

Research Article

# Representation of China and the Chinese in the Ethiopian Broadcast Media

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## Abstract

The chief objective of this study was to examine the representation of China in the Ethiopian broadcast media. The study aims to address specific objectives such as unraveling the major frames used in reporting about China and the Chinese, identifying the dominant information sources used by the Ethiopian broadcast media in reporting about China, and examining the representation of negative comments about China in the Ethiopian broadcast media. Theoretically, the study employs social constructionism together with framing theory through a qualitative research design. To that end, the study selected six television channels using purposive sampling and their coverage of issues in China in relation to three events. They are: 1) U.S. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi's visit to Taiwan; 2) the 2023 BRICS<sup>1</sup> summit held in South Africa; and 3) the 2023 Belt and Road Initiative summit held in Beijing. A corpus of 47 stories, regardless of their genre, was compiled and analyzed using framing theory and qualitative content analysis. The analysis revealed that China has been represented consistently through three frames. They are: 1) China is a "mighty power"; 2) China is a "fortress"; and 3) China is a "beacon of hope." These frames constitute several sub-themes within them.

## Keywords

China, Ethiopian Media, BRICS, Belt and Road, Africa

## 1. Introduction

The post-Cold War international order, popularly referred to as the "neoliberal order," was shaped and led by the United States' emergence as the sole global superpower. However, over the last two decades, China has emerged as a competing and contesting global power in terms of economic and political influence, posing difficult challenges to the West-led global order, and has begun to play a serious role in global affairs [1]. China is a new economic giant in the modern world, and it may become the world's next superpower in the near future. However, China's rapid rise in global political, economic, and diplomatic spheres appears unacceptable to the

US and its Western allies. As a result, China and the Chinese have become a hot topic in Western media and pop culture, and they are frequently portrayed as threats. In contrast, China and the Chinese have received a comparatively positive representation in African and Eastern media. Following its massive presence and involvement in several African development projects, the media across the continent portrays China as a strong partner with positive attributes. However, there are some differences in how China and the Chinese are portrayed in African media. Using this as a point of departure, this paper investigates the representation of China and the Chinese in

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Ethiopian broadcast media through a social constructionist lens and framing theory.

### 1.1. Representation, Media, and World Information Order

In social constructionism, knowledge and meaning are socially constructed, and this construction process is rooted in language (Burr, 1995) and makes its way to the public through narratives [3]. These narratives are often constructed through some kind of representation, and this representation determines the structure and content of the narratives. In the modern world, such narratives are created and transferred through mass media, and the practice is better known as framing. Framing suggests that the way information is presented, or "framed," can influence people's perceptions, attitudes, and opinions [9]. According to framing theory, media outlets and other sources of information selectively emphasize certain aspects of an issue while downplaying or omitting others. This framing can influence how the audience perceives and interprets the issue, shaping their understanding and opinions. This in turn helps to acquire and accumulate soft power, which boosts hard power (economic and military).

Soft power is now a critical tool for achieving massive economic, political, and diplomatic dominance, primarily through mass media and information control. In fact, in the twenty-first century, media plays an omnipresent role in all 'positive and negative changes' in society, regardless of geographical location [15]. As a result, the media can either manipulate situations or be manipulated by the interests of various actors, resulting in unintended connotations. As a result, the United States and its western allies dominated global media and information flow for decades. As a result, the western media decides what to pun in the mainstream, what to leave out, and how to present reality in accordance with their underlying ideology, and the rest of the world follows.

Critical voices from the global south have challenged the west's dominance over the world's information flow. In the 1970s, developing countries advocated for a New World Information Order (NWIO), arguing against the Western world's dominance and control over information production and dissemination, as well as global media resources [14]. Despite some progress, the West maintained control of the world's information and media resources. China, Iran, Russia, and Turkey have recently begun to challenge the western media by providing alternative information sources and media resources in the global south. As a result, media outlets like CGTN, RTI, TRT, and Press TV are now challenging the long-established western media.

### 1.2. The Image of China and the Chinese in the Western Media

The representation of Chinese culture in Western media has long been a source of contention. Western media frequently

portrays Chinese culture through a narrow lens, emphasizing stereotypes and cliché [2]. Despite the growing number of news reports about China in the Western media, it was noticed that a majority of them were negative. This can lead to a distorted and incomplete understanding of Chinese culture and perpetuate misconceptions.

Previous studies on the representation of China in Western media and popular culture unraveled several negative framings. Some of the historical imageries of China in Western popular cultures have appeared as 'exotic', 'fabulous', 'Yellow Peril', 'unscrupulous', 'cruel', 'despotic', 'devious', 'inscrutable' and many other stereotypes [2, 1]. In recent times as well, the dominant western media representation has remained negative. In fact, China is represented as a potential enemy and communist in the media discourse across the USA [12]. In a nutshell, the Western media represent China in orientalist and otherizing frames within their distinctive narrative structure. This narrative structure is often filled with stereotypes.

One common stereotype is the portrayal of Chinese people as exotic or mysterious, emphasizing traditional practices such as martial arts or ancient traditions. While these aspects are indeed part of Chinese culture, they do not represent the entirety of it. Chinese culture is diverse and multifaceted, encompassing a wide range of traditions, languages, cuisines, and contemporary practices.

Another issue is the tendency to depict China as a monolithic entity, ignoring its regional and ethnic diversity. China is home to numerous ethnic groups, each with its own distinct cultures and traditions. However, Western media often fails to highlight this diversity and instead presents a homogenized view of Chinese culture [18]. Furthermore, there is a tendency to sensationalize or exaggerate certain aspects of Chinese culture for entertainment purposes. This can lead to misinterpretations and misunderstandings, reinforcing stereotypes and biases.

China is often portrayed as an economic powerhouse, with a focus on its rapid economic growth, booming industries, and emergence as a global superpower. This portrayal emphasizes China's role as a competitor to Western economies and highlights its influence on global markets [20, 11]. Western media frequently covers human rights issues in China, including topics such as political repression, censorship, and the treatment of ethnic minorities, such as the Uighurs in Xinjiang [18]. These reports often highlight concerns about freedom of speech, press freedom, and civil liberties in China. Furthermore, China's political system is often depicted as authoritarian, with a centralized government and limited political freedoms. Western media often highlights the Communist Party's control over various aspects of society, including media, education, and the internet.

China is often portrayed as a major player in cyber espionage and hacking activities targeting Western countries. Reports often focus on alleged Chinese state-sponsored hacking groups and their alleged involvement in intellectual property

theft and cyber-attacks. Western media frequently covers China's trade policies, including issues related to intellectual property theft, unfair trade practices, and market access barriers. There is also coverage of China's growing influence in international organizations and its diplomatic relationships with other countries. Besides, China's environmental challenges, such as air pollution, water scarcity, and deforestation, are often highlighted in Western media. Reports often discuss the impact of China's rapid industrialization on the environment and its efforts to address these issues [19].

### 1.3. The Image of China and the Chinese in the African Media

China's relationship with Africa has grown exponentially over the last decade, with China now being the continent's largest trading partner, displacing Europe and the United States. The status of the relationship and its evolution are two of the most critical developments in international affairs [17]. China's rise as a world power, as well as its engagement on the continent in various forms, including state-level and private investments involving various actors, has not been without controversy. By 2014, an estimated one million Chinese migrants were living in Africa (Leslie 2016). It is now common to see Chinese people working on construction, industrial, and development projects in Africa's cities and rural areas.

Apart from its massive engagement in development activities, China has been gaining an increasing media presence in Africa. "This increased footprint of Chinese media on the continent is not entirely new, as the presence of Chinese media in Africa dates back at least until the 1960s and 1970s [17]. At the beginning of the new millennium, China came up with *The Go Out Policy* (also referred as the Going Global Strategy), which aims to promote Chinese investments abroad [13]. Accordingly, China made a huge investment in the African media industry through trainings and infrastructures, and relocated CGTN's (then CCTV) head office to Nairobi, Kenya. These efforts allowed China to tell a first-hand story about its investments and gain a positive attitude in Africa. Despite gaining significant results, China's media presence in Africa is still in a tough challenge.

One of the major challenges is the dependence of African media on western media outlets. African media has long been criticized for its heavy dependence on Western sources for news and information. This dependency has been attributed to a variety of factors, including historical ties between Africa and the West, limited resources and capacity within African media outlets, and the perceived credibility and objectivity of Western media. Critics argue that this reliance on Western sources can result in a skewed and limited perspective on African issues, as Western media often prioritize stories that align with their own interests and narratives. This can lead to a lack of coverage or misrepresentation of important African stories and perspectives.

Consequently, the representation of China in African media

often resembles that of Western media. Yet, compared to the Western media, China often gets positive and nuanced representations among African media outlets.

### 1.4. China Vs. the West in Ethiopian Media

The framing of China and the West in Ethiopian media can also vary depending on the specific country and media outlet, but there are some common themes and narratives that emerge. One framing often seen in Ethiopian media is the portrayal of China and the West as competitors in terms of economic influence and investment in Africa. This framing highlights the rivalry between the two sides for access to African markets and resources [12].

Another framing compares and contrasts the development models of China and the West. Chinese investments in infrastructure and manufacturing are often portrayed as more beneficial for Ethiopia's development compared to Western aid and assistance, which is sometimes criticized for its conditionality [6]. The political influence of China and the West in African countries is often discussed in African media. This framing may highlight concerns about China's non-interference policy or Western countries' involvement in African politics, including issues related to democracy, human rights, and governance.

The cultural influence of China and the West in Ethiopia is also a topic of discussion in African media. This framing may explore the impact of Chinese and Western media, entertainment, and education on African societies, as well as the perception of cultural imperialism [9]. The geopolitical dynamics between China and the West are often framed in Ethiopian media. This includes discussions on their competition for influence in Africa, their relationships with African governments, and their involvement in regional conflicts or peacekeeping efforts. Similar to the framing of China, these perspectives on the West can be influenced by various factors, including media outlets' political orientation, government relations with China and Western countries, and public opinion within African countries.

### 1.5. China in the Ethiopian Broadcast Media

Like many African countries, China has a significant presence in Ethiopia, with various investments and projects in the country. China and Ethiopia have maintained strong diplomatic relations for many years [4]. The two countries have signed various agreements to enhance cooperation in areas such as trade, investment protection, cultural exchanges, and people-to-people interactions. China has been involved in several infrastructure development projects in Ethiopia, including the construction of roads, railways, and industrial parks. One notable project is the Addis Ababa-Djibouti Railway, which was built by Chinese companies and connects Ethiopia's capital city with the port of Djibouti. Besides, Ethiopia is one of the African countries participating in Chi-

na's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). The BRI aims to enhance connectivity between Asia, Europe, Africa, and other regions through infrastructure development projects. Overall, China's presence in Ethiopia has had a substantial impact on the country's development trajectory through investments in infrastructure projects and economic cooperation.

While China's involvement has brought significant benefits to Ethiopia's economy and infrastructure development efforts, there have also been criticisms regarding issues such as labor rights violations by Chinese companies operating in the country. Such critics have been present in the public sphere in general and the media in particular. China has been gaining a significant presence in the Ethiopian broadcast media, with both negative and positive representations. Because the representation of China in Ethiopian broadcast media has changed over time, it is important to analyze the media periodically.

## 2. Statement of the Problem

In the modern world, six conglomerates own 90% of the world's media, and they decide what goes into the mainstream and how reality is presented. They present reality in accordance with their ideology, and the rest of the world follows suit. Many scholarly studies have proven and established that such framing is how they create a reality for the audience: a manufactured reality and a fabricated truth<sup>2</sup>. Because the world relies on them, these media outlets influence and/or manipulate the public over various issues. One such issue is China, which is often represented as a threat by the western media, and this negative representation is always copied by the media in the global south. In African media, China has been represented both negatively and positively depending on the specific political situations.

China has been the most prominent emerging partner, and Chinese enterprises have increased their trade and investment relations with African counterparts by a factor of more than ten over the past decades [7, 8]. Despite such huge engagement, China is often portrayed in two extremes: either very positively, bringing development and a supposedly win-win transformative experience; or negatively, as imperialistic, exploitative, and ruining the environment [5]. These views have been lingering in African media, academics, pop culture, and artistic outlets. The main reason (if not the only) for such bipolarized representation is the propaganda aired by the western media, which views China as a threat and rivalry to their economy, civilization, and dominance [16].

China and the Chinese people have been portrayed in Ethiopian media through both positive and negative attributions. On the one hand, China is portrayed as a strong economic superpower and ally working tirelessly to improve economic and development cooperation. China, on the other hand, has been shaped by stereotypes and prejudice. Generalizations about Chinese people's behavior, work ethic, or business practices are examples of stereotypes. These narra-

tives are primarily spread through mass media in various forms, such as news, documentaries, and reality shows.

The Chinese government has been involved in several initiatives with Ethiopia to change negative perceptions. These include teaching Chinese in Ethiopia (at Addis Ababa University), cultural exchange programs, teaching Amharic at Chinese universities, and providing massive scholarships to Ethiopian students. Despite these efforts, Ethiopian media images and narratives about China and the Chinese people remain suspect. Using this concept as a starting point, this study seeks to answer the following questions:

*RQ1:* How are China and the Chinese represented in the Ethiopian broadcast media?

*RQ2:* How are western media's negative comments about China represented in the Ethiopian broadcast media?

*RQ3:* How do the Ethiopian broadcast media portray the rivalry between China and the West?

*RQ4:* What is the advantage and shortcoming for China and western media in terms of promoting their voice in Ethiopia?

*RQ5:* What are the dominant information sources of Ethiopian broadcast media in reporting about China?

## 3. Objectives of the Study

The chief objective of this study is to analyze the representation of China and the Chinese people in the Ethiopian broadcast media. As such, the study has the following specific objectives:

1. To unravel the major frames used in reporting about China and the Chinese;
2. To examine how western media's negative comments about China are represented in the Ethiopian broadcast media;
3. To investigate how the rivalry between China and the West is represented in the Ethiopian broadcast media;
4. To pin out the strengths and weaknesses of China's and western media in promoting their voices in Ethiopia;
5. To identify the dominant information sources of the Ethiopian broadcast media in reporting about China.

## 4. Theory

Framing theory is a communication theory that explores how media and other sources of information can shape the way people interpret and understand events and issues. It suggests that the way information is presented, or "framed," can influence people's perceptions, attitudes, and opinions [9]. According to framing theory, media outlets and other sources of information selectively emphasize certain aspects of an issue while downplaying or omitting others. This framing can influence how the audience perceives and interprets the issue, shaping their understanding and opinions.

In the context of China and the Chinese in the Ethiopian broadcast media, framing theory suggests that the way these

actors are portrayed can shape how Ethiopian audiences perceive and understand their interactions and influence in Ethiopia [10]. The specific frames discussed earlier, such as economic competition or cultural influence, are examples of how China and the West can be framed in Ethiopian media to shape public opinion and understanding.

Framing theory also acknowledges that different media outlets and sources of information may frame an issue differently, reflecting their own biases, interests, or agendas. Therefore, it is important to critically analyze and consider multiple sources of information to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the complex dynamics between China, the West, and Ethiopia.

## 5. Methods and Data

The research orientation for this study is qualitative research design. Within this qualitative paradigm, the study employed framing theory as a major theoretical facet and qualitative content analysis in line with the research questions and objectives. The data were collected from six television channels that present contents in Amharic. The outlets are selected based on their space coverage, affiliation, and content focus. The targeted media outlets are the following:

**Table 1.** List of sampled and investigated media outlets.

No	Channel name	Owner	Languages
1	Ethiopian Television (ETV)	Government	Amharic
2	Fana Television	Ruling party	Amharic
3	Walta Television	Ruling party	Amharic
4	Asham Television	Private media	Amharic
5	NBC Ethiopia	Private media	Amharic
6	EBS Television	Private media	Amharic

Of the six channels listed in the above table, ETV is a national television owned by the Ethiopian government, while *Fana* and *Walta* televisions are owned by the ruling political party, the PP. The remaining three channels are owned by private companies, and they mainly focus on entertainment contents, compared to the previous ones, which dominantly focused on political, diplomatic, and development issues. In terms of space, all of the selected channels are available throughout the country through satellite and internet platforms. Exceptionally, the national channel, ETV, is available through antennas throughout the country.

A corpus of 47 stories, regardless of their genre, has been compiled. The corpus focused on three events: 1) U.S. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi's visit to Taiwan; 2) the 2023 BRICS' summit held in South Africa; and 3) the 2023 Belt and Road

Initiative summit held in Beijing. The stories in the corpus include news, commentaries, interviews, expert analysis, and documentaries that focus on China in one way or another. The data were categorized thematically and analyzed using qualitative content analysis, and the findings were presented using representative excerpts taken from the sampled texts.

## 6. Data Analysis and Presentation

### 6.1. Targeted-Events

As stated in the previous section, this study targeted three events that ultimately connected China and its relationship with the rest of the world. The targeted events are the following:

#### *Nancy Pelosi's visit to Taiwan*

In August 2022, the Speaker of the US House paid a formal visit to Taiwan. It is true that tensions between China and the United States were raised by Nancy Pelosi's travel to Taiwan. Beijing was incensed by the House Speaker's visit to Taiwan because it called into question Beijing's claim of sovereignty over the island. China prohibits official exchanges between foreign governments and Taiwanese authorities, citing Taiwan as part of its territory. The US has unofficially adhered to the "One China" policy since establishing diplomatic relations with China in 1979, and Pelosi's visit was perceived as a violation of this policy. In response to Pelosi's visit, the Chinese government released a statement in which it expressed its profound displeasure and urged the US to uphold the "One China" policy. Sanctions were also levied by China on a number of American participants in the visit, including Pelosi.

#### *The BRICS summit in South Africa*

The leaders of Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa meet annually for the BRICS summit. It gives these nations a forum to communicate and work together on a range of topics of shared interest, including trade, investment, economic cooperation, and global governance. August 2023 saw the holding of the most recent BRICS summit in South Africa. Ethiopia was among the five new members accepted at the summit's conclusion.

#### *Belt and Road Initiative in Beijing*

The Belt and Road is a global initiative proposed by China a decade ago with the aim of connecting China with the rest of the world. It is the most expensive project in the entire history of the world and aims to connect China with more than 150 countries through ports, roads, and other infrastructure. The project has been criticized by the U.S.-led Western block, which repeatedly expresses their worries, claiming that the project is a Trojan horse for China's hidden agenda of global resource scrambling and military dominance. The latest summit (the 3rd summit) of the Belt and Road Initiative was held in October 2023 in Beijing and attended by many heads of state, including the Ethiopian premier, Abiy Ahmed.

### 6.2. Identified Frames

Based on the selected data, three major frames have been identified. They are: 1) China is a “mighty power”; 2) China is a “fortress”; and 3) China is a “beacon of hope”. These frames constitute several sub-themes within them, as presented with explicit excerpts in the following parts. Each frame and sub-theme were explained explicitly using representative examples selected from the collected data.

#### 6.2.1. China is a “Mighty Power”

China's robust economy, sizable population, and widespread influence have led to its perception as a powerful nation. It is presented as a rising superpower that can stop any aggression from the USA in particular or the West in general. This theme is dominant across African media outlets, framing the tension between China and the West (i.e., the USA and its allies). A typical scenario from the data set for this study is the representation of Nancy Pelosi's visit to Taiwan in August 2022, which triggered a spark of opposition from China. Following Pelosi's visit, the media in the West hailed the action, while the media in the East, basically China, criticized the visit, claiming that it would incite war. Likewise, the Ethiopian media took the Chinese storyline and criticized the visit through a powerful representation of China and its military and economic capability and resilience to threats. Here are some examples from the data:

እንደ የ 82 ዓመት አዛውንትን ያሳፈረ ግዙፍ አወጅጥላን ታይዋን በምትባል ራስገዝ ደሴት ላይ አረፈ። ፡ አሁን የቻይና ውጤታዊ ሀይል ቁጥጥር ይደፋ። ፡ የታይዋን ሰሜን በጀት፤ የደሴቷም ወቅያኖስ በጦር ማከብ እየታሰሰ ነው። ፡ ... ያኔ እናት ሀገር ቻይና ግዛቱ እስከ ታይዋን ወሽመጥ፤ ሉዓላዊነቴም የታይዋን ደሴቶችን ያካትታል አለች። ፡ ... በ1979 ዓ.ም. አሜሪካ የአቋም ለውጥ በሚረግጥ ከታይዋን ጋር የነበራትን ግንኙነት ሁሉ በማቋረጥ ግንኙነቷን ወደ እናት ምድር ሀዝባዊት ሪፓብሊክ ቻይና አዘረች። ፡ ያኔ የቻይና መንግስት ቻይናን ያለ ታይዋን ማለም ቀርቶ ማህበራዊ አደጋም የሚል ጠንካራ አቋማ ለአለም አሳወቀ። ፡ ይህም አቋም በሚሰማ ሀገራት የታላቅ ሆኖ ነበር። ፡ በአሜሪካ በኩል ግን ይህንን የቻይና ጽኑ አቋም የሚረረር ድርጊት በድብቅ ቀጠለ። ፡ ... አሜሪካ ባለፉት አርባ አመታት ለታይዋን አስተዳደር የጦር መሳሪያ በመሸጥ፤ በታይዋን ጉብኝት በሚረግ፤ በኋላም ቻይናን በታይዋን በኩል ከጃፓን፤ ፊሊፒንስ እና ሌሎች ሀገራት ጋር በሚገናኘው የታይዋን ወሽመጥ የጦር ማከብ በማስገባት ቀጠናውን የመቆጣጠር ድብቅ አጀንዳዋን በይፋ ገለጠች። ፡ ... በፕሬዝዳንት ዶናልድ ትራምፕ አስተዳደር ዘመንም አሜሪካ 18 ቢሊዮን ዶላር የሚወጡ የጦር ጀቶችና ሌሎች ዘመናዊ የጦር መሳሪያዎችን ለታይዋን በመሸጥ አሜሪካ የታይዋን ተገንጣይ ሀይሎችን አደፋፈረች። ፡

A huge plane carrying an 82-year-old woman landed on the self-administrative island called Taiwan. ... Now the Chinese Defense Forces are furious, and they are monitoring Taiwan's sky with jets and its oceans with the navy. ... Long ago, motherland China declared that its territory stretches up to the

Taiwan Strait and that its sovereignty includes the islands of Taiwan. ... In 1979, the USA changed its position, abandoned its relationship with Taiwan, and turned its face toward its motherland, the Peoples Republic of China. At that time, the Chinese government firmly announced the impossibility of dreaming or thinking about China without Taiwan. This position had become an accepted truth among the majority of nations in the world. However, the USA secretly continued to do things that breached China's position. ... In the last 40 years, the USA has voiced its secret agenda of controlling the region by selling firearms to the Taiwan administration, visiting Taiwan, and deploying a warship in the Taiwan Strait, which connects China with Japan, the Philippines, and other countries. ... During President Donald Trump's administration, the USA backed Taiwan's cessationist group by selling 18-billion-dollar-worth of war jets and other modern weaponry.

The above news excerpt from *Fana TV*, a television channel affiliated with Ethiopia's ruling party, clearly states China's powerfulness through a binary analogy. On the one hand, it depicts China as a "motherland," emphasizing its territorial integrity and military might, and acknowledging Taiwan as part of China's territory. In fact, Taiwan is represented as a "self-administrative island," and its leadership is labeled as a "cessationist group" backed by the USA. Such representation is synonymous, if not identical, with China's view regarding Taiwan and its sovereignty. On the other hand, the news gravely blames the USA for breaching China's territorial integrity and position by backing Taiwan through arms supply. By doing so, the USA is blamed for having a secret agenda for controlling the Taiwan Strait. Besides, the story depicted the U.S. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi as an "82-year-old women", rather than introducing her name and official status, and by doing so, the news undermines the visit and delegitimizes the action. Here, it is important to underline that representing Taiwan as part of Chinese territory and blaming the USA together with the Western world are among the major narratives in China's political discourse, and the above excerpt took the color and form of China's government storyline.

የኢኮኖሚ አቅማን አጠናክራለች፤ አለማቆላዊ የዲፕሎማሲ መሪ ቢሆን በበርካታ የአለም ሀገራት ላይ ተዘርግቷል፤ ወታደራዊ ቁመኖም ቢሆን ለማንኛውም ሀያል ሀገር ስጋት እስኪሆን ድረስ የዘመነ ነው። ፡ ለአሜሪካና ሌሎች የምራቡ ሀገራት የራስ ምታት ሆናለች። ፡ አሜሪካ ከሷ ጋር ያላትን የንግድ እና ኢንቨስትመንት ትስስር በተደጋጋሚ በምትጥላቸው የታሪፍ እቀባዎች አጣብቂኝ ወስጥ ልትከት ሞክራለች፤ ዛሬም አልባዘነችም። ፡ ቻይና ይህን ሁሉ ትንኮሳና የጋርዮሽ ተጽዕኖ የመቋቋም አቅማን ቀድሞ በማክበቷ ለማንም ልትገዛ አልቻለችም። ፡<sup>5</sup>

[China] has developed its economy, expanded its diplomatic network among numerous nations, and increased its military might to the point that it poses a threat to all superpowers, including the United States and other Western nations. Through a tariff embargo, the USA attempted—and continues to attempt—to halt China's expansion of trade. Due to its robust economic growth, China remained impervious to gang

influence and intimidation.

Akin to the previous excerpt, this example explains China’s economic progression, military might, and resilience to challenges posed by the U.S.-led Western block. Analogously, the U.S. and its allies, mostly the Western block, were represented as antagonists that have been continuously trying to halt or slow down China’s trade expansion, economic progress, and huge military buildup. As it was mentioned in the previous section, China’s political discourse is always framed in the binary opposition of ‘THEM vs. US’, and the THEM block always focuses on blaming the U.S. and its allies. Thus, the above example first glorifies China’s economic, diplomatic, and military might, followed by the ‘anti-West’ rhetoric.

የአለምሁለተኛዋ ባለግዙፍ ኢኮኖሚያዊ ችግር ችይና ይፋ ያረገ ችውቶ ፊደል እንድንቤልት ኢኒፊቴቭ አስር አመትን አስቆጥሯል፡፡ የቻይናው ፕሬዝዳንት ሺ ገርንግ ፒን በአወሮጋውያን ዘመን አቆጣጠር 2013 ላይ ይፋ ያደረጉት ይኸው ኢኒፊቴቭ ታዲያ ቻይናን ከአንድ መቶ ሀምሳ የአለም ሀገራት ጋር የሚያስተሳስርም ነው፡፡ ከፍተኛ ትሪሊዮን ዶላር ፈሰስ የሚደረግበት በታሪክ ወዲያ የአለም ፕሮጀክት እንደሆነ የሚለጸው የሮድ ኤንድ ቤልት ኢኒፊቴቭ በወደብ ልማት፣ በመንገድና በሌሎች መሳሪያዎች ቻይናን ከተቀረውአለም ጋር ይበልጥ ያገናኛታል።<sup>6</sup>፡፡

It has been 10 years since the world’s 2nd-biggest economy, China, introduced the Belt and Road initiative. The initiative that was introduced by President Xi Jinping in 2013 aims to connect China with 150 countries around the world. It’s the world’s most expensive project, with an investment of trillions of dollars and targets to connect China with the rest of the world through roads, ports, and other infrastructure.

By officially acknowledging China’s economic power as "the world’s 2nd-biggest economy, the above excerpt explains China’s mega ambition of connecting its economy with the majority of countries across the globe through the most expensive project in the world. This shows China’s mighty power and capability of implementing megaprojects that have never been seen before throughout the entire history of the world.

In a nutshell, the framing of China as a ‘mighty power’ rests on the following four metaphors: 1) China is represented as a rising tide, lifting its economy and influence to new heights; 2) China is a great wall, standing tall and impenetrable, symbolizing its strength and resilience; 3) China is a silk road, connecting nations and cultures, facilitating trade and shaping global commerce; 4) China is a mighty lion, roaring with economic prowess and territorial ambitions.

**6.2.2. China is a “Fortress”**

This frame suggests that China plays a protective role for the global south countries against potential threats or influences from the global north or Western nations. This frame is dominant in the landscapes of many African, Asian, and South American countries that once suffered massive exploitation at the hands of Europeans and later by Americans. Most African countries, which had been under colonial rule, view China as an alternative development partner that can eman-

cipate them from the various kinds of economic, political, and military manipulations from their former colonizers and the USA. This is evident in the media reports across Africa that emphasize hailing China-led worldwide initiatives such as the New Development Bank, the BRICS, and the Belt and Road Initiatives in favor of long-standing synonymous organizations such as the World Bank, IMF, UN, and other affiliated institutions. Here, China is viewed as the initiator and leader of the New World Order. In Ethiopia too, the media remains intact, framing China as a superpower that could defend the country from Western manipulations. Despite not being colonized; the Ethiopian media outlets are firmly focused on viewing China as a fortress against the US-led western power. Here are some examples:

... ኢትዮጵያ በአባልነት የተቀላቀለችው የብሪክስ ጥምረት ደግሞ ከምዕራባውያን ዘርፈብዙ ተጽዕኖ የተላቀቀ፣ አዲስ የዓለም ስርዓት ለመፍጠር የሚሰራ በመሆኑ የሀገሪቱን ተሰማኝነት ይበልጥ ከፍ የሚያደርግ ነው፡፡ ... አሁን ባለው አዲስ የዓለም ስርዓት ለመፍጠር በሚደረገው ፍትህ ደግሞ በነባራዊ ሁኔታው ከደመገጃ ጋር ብሎ ብቻ መቀመጥን ሳይሆን ከራስ እሳቤ እና አቋም ጋር ከሚሞከሩ ጥምረትን መፍጠር ወቅቱ ግድ የሚልበት<sup>7</sup>...

...The BRICS Ethiopia joined in is a joint effort that is free from the West’s multidimensional influence and works to create a new world order, and as a result, it enhances Ethiopia’s visibility. ... In the contemporary struggle of creating a new world order, it’s a must to create a joint with those who have similarities with their thoughts and stands, rather than sitting in isolation and saying I am free from the blood.

For decades, countries in the global south have been expressing their discontent towards the Western world, which was always blamed for controlling the world’s resources, economy, politics, and culture through colonization and, afterwards, neo-colonization. Countries have been under the influence of global organizations that were established to bring peace, justice, and development throughout the globe. Yet, these global organizations have been used as a manipulation tool by the global north countries in their pursuit of wealth and resources from the global south countries. Taking this as a departure line, the above excerpt represents the BRICS as a way of freedom for third-world countries in general and Ethiopia in particular. In this process of getting away from the west’s manipulation and creating a new world order, BRICS holds the central stage, putting China at its nucleus. Accordingly, China is viewed as a shield or fortress that could defend the countries of the global south from any kind of influence, threat, or manipulation from the global north.

“... ብሪክስ በምዕራባውያን የሚዘወረው የግለሰብ ፍርድ አርደር ወይም አገዛዝ የግለሰብ ሳወዝ ሀገራትን ጥቅም በፍትህ መንገድ ከሚከጠበቅ አኳያ ብቃትና ቅብልነት እያጣ በመሞጣቱ እና አግላይነቱ በከፋ መልኩ እየታየ በመሞጣቱ የተነሳ ይህንን ችግር በመሰረታዊነት ለመፍታት የሚያስችል አማራጭ ሌላ ሂደት በተደረገው ትግል የተፈጠረ የደቡብ ደቡብ የትብብር መድረክ ወይም ብሉክ ነው፡፡<sup>8</sup>”

“BRICS is a south-south cooperation or block created out of the struggle to find an alternative to the global north order or hegemony that has been losing its acceptance due to its injustice, partiality, and inability to ensure the benefits of the global south countries”.

Similar to the previous example, the above excerpt underlines the significance of BRICS by analogously criticizing the existing world order dominated by the global north and its partiality and injustice towards the global south. By doing so, BRICS is hailed as a way-out from the West’s hegemony, and China is represented as a midwife of the process.

... አንዳንድ ተንታኞች እንደሚሉት ፕሮጀክቱ እየጨመረ የመጣውን የቻይናና ሌሎች ሀገራት ጠንካራ ግንኙነት ይበልጥ ለማሳደግና የሀገሪቱን የሀይል ማዘን ለማስጠበቅ ትልቅ ማገድ ያለው ነው። ይህ ግዙፍ ፕሮጀክት ቻይናን ከተቀረው ዓለም በወደቦች፣ በባቡርና በመንገድ ማስተሳሰር ትልል ግቡ ነው። በአንጻሩ፣ አሜሪካና ሌሎች ምዕራባውያን ደግሞ ይህ የቤልት ኤንድ ሮድ ፕሮጀክት ቻይናን በአለምአቀፍ ደረጃ ለምታደርገው የጥሬ እቃ ቅርምትና ወታደራዊ ማስፋፋት የትርጉም ፈረስ ነው በሚሉት ስጋታቸውን ይገልጻሉ። ... ምዕራባውያን እንደሚሉት ፕሮጀክቱ በወሰጡሌላ አጀንዳ የያዘ የትርጉም ፈረስ ነው ወይስ የእነሱን የአማካኝ የባላይነት ገሽሽ አድርጎ የጋራ ተጠቃሚነት የሰፈነበት የኢኮኖሚ ስርዓት የሚጥር ማሆኑ ነው ያሰጋቸው<sup>9</sup>

... According to some analysts, the project [Belt and Road] is crucial to widening China’s increasing relations with other countries and to maintaining the country’s power balance. This huge project’s aim is to connect China with the rest of the world through ports, railways, and roads. Contrarily, the USA and other Western countries express their worries, claiming that the Belt and Road Initiative is a Trojan horse for China’s worldwide ambitions of resource grabbing and military expansion. ... Does the project have a hidden agenda, as the Westerners say, or are they worried because the project defies their long-standing hegemony and creates an economic system centered on mutual benefits?

In the above example, there are two storylines. The first three lines underline the aim of the Belt and Road initiative, together with explaining its massive size and wide coverage. Then, the next statement presents the worries and views of the West towards the project, claiming that the project is a Trojan horse for China’s hidden agenda. Finally, the news questions the West’s view critically, defends China’s storyline, and hails the project. In doing so, the news tried to unravel the agenda hidden behind the West’s criticism of the Belt and Road initiative and discredit their argument by reminding them of the injustice and partiality they committed. In conclusion, by defending the project and discrediting the critics from the West, the news represented China as a shield of protection and a path of mutual benefit among countries.

... የአፍሪካን ኢኮኖሚአሁን ካለበት ደረጃ ስርነት ቀል በሆነ መንገድ ለማሻሻል እንደሚገባ በሚሉ ገለጻት የጀህንስበርጉ ጉባኤ አለም ያጋጠመውን የምጣኔ ሀብት ስብራት በፍተሀዊነት እንዲመኝ ደግ ጉልበት

እንደሚሆን ወም በርካታ የፖለቲካ ተንታኞች በመገለጽ ላይ ናቸው። ጉባኤው ከቀዝቃዛው የአለም ጦርነት ወዲህ የዓለም አቀፉ የንግድ እንቅስቃሴና ማጠባበቂያ በጀቶችን በዶላር ትኩረት ላይ ብቻ ይሁን ተብሎ አሜሪካ ያስደነገገችውን የባላይነት ቀልብ፣ ቡድን ሰባትና ቡድን ሀያ አባል ሀገራት ላይ የተንጠለጠለውን የጂኦፖለቲካ፣ የኢኮኖሚና የዲፕሎማሲ እንቅስቃሴ በመቀልበስ መገዳደር የሚችል መሆኑን የሀይል ማዘን ከምዕራባውያን ለመንጠቅ በሚደረገው ግብግብ የክንደ ፈር ጥምቶቹ ቻይናና ህንድ ስብስብ የሆነው ብሪክስ በዚሁ ጉባኤ አዲስ የመጣ በያያ ገንዘብን ይፋ ለማድረግ የደረሰበትን ደረጃ እንደሚሳወቅም ይጠበቃል።<sup>10</sup> ...

... Many political analysts are saying that the Johannesburg summit, which is expected to improve Africa’s economy massively, will play a pivotal role in fixing the world’s economic halt through justice. The summit is expected to introduce its new currency by averting the USA’s hegemony, which proclaimed the dollar as the sole currency of international trade and reserve after the end of the Cold War. BRICS, the team of the giants China and India, will challenge the [world’s] geopolitics, economy, and diplomacy that were dominated by the G7 and G20 countries.

As it was explained in the previous sections, the world’s economy has been dominated by the global north, and at the center of this world order are the G7 and G20 organizations. These organizations consolidated the power to determine the overall political, economic, diplomatic, and other activities of the world. To breach this hegemony, countries such as China and India established a new block called BRICS, and this block has been viewed by many African countries as a fortress that can defend them from the West’s manipulation. Accordingly, the news in the above example underlines the positive impact of the BRICS on improving Africa’s economy and challenging the world order dominated by the global north. In doing so, China is represented as a giant powerhouse capable of challenging the West and defending the South from possible influence and manipulation.

In summary, the framing of China as a ‘fortress’ emphasizes the following metaphors: 1) China is a shield, defending Africa from the encroachment of the global north’s dominance; 2) China is a fortress, fortifying the global south against the influence and exploitation of the global north; 3) China is a shield of prosperity, shielding the third world from the economic exploitation of the global north. In doing so, the West is always blamed and represented within a manipulative frame.

**6.2.3. China is a “Beacon of Hope”**

Given its massive investment, infrastructure development, aid, and huge financial assistance to Africa, China has been viewed as a source of hope and prosperity by many African countries. Its existence in Africa and its relationship with African countries is perceived as non-manipulative and a win-win sum game. This is vividly evident in the reports of media outlets across Africa. China is represented by the African media as caring partner, who centers on mutual cooper-



ኢንቨስትመንት ምንጭ አጋር ሆኖ ጥቅም ጥይታለች፡፡<sup>13</sup>

Axum's civilization and China's civilization were two of the four notable ancient civilizations. Historical documents reveal that the countries had a trade relationship based on the Red Sea. In modern times, the relationship between the two countries began in the 1970s during the reign of Emperor Haileselassie I, and the relationship has stood still for more than 50 years with comprehensive strategic cooperation for development and trade. Especially since the 1990s, the two countries have been building strong multidimensional cooperation. "Especially in the last ten, fifteen years, China has been a strong ally of Ethiopia in multiple dimensions. For China, Ethiopia is an African showcase. Especially when China began to become a superpower in 2008 and began to compete with the USA, speaking and creating a good relationship with Ethiopia is considered as speaking with other African countries indirectly by China. Ethiopia too considers China a major economic and diplomatic ally." The relationship between the countries has been developing, and for years, China has been Ethiopia's major trade and investment source and ally.

The above excerpt from Walta TV, a television channel affiliated with the ruling party, emphasizes the strong cooperation between China and Ethiopia through historical allusions. The news begins with the trade relationship between Axum's (Ethiopia's ancient civilization existed three thousand years ago) and China's ancient civilizations. By doing so, the news tried to show the deep-rooted relationship between the two countries. Then the story boldly asserts the cooperation between the two countries over the last five decades. Finally, the story labels China as a major source of trade and investment, and this vividly entails China's role in midwifery Ethiopia's development and prospects. As a result, China is represented as a source of hope.

In conclusion, the framing of China as a "beacon of hope" entails the following metaphorical themes: 1) China's support for Africa is like a lighthouse, guiding and illuminating the path towards development and prosperity; 2) China and Ethiopia are like a strong bond, unbreakable and resilient in the face of challenges, supporting each other through thick and thin; 3) China and Africa are like a team, collaborating and strategizing together to achieve shared goals and mutual success; 4) China's involvement in Africa is like a bridge, connecting the two regions and fostering mutual understanding and exchange.

## 7. Discussion and Conclusion

The chief objective of this study was to examine the representation of China in the Ethiopian broadcast media. To that end, the study selected six television channels using purposive sampling and their coverage of issues in China in relation to three events. They are: 1) U.S. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi's visit to Taiwan; 2) the 2023 BRICS' summit held in South Africa; and 3) the 2023 Belt and Road Initiative summit held

in Beijing. A corpus of 47 stories, regardless of their genre, was compiled and analyzed using framing theory and qualitative content analysis. The analysis revealed that China has been represented consistently through three frames. They are:

1. *China is a "mighty power"*: China is represented as an emerging superpower that is capable of averting the long-standing dominance of the global north block led by the U.S. and its Western allies. This frame is mainly focused on showing China's military strength, economic boom, and territorial integrity. Particularly, Taiwan is represented as part of China's territory, and its leadership is labeled as a cessationist group backed by the U.S.-led Western block. In fact, the U.S. has been blamed for breaching China's sovereignty, economic progress, and diplomatic initiatives.
2. *China is a "fortress"*: The frame depicts China as a shield for the global south, Africa in general, and Ethiopia in particular. In doing so, the frame first presents the West's manipulation of the global south countries and then represents China as a shield or fortress that could protect Africa and Ethiopia from potential manipulations through a win-win strategy. This is a similar finding to Li's (2021) study that focused on the representation of China in Kenyan and Ethiopian media during the COVID-19 pandemic. Li's study found that China has been represented as a powerful nation and a strong ally to Ethiopia. In fact, China, together with Russia, used their veto power in the UNSC to decline many sanctions proposed by the West during northern Ethiopia's war. In the current study as well, China is represented as a caring partner with a strong iron fist that is capable of protecting Ethiopia through its massive initiatives, such as the BRICS and Belt and Road Initiatives, that aim to create a new world order where countries enjoy equal status and mutual economic benefits.
3. *China is a "beacon of hope"*: This frame first blames the West for manipulating and under-developing Africa and Ethiopia, and then represents China as a way out of the problem and progress towards development and prosperity. In doing so, the frame focuses on representing China as a trusted ally of Ethiopia that builds on cooperation and mutual benefits. This cooperation is depicted through massive infrastructure development, financial support, and diplomatic assistance.

The Ethiopian broadcast media has consistently presented China in a positive light, in contrast to the negative portrayal of the country in the western media. Not only did Ethiopian media portray China in a favorable light, but they also went too far in offering a counter-narrative to the bad images that the western media continued to propagate. This is mostly accomplished by casting China as a messiah who can offer solutions and holding the United States and its allies accountable for the numerous issues that have occurred throughout the world.

China has been depicted by Ethiopian media as a savior

who can provide answers to a lot of the current global issues. This is accomplished by showcasing China's economic expansion and advancement, which is regarded as a template for other emerging nations to imitate. The media frequently emphasizes China's initiatives to advance global peace and stability, especially in Africa, where China has made significant investments.

Furthermore, the Ethiopian media has held the US and its allies responsible for a host of global problems that have happened. This is accomplished by drawing attention to the hypocrisy of western nations' international policies, which frequently put their own interests ahead of those of other nations. The detrimental effects of Western operations around the world, particularly in Africa, are also emphasized by the media.

In conclusion, the Ethiopian broadcast media has consistently portrayed China in a positive light and has gone too far in offering a counter-narrative to the negative images propagated by the western media. This is achieved by casting China as a messiah who can offer solutions and holding the United States and its allies accountable for their actions.

## Abbreviations

BRICS	BRICS is an Intergovernmental Organization Comprising 9 Countries - Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa, Iran, Egypt, Ethiopia, and the United Arab Emirates
BRI	Belt and Road Initiative
ETV	Ethiopian Television
NWIO	New World Information Order
UNSC	United Nations Security Council

## Author Contributions

Berhanu Asfaw Weldemikael is the sole author. The author read and approved the final manuscript.

## Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest.

## Appendix (URL Address of the Analyzed Stories)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HUeyd4i2uyw>  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KSxpiCx\\_dcQ](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KSxpiCx_dcQ)  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cWI57BkSk5M>  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iU4QiaBIRzY>  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2qDRmMo-DRM>  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CDsoX5220sE>  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3pj88Y-JjUg>  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X1BeK\\_OEcBQ](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X1BeK_OEcBQ)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FVWVkJZe6igc>  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rJbFwdeWczQ>  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MnmIbBL7t78>  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Krip3p1IJoI>  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rg0Uukpe1q4>  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-3Qzrx7tKJQ>  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uTnVrd7QekY>  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d-vCXUeHqCI>  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-C3apA9Or6Q>  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Vcp0nC5Fgns>  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HCHvQHv5gl0>  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bN-bkK0bXQk>  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1toff5jQC9M>  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ulBe5go6pxA>  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=08PK\\_tDxMPc](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=08PK_tDxMPc)  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0QohuHIwiMc>  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BpAphlS0ZQo>  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OmZ\\_R14PFec](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OmZ_R14PFec)  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=34gfbBWJy\\_U](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=34gfbBWJy_U)  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pGux8RVdWjg>  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uJYy7-yGcd4>  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jbPFaR86Kjo>  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FnuGNw0uRXw>  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g81QFWVKSZY>  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qCex9zD9PjY>  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Rm\\_BxSmaZPY](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Rm_BxSmaZPY)  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3337p8AXDcA>  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yIN03MxzEHo>  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oAppvSB-h3I>  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=umJgPuhoFSE>  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kToNiBfsqOQ>  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gAajfzMIFto>  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5NhDuV5v9ZU>  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ympJlh7ZcDE>  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yJh7sA09FkI>  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dGflvOokEgg>  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-1aQyQ1QfYg>  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ipSzjCABxXY>  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EotjhlrTmkA>  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QMFexxDQ6mM>  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9VE0dey1KWM>  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R9z8\\_sdq3Kk](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R9z8_sdq3Kk)  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R45ltlgpUeE>

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## Biography

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1 BRICS is an intergovernmental organization comprising 9 countries - Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa, Iran, Egypt, Ethiopia, and the United Arab Emirates.

2 The portrayal of China in Western media - Daily Times

3 All the excerpts used as examples throughout this paper are abridged forms of full stories, be they news, documentaries, or interviews, and the English translations next to the original texts are provided by the author.

4 This is an abridged form of a commentary about Pelosi's visit to Taiwan, presented by *Fana BC*, a broadcast outlet affiliated with Ethiopia's ruling party, the PP.

5 A news item from *Asham TV*.

6 A news item broadcasted in the Ethiopian national television, ETV.

7 News item broadcasted by ETV.

8 A quotation from a senior government official was included as a key message in one of the news stories aired by TV.

9 A commentary from ETV regarding the Belt and Road project.

10 An analysis presented by NBC Ethiopia.

11 A news item from *Fana BC*.

12 A news excerpt from *Walta TV*.

13 A news excerpt from *Walta TV*.