

cutting-edge 21st-century techno-industrial policy, but more like a continuation of the GOELRO to GOSPLAN to NDRC institutional development and feels like 1920s policy being repackaged for 2020. What was prescribed here will not eventuate, but neither will it be completely abandoned. This is a codification of policy wreckage, and it joins the Soviet industrial institutions which already litter the Eurasian landscape.

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*China in Ethiopia: The Long-Term Perspective*

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In *China in Ethiopia*, Aaron Tesfaye lays out the historical and contemporary relations between China and Ethiopia and discusses the long-term interests and implications of their evolving relationships on the economic, political and strategic fronts. The book opens up with a critique of China–Africa studies for primarily putting China in the driver’s seat, thus overlooking the agency of African actors. The diverse forms of political and economic arrangements among African countries and the uneven ability of African state actors to negotiate with their Chinese counterparts, the author argues, necessitate scholarly research into bilateral relations between China and specific African countries. The focus on China–Ethiopia relations is then justified by the latter’s geopolitical and geostrategic importance.

Chapter one traces the history of China–Ethiopia relations. It details Ethiopian leaders’ shifting perspectives towards China as being shaped by their strategic consideration of the domestic, regional and international politics at the specific time period. For example, Emperor Haile Selassie, in alliance with the US, was cautious of developing close relations with the socialist government of China. Later, during the Derg’s rule (1974–90), Chinese support of the “oppositional sides” – such as the Eritrean Liberation Front, the Western Somali Liberation Front in the Ogaden region, as well as the national government of Sudan – in order to combat the influences of the Soviet Union and the US in the Horn of Africa, further strained its relationships with Ethiopian leaders.

Chapter two continues to examine contemporary China–Ethiopia relations under the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia since 1991. The government, led by the Ethiopian People’s Revolutionary Democratic Front and faced with domestic and international challenges to the one-party system, heavily invested in economic development to legitimize its rule. Partnership with China, according to the author, was a strategic choice of the Ethiopian leaders to obtain much-needed foreign capital and technological know-how to push forward modernization. Chapter three then specifically focuses on the economic dimension of the bilateral relation. The author reviews Chinese investment in megaprojects such as railways and dams as well as small projects in agriculture, road construction and manufacturing. He argues that Ethiopia’s cooperation with China has been carefully managed and coordinated by the federal government through national Growth and Transformation Plans (GTPs). Therefore, despite the country’s dependence on foreign assistance, it is capable of crafting a national framework to direct the flows of aid and investment.

Chapter four moves on to examine the strategic dimension of the bilateral relationship. This is what I consider a major contribution of book: the contextualization of the China–Ethiopia relations in the regional geopolitics in the Horn of Africa. The author explains how geopolitical interests in East Africa’s untapped resources and eagerness to retain influence over the Red Sea have shaped China’s active engagement with Ethiopia and other regional organizations. Similarly, the Ethiopian government’s relationships with ethno-linguistically based regional states as well as the neighbouring countries will continue to shape its relations with China. The future of China–Ethiopia relations is further discussed in chapter five, where the author finds alignment between Ethiopia’s industrial policy and China’s Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). He argues that BRI has the potential to accelerate bilateral trade between the two countries and facilitate integration of East Africa in the global economy. Nonetheless, the long-term relationship is dependent upon factors such as the domestic political stability in Ethiopia, the influences of US and EU in the country, and regional politics in the Horn of Africa, the Red Sea and beyond. The author concludes by expressing concerns over centralized control of economic, political and technical resources by the ruling party in Ethiopia, which has resulted in uneven development across ethnic regions and has implications for future internal cohesion and political order.

Overall, the book provides a neat overview of China–Ethiopia relations for students and researchers interested in international relations, political science and China–Africa studies in general. There are two areas that I would love to read more about from the book. First, much of the discussion draws upon media reports, policy documents and existing scholarly work. I expect to read a more focused analysis of the author’s interviews with Ethiopian officials from various institutions during his three years of field research, which was stated as a major source of data for the book. Second, a main argument of the book is that Ethiopia has taken measures to obtain economic assistance, investments and technologies to boost national development. Ethiopian agency is hence demonstrated by its willingness to learn from China’s modernization experiences and its adoption of various policy frameworks such as GTPs. As the author explains through the example of industrial parks, the government intends to enhance forward and backward linkages in the economy. Yet, beyond national plans and strategies, I expect to read, through concrete examples, how the Ethiopian government has achieved or is yet to achieve these goals in their actual engagement with the Chinese government and investors. As Chris Alden wrote in the foreword, the Ethiopian management of its relations with China involves an arduous learning process. Therefore, additional evidence on how the Ethiopian government adjusts its measures along the road will be appreciated.

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