRQ LQ (WKLRSLD HYHQ LI WKDW PHDQV IRUIHLWLQJ VKRUW-WHUP FRPPHUFLDO EHQHILWV IRU ORQJ-WHUP VWUDWHJLF JDLQV 7KHUHIRUH (WKLRSLD KDV VHUYHG DV ERWK D GLSORPDWLF DQG SK\VLFDO SDWKZD\ IRU &KLQD WR HVWDEOLVK D VLJQLILFDQW SUHVHQFH LQ $IULFD

ðXîXíXïX Z]v [• u}v•šŒ š]}v Œ}}u

Ethiopia is not just an entry point. RT OHYHUDJH (WKLRSLD¶V FHQWUDOLW\ &KLQD PXVW GHPRQVWUDWH WDQJLEOH DQG DSSHDOLQJ DFKLHYHPHQWV LQ (WKLRSLD WR $IULFDQ OHDGHUV DQG EXVLQHVVHV &KLQD¶V SROLWLFDO HFRQRPLF DQG VHFXULW\ HQJDJHPHQW ZLWK (WKLRSLD QHHGV WR EH SURGXFWLYH WR ZLQ WKH KHDUWV DQG PLQGV RI RWKHU $IULFDQ FRXQWULHV +DFNHQHVFK IURP DOO $IULFDQ FRXQWULHV WKH YLVLELOLW\ RI &KLQHVH HQJDJHPHQW LQ $GGLV $EDED KDV DQ LPPHGLDWH PXOWLSOLHU HIIHFW WKURXJKRXW WKH FRQWLQHQW ZLWK (WKLRSLD PDNHV &KLQD¶V UROH PRUH YLVLEOH FRPSDUHG WR LWV FRXQWULHV &RJQL]DQW RI WKLV PXOWLSOLHU HIIHFW WKH &KLQHVH ZDQW WR XVH (WKLRSLD QRW RQO\ DV D JDWHZD\ EXW DOVR DV D PRGHO IRU WKHLU HQJDJHPHQW LQ $IULFD 'DUHVNHGDU ; 0HOND\X 7KH\ EHOLHYH WKDW VXFFHVV LQ (WKLRSLD ZLOO SDYH WKH ZD\ IRU VXFFHVV LQ RWKHU $IULFDQ FRXQWULHV RU WKDW FRQWUROOLQJ (WKLRSLD LV FRQVLGHUHG HVVHQWLDO WR H[HUW LQIOXHQFH RYHU $IULFD 'DUHVNHGDU &KLQD UHOLHV RQ VLJQLILFDQW\ ODQGPDUN SURMHFWV DV D ZLGHU VWUDWHJ\ WR DWWUDFW $IULFDQ OHDGHUV DQG FRQYLQFH WKHP WKDW &KLQD LV D JHQXLQH SDUWQHU IRU $IULFD 7KH &KLQHVH DOVR FRQVWUXFWHG WKH KHDGTXDUWHUV RI WKH &RPPHUFLDO %DQN RI (WKLRSLD &%(EXLOW DW D FRVW RI PLOOLRQ 86' ,W LV WKH WDOOHVW EXLOGLQJ LQ (DVW $IULFD DQG WKH WKLUG WDOOHVW RQ WKH FRQWLQHQW ZLWK D KHLJKW RI PHWHUV DQG IORRUV (1$ 7KH\ VHUYH V\PEROLF UROHV

This demonstrative effect also explains why China has constructively engaged with Ethiopia, as will be evidenced by WKH GLVFXVVLRQ RQ WKH µVWUDWHJLF GHY &KLQDUHODWLRQV QRWDEO\ WKH SUROLIHUDWLRQ RI LQGXVWULDO SDUNV DQG ODUJH-VFDOH SRZHU DQG WUDQVSRUW

projects. The economic transformation China facilitates in Ethiopia can help convince African leaders that it can achieve similar results in their economies. China sees Ethiopia as an opportunity to showcase its developmental model through large and symbolic infrastructure projects and industrial investments (Carmody and Murphy, 2022). Yonas (2024) highlighted a statement by a Chinese professor that described Addis Ababa as "the showroom for Chinese investment," meaning its success could serve as a platform for showcasing Chinese companies to other African destinations. Dawit (2024) aptly described that Ethiopia serves as a "showroom" for China, showcasing its model of economic development in Africa. During the AU summit, PDQ\ YLVLWV WDNH SODFH EXW WKH\ DUH OLWHU LQVWHDG WKH\ DUH PLFURFRQWUROOHG &KDZLW 2024). Information obtained from the Chinese Embassy further confirms that Ethiopia is a model of China's good relations with other nations (Anonymous[11], 2024). Therefore, establishing good relations with Ethiopia paves the way for other nations to follow suit (Anonymous, 2024).

The same is true for their BRI. The BRI encompasses three main routes: Europe, the Middle East, and Africa, with Ethiopia selected as the pilot country for the African route (Lema[12], 2024). Many Western commentators view the BRI as a tool for advancing China's ambitions for raw materials in Africa and for projecting its influence in Africa and beyond. In contrast, China presents it as a mutually beneficial Initiative. In this context, China VHHV LWVHOI DV D FUXFLDO VKRZFDVH IRU %5,¶V SRWHQWLDO DV DQ µJOREDO 0XUSK\ S ’HIIQHU DQG 3VDWKD S DOVR growth as part of China¶V %5, FDQ GHYHORS DQ H[DPSOH IRU WKH ZKROH $IULFDQ FRQWLQHQW · +DFNHQHVFK Chinese perspective, relations DVVHUW with Ethiopia are seen as an example of China¶V JUHDW VXFFHVV LQ LWV HQJ This is evident from Chinese state media broadcasts of these mega projects and success stories to the global community, which attempt to create goodwill and a positive image on the continent and beyond, thus ensuring geopolitical support in its competition with the West. It follows, therefore, that China conducts its activities in Ethiopia in a way that demonstrates it is $IULFD¶V WUXH SDUWQHU DQG VWUHQJWKHQV LWV JOREDO

[11] ,¶P JUDWHIXO WR $QRQ\PRXV GLSORPDW DW WKH &KLQ of views on this matter during an interview conducted on November 18, 2024, in Addis Ababa.
[12] ,¶P JUDWHIXO WR /HPD)H\LVVD RI WKH (WKLRSLDQ ,Q exchange of views on this matter during a phone interview conducted on December 4, 2024.

$ U H F H Q W D J U H H P H Q W I X U W K H U K L J K O L J K W V W K H U H F H Q W O \ V L J Q H G E H W Z H H Q W K H * R Y H U Q P H Q W R I (W K L R S L D
agreement signed between the Government of Ethiopia, the Government of China, and the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) aims to establish Centers of Excellence in Ethiopia, focusing on enhancing people's well-being through various development projects. This initiative positions Ethiopia as a pilot country with the potential to expand to other nations and make significant contributions to achieving the African Union's Agenda 2063 goals (UN, 2024).

Therefore, Ethiopia serves as a launching pad for China to project its soft power and enhance its engagement in Africa as a whole, demonstrating its alternative political economic model on W K H J O R E D O V W D J H $ F F R U G L Q J W R ' H \ F K L Q D ¶ V $ $ U L F D Q ‡ 7
S R O L F \ L V V R I W S R Z H U « , W L V P L Q L P X P R I W K H ¶ R W K H U ' H Y H O R S P H Q W
image of China % H L M L Q J D F W L Y H O \ X V H ¶ V W K H U H D Q H V W R K H U V S R W L
China L Q $ I U L F D D V D I U L H Q G O \ F R X Q W U \ U H D G \ W R S U R Y L G
this purpose, there is no better showcase than Ethiopia. And the aforementioned positive portrayal of Ethiopia by Chinese and other elites, along with the ensuing strong Ethio-China relations, perfectly aligns with the critical geopolitical discourse on elite representations of a given place and the policies it demands.

To conclude this section, Ethiopia is the diplomatic center of Africa, hosting numerous regional and international organizations. This helps China as a diplomatic and business entry point to the continent as a whole, accessing various stakeholders simultaneously. Besides, the diplomatic centrality and the ensuing frequent visit of African as well as international delegations make Ethiopia a showcase for China¶ V V X F F H V V L Q L W V $ I U L F D
0 R U H R Y H U (W K L R S L D ¶ V J H R J U D S K L F D O F H Q W U D O L W \ Z L W K
regional states and maintain control over critical supply chains. This diplomatic and geographic centrality partly explains why China K D V E H H Q G H H S O \ L Q Y R O Y H G L Q (W K L
lack of adequate strategic resources. This, in turn, helped Ethiopia to get economic as well as political advantages owing to China¶ V G H H S H Q J D J H P H Q W

4.2.2. Ethiopia's Diplomatic Influence in Africa

ð X î X î X í X š Z] } ‰] [•] v ‰ v v v] ‰ o } u š] ‰ } Á Œ
Hosting regional and international institutions is a valuable asset for Ethiopia, attracting a diverse range of actors to pursue their geopolitical ambitions effectively. However, Ethiopia is not merely a diplomatic venue or the headquarters of these institutions; it is also an influential

member of many of them, particularly at the sub-regional and continental levels, as will be discussed further below. Ethiopia has long been an influential player in African politics. Historically, Ethiopia has a long-standing tradition of statehood and diplomacy. Unlike much RI $IULFD LW VXFFHVVIXOO\ UHVLVWHG FRORQLDO UXOH $IULFD· 7HVKDOH S $V 7HVKDOH QRWHV ‡(W consciousness of Africans. It has been revered as a symbol of Black defiance of White GRPLQDWLRQ· 7HVKDOH S 7KLV GLVWLQFWLYH FRQWULEXWLRQ LQ $IULFD V GHFRORQL]DWLRQ PRYHPHQ and diplomatic† has been significant in aiding African nations like South Africa, Zimbabwe, and Namibia during their struggles against colonial and imperial rule. Melaku (2024) noted that the three colors of Ethiopia's flag—green, yellow, and red—are recognized as Pan-African colors, with around 12 countries adopting these colors in their flags, differing only in the arrangement of the colors.

$V 0RQ\DH ULJKWO\ QRWHG ‡(WKLRSLD KDV DOVR FDXVHV RI WKH *OREDO 6RXWK DQG 3OD\HG D 9LWDO 5ROH LQ (VWDEOLVKLQJ WKH OAU KLJKOLJKWV LWV LQIOXHQFH LQ V-RDSA Qat. StUL FD¶V independence and proactive role in decolonization have granted Ethiopia significant prestige, which it leveraged to build diplomatic and military strength, particularly through cooperation with global powers like the United States (Iyob, 1993). Consequently, Ethiopia became a prominent actor in African politics and a leading voice for the continent on international platforms, joining the League of Nations (LN) and later co-founding the UN (Yonas, 2020). ,\RE S VLPLODUO\ DUJXHV WKDW (WKLRSLD¶V SU status in the international community, first as Africa's only delegate to the League of Nation DQG WKHUHDIWHU DV D OHDGLQJ $IULFDQ YRLFH LQ WKH it to navigate both internal and external challenges. For instance, Iyob (1993, p. 268) argues WKDW WKH OHJLWLPDWH LQWHJ Haile Selassie's international stature DQG and increasing influence in the region's politics. 0LFKDHO S VLPLODUO WKH IDYRUDEOH GHFLVLRQV RI WKH 81 DQG 2$8 UHIOHF UHJLRQDO SROLWLFDO SRZHU ·

It has consistently championed African interests in international forums. This role of representing Africa has persisted into the era of the EPRDF regime. According to Clapham (2017, p. 190):

The EPRDF regime under Meles Zenawi nonetheless achieved the status of one of the µQ H Z $ I U L F D Q ¶ J R Y H U Q P H Q W V W K D W were deemed to lead the way to the reformation of the continent, while Meles himself acquired little less than a heroic role, both within Africa and beyond it, as an articulate spokesman for continental aspirations. This role is indicated by his position on the % U L W L V K J R Y H U Q P H Q W ¶ V & R P P L V V L R Q African representative on the climate change agenda.

The AU Commission underscored this in its message of condolence following the passing of Meles Zenawi, stating Q J ‡ W K H & R P P L V V L R Q Z L O O U H P H P E H U O D W H his exceptional contribution to the advancement of the objectives of the AU and the promotion