
The Influence of Political Authorities on Political News Reports in ‘Addis Zemen’ and ‘The Reporter’: A Comparative Study

By-

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Acronyms and abbreviations used in this study

EFJA=====Ethiopian Free Journalists' Association

EHRCO===Ethiopian Human Rights Council

ENA=====Ethiopian News Agency

EPA=====Ethiopian Press Agency

EPRDF=====Ethiopian Peoples' Revolutionary Democratic Front

ERTA=====Ethiopian Radio and Television Agency

FoE =====Freedom of Information

FoP =====Freedoms of the Press

FoS=====Freedom of Speech

HPR=====House of People's Representatives

IPI=====International Press Institute

IPU=====Inter-Parliamentary Union

MoFA=====Ministry of Foreign Affairs

MoI=====Ministry of Information

TGE=====Transitional Government of Ethiopia

UDHR=====Universal Declaration of Human Rights

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(Yekebede)

ABSTRACT

Ethiopian media industry is hampered by various factors, one of which is the influence coming from political authorities. The constitution of the country has clearly enshrined freedoms of speech and of the press. However, on the ground, these freedoms have not been translated the way they are provided for in the constitution.

This study is aimed at evaluating the presence of this influence of political authorities that is seen as hampering the independent political news reporting of two national Amharic newspapers - '*Addis Zemen*' and '*The Reporter*'. To achieve this, the study has made a comparison on the variations, degree, particular nature and relative impact of the influences on the two papers.

The study will show that the influence of political authorities, though unavoidable in any part of the world, is seriously damaging the political news reporting of Ethiopian media. This in particular is constraining the independent role of the state owned '*Addis Zemen*.' The private owned '*The Reporter*', on the other hand, though still impacted by the influence, is performing better and is trying to contribute to the national democratizations efforts.

Generally speaking, the study has identified this influence of political officials as a hindrance on the constitutional Freedoms of Speech and of the Press, as well as on the public's right to know.

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1 Chapter One – A Prelude

1.1 Introduction

The 21st century can safely be described as an “information age”, where “...the global revolution in communications and media reached new heights with new developments in message delivery system, new information infrastructures and in digital broadcasting” (Okigbo and Eribo, 2004: 63) all made possible in a bid to satisfy human beings’ growing desire for information.

Information is one of the “major pillars” of current technological advancement and world civilization. People’s use of information in the 21st century has reached remarkable heights, with “Most people rely(ing) on journalists (and hence the media) for surveillance –to inform them about what is going on in the world today” (Ruddin and Ibbotson, 2003:1). In fact, as stated by Franz Kruger, “today’s world without information would be unimaginable” (Kruger, 2004).

In his book *On Democracy*, Robert A Dahl described the century as a “democratic era.” The global “inclination towards democratic ideals and democratic forms of governance has become an additional feature of the 21st century” (Dahl, 2000). Needless to say democracy has gained strong momentum in the social, economic and political aspects of the globe in general.

In Ethiopia, however, despite its 3000 years of history, unique alphabet and long tradition of writing, the development of media is a recent phenomenon, with Ethiopian print media industry only appearing around 1900 (Shimeles, 2000). This late development of the press has been further constrained by social, economic and technological factors. The adverse attitude held by previous politicians and governments has also contributed a lion’s share in complicating this late development of the media (ibid; Daniel, 2003).

Ethiopia is also a country that has suffered a lot at the hands of undemocratic governments. According to Fasil Nahum (1997)¹, the absolute hereditary monarchy that ruled the country till 1974 and the socialist military regime ‘Derg,’ were “undemocratic” in that they granted limited democratic and human rights in their respective constitutions. The country’s renewed hope for democracy, like many other African countries, only came in the early 1990s. Although the constitutions of the previous governments made a few references to FoE and FoP, the exercise of these rights have not been realized except in a few instances. During these regimes the state media was regarded as the personal property of governments and private press was outlawed. Thus the media was relegated as a propaganda machine for the ruling classes while the public was devoid of alternative media outlets.

The governmental change of 1991 and the subsequent change of the constitutional order have brought about the flourishing of private press and the restructuring of the state media. One of the first tasks carried out by the ruling party, the Ethiopian People’s Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) right after its assumption of power in 1991, was to issue a proclamation that was aimed at regulating media industries (EFDRE Proclamation 6/1991 and proclamation 34/1992). The new government “retained the preexisting state media under its control and greatly expanded it, and it allowed the private sector to participate in the media industry” (Nahum, 1997).” The constitutional change that followed the governmental change has also assisted the development of the media.

Article 29 of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (FDRE)’s constitution, grants Freedom of Expression and of the Press as basic and inalienable human rights. The immediate result of this political reform as well as the enactment of various legal documents that ensured media freedom was the flourishing, in an unprecedented manner, of several newspapers and magazines, whose ownership ranged from private individuals to civic organizations and religious institutions in the country.

¹ Constitution for A Nation of Nations the Ethiopian Prospect

However, this fast growth of the media industry, in particular, the private print media, was curtailed in 2005 following the government's measures taken in connection with the third national election and the political turmoil that followed shortly after. Almost all of the Ethiopian private newspapers, together with a few foreign news outlets, have been blamed by the government for "unethical" and "subversive" news reports. The government also used the coercive power of the police force to shutter the operations of at least twenty newspapers, arrested their owners and professionals; and filled treason charges on them (IPI. 2006 update on Ethiopia).

Although, these measures of the government became blatant in this period, the government has been accused of mishandling Ethiopian media for years. Until very recently, the country was devoid of private electronic media. The private print media on the other hand, was complaining about strict licensing, antagonism, lack of cooperation in accessing government information as well as the previously mentioned cases of frequent harassment, intimidation, criminal charges, arrest and assault, among others.

The state owned media (ERTA, EPA, ENA and others) have been allegedly living under the economic, legal and political mercy of the government. They are reportedly provided with loyal media officials and gatekeepers that ensure the adherence of the media to the political system. Though directly answerable to the HPR and provided with constitutional rights that provided them with independence from the government, these media organizations have been incorporated into the governmental information network that is spearheaded and directed by the MoI. The provision of direct orders, enforcing self-censorship on journalists, political editing (sanitization) and the like, are said to be some of the major forms of influences from political authorities violating the independence of the media.

Although the government frequently maintains that it has freed Ethiopian media from any form of influence, the two-way accusation and blaming between the media (the private media in particular) and the government is a continuing saga to date, and is the basis for this investigation.

1.2 The research objectives

This study is aimed at investigating one of the factors that are hampering the independent role of Ethiopian media i.e. influence by political authorities. Although the paper acknowledges that there are a lot of other factors involved, political authorities' influence has been singled out as particularly constraining on the independence of the media in Ethiopia. The study is aimed at exploring the extent of this influence by political authorities in both the public and the private media. In doing so, it is hoped that the study will play its part in contributing to the country's fresh efforts on democratic reform.

1.3 Statement of the problem

As stated in the previous section, the governmental change that occurred in Ethiopia in 1991 as well as the subsequent political and legal reforms has brought about the increased number of private newspapers. The laws and regulations issued to regulate the Ethiopian electronic media have restructured the state owned media after the public service broadcaster model of the west.

Despite these legal provisions, the operations of Ethiopian media have been challenged by several political problems. The media, in particular the private media and the government blame each other for irresponsibility in mishandling FoE and FoP. The press blames the government for repressing its independence through strict licensing procedures, official secrecy, as well as arbitrary "harassment, intimidation and frequent imprisonment of journalists from the private press (EFJA, 2007; IPI Report update on Ethiopia 2006, 2007 and 2008; Reporters sans Frontiers, 2007; EHRCO 2007; Daniel, 2006; and Shimeles, 2000). Following the political turmoil that was created in 2005 the government accused several private newspapers of violation of press laws and misconduct in the exercise of FoE and FoP. Consequently, the state brought treason charges on the papers and liquidated them afterwards.

On the other hand, some of the legal provisions that restructured the state media have been accused of creating gaps in which the government could interfere in the

independent operations of the media. This interference of the government on the media is presumably realized through the appointment of “loyal” media executives, allocation of funds, issuing directions on the operations of news desks as well as other activities (Daniel, 2003).

Apart from these conflicting views, both the private and state media are provided with constitutional rights and freedoms, the exercise of which should not be limited except in accordance with the law. Ethiopian media, like any other media institutions in the world, is supposed to serve independently and to satisfy the public’s right to information. This can, however be achieved through protecting the media’s independence and operational freedom from powerful organs. Examples of such powerful organs that are deemed to influence media organizations are political organs and officials. If present, such political factors, particularly the arbitrary intervention of political officials, may bring adverse consequences on the independent activities of the media organizations and their professional duties. These influences will have dire implications on the free flow of truthful news and information; on the media’s role to act as a platform for the entertainment of diversified values, opinions and ideologies and thereby impacting on the media’s role to serve the public’s interests, rights and need for information.

While political actors and parties are supposed to be guardians of freedoms of expression and of the press; elements that have a huge role in democratizing nation states, sometimes these same officials become the major sources of problems for the independent operations of the media. It is this paradox that the study seeks to unravel in the case of Ethiopia.

1.4 The Research Questions

This research work entitled “The Influence of Political Authorities on Political News Reports in *Addis Zemen* and *Reporter*: A Comparative Study” tries to investigate the political news reporting activities of two Amharic news papers. In doing so the study tries to answer the following research questions:

1. Is there any influence by political authorities on the news reporting of Ethiopian media organizations?
2. What are the major forms and nature of this political influence?
3. How does this political influence affect the comparative independence of state vs. private media?
4. What are the aggregate effects of the political influence on the independent operations of the two newspapers in particular and the Ethiopian media in general?

1.5 The research hypothesis

This study is founded on the premise that Ethiopian media activities have been constrained by several political factors, that is, strict regulation by the government, criminalized libel and sedition charges, strict licensing procedures for the private media and firm supervision on the state ones among others. Of all these factors, the researcher believes that the influence from political officials of the country is a major constraint and has thus been dedicated as the subject of enquiry in this study.

In line with this, the study hypothesizes that:

1. There is a remarkable degree of influence by political officials and their offices in the independent operations of the Ethiopian media.
2. The state owned media are responding in favor of the political authorities, thus relegating their responsibility of serving the public interests.
3. The private media have been sandwiched between the double pressures of serving the public's interest and the challenges arising from such factors.
4. Ultimately the paper assumes that both the state and private owned media are not efficiently discharging their inherent role of serving the public, watchdogging the government and its officials, safeguarding FoS, FoE and FoP and their role as a lubricant for socio-political reform and democratization.

1.6 Theoretical perspective

In undertaking this study the paper tries to make use of various theoretical perspectives that are directly related to the topic under investigation. Firstly, the paper uses the “Normative Theory of the Media in a Democracy”. This theory underscores the role and contribution of the media in nurturing and upholding a democratic order. Scholars, that is, Media, Communications and Political in particular, note the immense power of the media in shaping public opinions and attitudes. “The media”, they say, “plays (a) significant role in reforming and structuring the social political and economic aspects of nations and the world” (Street, 2001). By informing and educating the public on various political issues and serving as a platform for the free flow of ideas, the media has played a momentous role in global politics.

It is important to note that the role of the media is not only limited to informative and educative functions, but that its watch-dogging role on governments has also been proved important. In recognition of their contribution in limiting the power excesses of the three arms of the governments, the media have been reputed as the “*Unlegislated Legislatures*” or the “fourth state” (Ruddin Ibbotson: 2003).

Cognizant of its role in advancing a democratic system, several countries have incorporated Freedom of Expression (FoE) and of the Press (FoP) in their national constitutions. These rights have also been enshrined in various international legal documents such as the Universal Declaration on Human Rights (UDHR) and the African Bangui Charter. However, the conception of the media in several countries has not received a warm welcome. Political leaders in Europe and elsewhere have been uncomfortable with the creation of a medium that enlightens the citizenry, challenges the status quo and stirs up socio-political reform. This has resulted “in the media’s unbroken disagreement with people power” (Ruddin and Ibbotson: 2003). Political officials in every part of the world have been undertaking their level best to impose the free role of the media and the media has been striving throughout centuries to ensure its freedom and independence from the influences of the politicians. The battle between media and political figures has not only withstood the test of time but has also transcended geographical distance. Despite variations in magnitude, form and effect, governments and

politicians from all parts of the world have been trying to tighten their grip on the media and curb the free flow of information unfavorable to them.

Following the end of the Cold War and the collapse of the Soviet Union several countries of Africa, Latin America, Asia and Eastern Europe have embarked on democratizing their nations. This democratic fervor being witnessed in the world has also been reflected in Ethiopia.

The second theoretical perspective the paper is founded on is the “Political Economy of Mass Media.” This theory, according to John Street, assumes that “all forms of public communication are subject to an element of regulation” (Street, 2001:104). However, although the government in the global market of the current world is assumed to take a “peripheral role” both in the economic and political communication, “it still remains a crucial player.” (ibid) Through the imposition of regulations and the granting of liberties through law and policy, governments and their agents continue to influence journalism.

This intervention of governments is quite apparent in the news media both of the democratized west and the democratizing African countries. Although there are claims frequently made by governments of having granted absolute freedom for their media institutions to act independently,

“...what is reported in the newspapers and on television is not simply a product either of events in the world or of the perceptions and prejudices of individual journalists. Although events and prejudices certainly play their part, equally important are the conditions and the constraints under which journalism is practiced” (Street, 2001:103)

According to this theory the socio-political factors in which the profession is practiced and particularly the political system, will definitely influence the nature of journalism practiced in a country. These influences are realized through various ways such as laws and regulations, secrecy, spin-doctoring and propaganda tools.

Thirdly, in order to briefly assess the Ethiopian media landscape, the study will make use of the “Four Theories of the Press” which were written by Siebert, Peterson and

Schramm (1956). In this model the government / media relations take the presumption that the “press always takes the coloration of the social and political structures within which it operates” (Siebert et al, 1956: P.1)

The study has incorporated these and other theoretical perspectives on media, media and democracy and the relationship of governments with the media. In so doing, it is hoped that the study will present a convincing case that gives a clearer picture of the role the Ethiopian media is playing for the country’s fresh start towards political reform and democratization, the impact the media is receiving from political authorities in their independent operations as well as a brief description Ethiopian media-government relationship.

1.7 Research Methodologies

The intricate nature of the subject matter raised in this study requires a careful selection and use of appropriate research methodology. The various stages and dimensions of the study cannot be dealt with through the use of a single methodology and as a result, the study employs both qualitative and quantitative research methodologies. Triangulating the research methodologies has the objective of balancing or covering the weakness of one of the research methodologies used for a specific stage of the study.

Three kinds of research tools, that is, attitudinal measure survey, content analysis, and in-depth interviews, have been employed in the study to obtain quantitative and qualitative research findings. The selection and justification of the research methodologies has been elaborated in chapter three of the study.

1.8 Scope of the Study

The study would be mostly limited to the task of investigating the Amharic news reports of the two newspapers i.e. ‘Addis Zemen’ and ‘The Reporter’, focusing particularly on the political news items and political reporters. The two newspapers have been selected because of the apparent simplicity to undertake comparisons on a particular genre of media outlet i.e. print media. This is also aimed at creating a feasible comparison

between the state and private owned media. The two newspapers have also been selected because they have been serving the society for a long period despite the difference in their ownership.

1.9 Limitations of the Study

The Media is a very broad sector which encompasses different forms, and for the purposes of a single Masters' thesis, it would not be feasible to look at all forms of the media as well as all institutions that make up the Media in Ethiopia. The choice of print media and in particular only two "Amharic" newspapers in a country that has a lot of newspapers, automatically excludes a very big area both in terms of form and language in which political influence by authorities could be evident. This constitutes the first limitation of this study, as it presents a narrow view of the impact of politicians on reporting. The influence of political officials on media organizations manifests the world over, and in most of cases this influence is hidden and is disguised in various pretexts. The delicate and complex nature of the study required that the research concentrated on those newspapers that were likely to yield results. There was always the danger that for one reason or the other, interviewees would be suspicious and reluctant to openly express their comments on some of the political influences and thus the political system.

Admittedly, political influence varies from place to place and also significantly differs in accordance with the peculiar realities of the various newspapers. The fact that the surveys and the interviewees were conducted in the capital and in two regional towns limits the physical reach of the findings. However, it should be noted that practically, it would not have been feasible to do the study in the whole country, and the capital was chosen because it houses the headquarters of both newspapers. The comparative analyses were made on only two of the country's several newspapers because of the readership, and thus their perceived importance in the country. The research methodologies used for the study were by no means exhaustive and the samples not an all encompassing. The accuracy of the scale that was used in the analysis, the researcher's own preconceived ideas about the topic under examination, all form part of the various limitations of this study. Nonetheless, the driving force behind this study was not a need to produce a perfect piece of work. Rather, it was an attempt to examine one of the factors that have

impacted on the independent reporting of the private and the public media, and in so doing, contribute to the wealth of literature on the subject, the field in general, as well as the country's new initiative towards democracy.

2 Chapter two - Review of Related Literature & Theoretical Approach

2.1 Information and news media in contemporary society

There is a widely held perception that “the contemporary period is the beginning of a new phase in human society, with industrial society being replaced by what is most commonly called the information society (Campbell, 2004:2).” In support of this view, Okigbo (2005) quotes Keohane and Nye (1998) as saying that “...the global revolution in communications and media reached new heights with new developments in message delivery system, new information infrastructures and in digital broadcasting” (Okigbo C. and Eribo, 2004:63). This trend is being manifested through the boom in ICT and services as well as the growth of multinational media corporations.

Campbell, (2004:2) summarizes the overall effects of the transformation saying, “we are possibly at the beginning of an era of transition from societies organized around industrial development to societies organized around information.” For many scholars like Garrison (1992), this transition is a response to human beings’ “inherent” desire to know what’s going on around their environment and it is revolutionizing our lives.

Journalism and media corporations with their various genres; newspapers, magazines, radio, television and the new media, are an integral part of the information system. In order to achieve its current position, “journalism has come a long way since the Gutenberg Bible of the 1455...since then, new technologies have been at the forefront of journalism developments (Herbert, 2000:7),” and in recent decades, this development of the media has been assisted by the boom in technological advancements.

Journalism and news media have been at the center of world political and social reformation for the past four or more centuries. They have performed various activities that simplified the way we live. Some of "the important functions of the media in any free country (or Society)", as stated by Curran and Seaton (2003) include; “to inform, to

discuss, to mirror, to bind, to campaign to challenge, to entertain and to judge.” (Curran and Seaton, 2003: 380)²

As a result information intake and people’s reliance on it, particularly in the developed west, has reached remarkable levels. As Pradip and Nain (2004:24) explained it, “Mass media and electronic media in today’s highly differentiated and compartmentalized world are becoming the primary means through which people interact with each other, beyond their immediate every day contacts.” Information has become the backbone of economic, social, political and cultural activities. In fact according to Kruger (2004), “the modern world is quite unimaginable without the media.” The role played by the media in countries like Ethiopia, where political reform, democratization and renewed efforts for development are fresh starts, is of paramount importance. The Ethiopian, media, however, is characterized by low development and inefficiency, and is constrained by several factors including the one being addressed in this study.

2.2 Democracy an ultimate resort?

During the last half of the 20th century the world started to witness “unprecedented change” in the political sphere. In this period “people and governments started to realize the dangers of dictatorial, aristocratic and other non-democratic forms of governance” (Dahl, 2000). This attitudinal shift has pushed “all of the main alternatives to democracy to disappear, turn into eccentric survivals, or retreat from the field to hunker down in their last stronghold” (Ibid: 1). These moves for democracy have grown well into the 21st century and form an integral basis for this study.

In this century “democracy, both as an ideal and as a set of political institutions and practices, has triumphed in most countries of the world. Even in those where it has not, democracy forms the aspiration of many of their citizens” (IPU,³ 2005). This growing

² Power without Responsibility: The Press and Broadcasting in Britain

³ Parliament and Democracy in the 21st Century - Preliminary Report by the Inter-Parliamentary Union Convened by the Inter-Parliamentary Union at United Nations headquarters, New York, 7 to 9 September 2005

inclination towards democracy has become one of the characteristic features of the 21st century. A lot of weight and value has been attached to democracy because, “the main concern of liberal democracy”, as described by MacNair (2003) is “to grant individual civil liberties against the incursion of the state.” Democracy is also preferred because it prevents:

“government by the cruel and vicious autocrats; guarantees citizens a number of fundamental rights, ensures its citizens a broader range of personal freedom, helps people to protect their own fundamental interests, as well as because it ensures maximum opportunity for citizens to exercise the freedom of self determination and it fosters a relatively high degree of political equality, among others” (Dahl, 2000:48).

In defining the key features of democracy MacNair (2003:17) enumerates “constitutionality, participation and rational choice” as the three major ones. On the other hand the IPU report defines democracy “both as an ideal and a set of institutions and practices” (IPU, 2005:10). The report further says that:

“As an ideal, it (democracy) expresses two very simple principles: first, that the members of any group or association should have the determining influence and control over its rules and policies, through their participation in deliberations about the common good; second, that in doing so they should treat each other, and be treated, as equals. These principles are applicable from the smallest group up to the largest state; how effectively they are realized in practice is the touchstone of how democratic any association can claim to be (Ibid).”

Realizing its advantage for the betterment of a country’s socio-political, economic and other aspects of life, several countries are “responding to the clamor of democracy” (Nyamonajah: 2005). On the other hand, pressures from within and outside their territories are being imposed on the so-called “undemocratic governments” to join the bandwagon of democracy. Either way, implanting and cultivating a democratic order is

no small task. Despite numerous challenges, most of the efforts exerted right after the end of the Cold War to cultivate the roots of democracy are coming to fruition and “democracy as a valued system of politics”, is flourishing in most parts of the world. Countries in Africa, Asia, Latin America, Eastern Europe and elsewhere, for instance, which were referred to as “undemocratic”, have now started democratizing their political systems (Dahl, 2000; Nyammonajah, 2005). Like in several African countries, the process to cultivate democracy in Ethiopia is a new effort that begun only in 1991. This effort undoubtedly has several challenges to address, including the weak role the country’s media is playing in the process.

2.3 Media and Democracy

In order to realize its goals, a large-scale democracy requires several political institutions, arrangements and structures. The 2005 IPU report is solid in asserting that “democratic principles cannot be realized without appropriate political institutions and practices” (IPU, 2005:8). The report further maintains the indispensable significance of these institutions saying that “at the level of the modern state these democratic principles are only realized through a complex set of institutions and practices, which have evolved over time and continue to do so” (ibid).

According to Dahl some of these structures “highly required” by a full-scale democracy include “...elected officials; free, fair and frequent elections; freedom of expression; alternative sources of information as well as associational autonomy and inclusive citizenship” (Dahl, 2000). The IPU further lists “a guaranteed framework of citizen rights; institutions of representative and accountable government; an active citizen body or civil society; and a number of mediating institutions between government and citizens, among which political parties and the media (IPU, 2005:8),” as being the most important structures of a democratic order.

The interwoven relationship between the media and democracy has been discussed by several scholars. Dahl (2000:85) affirms that “the availability of alternative and relatively independent sources of information is required by several of the basic democratic

criteria.” The presence of such media, which cater for the other side of the story, inevitably augments enlightened understanding and effective participation of the public in the political process. The creation, presence and active participation of an enlightened citizenry, lead to the conducting of democratic principles “in the public arena (as distinct from the secret characteristics of autocratic regimes).” Thus, MacNair (2000) recommends that the “knowledge and information on the basis of which citizens will make their political choices [to] circulate freely and be available to all” (Ibid: 19) citizens of a country.

These contributions of the media for a democratic system have been further stated by Nyamonajah, who writes:

“People can only participate and make their wishes known, if public communication is made an integral part of political democracy.” “Effective democracy”, he maintains, “demands a system of constant interaction with all the people, accessibility at all levels, a public ethos which allows conflicting ideas to contend and which provides for full participation in reaching consensus on socio-cultural, economic and political goals (Nyamnjo, 2005: 2).

A democratic media also serves as a market place or platform for the free flow of diversified news, information, ideas, and ideologies, thereby “facilitating the formation of public opinion, feeding that opinion back to the public from whence it came” (MacNair, 2003: 21). The media help society scrutinize alternative political views, strategies, political parties and politicians. They also help raise civic competence by enabling citizens express their views; discuss, evaluate and scrutinize their governance and political representatives. They foster people’s capacity in making informed decisions in the election of their representatives as well as raising their active participation in the political system.

In addition to their surveillance (or monitoring), educative and publicity roles, the media have also proved a success in determining political causes. Through their function of agenda setting, they have influenced political views of the electorate and governments.

They “are therefore, to be numbered with other political institutions –parliaments, executives, administrations and parties” (Street, 2001: 231).

To corroborate his view, Street, (2001: 7) quotes Andrew Marr, (BBC political editor 1996) who claims that “the media are more effective at ensuring democratic accountability than the arrangements formally designated for this purpose.” History has recorded investigative news reports which by exposing secrecy, mischief, and other misbehaviors; compelled governments and political officials to become responsible, responsive and accountable to their electorate.

The media have also helped in maintaining the democratic principle of “Separation of Power” between the three arms of the government. As appreciated by the IPU report (2005: 16), “the media have always been seen as a ‘watchdog’ against all kinds of abuse. How well they fulfill these functions is vital for the quality of democratic life.” Due to their role as a watchdog on the government and its officials in times of secrecy, mischief, corruption, and maladministration, the media are reputed as “The Unlegislated Legislators” or the “Fourth Estate” (Herbert, 2001).

For assuming the role of creating awareness on human and democratic rights, exposing violations, urging justice and rectification, the media have been accredited as the “voice of the people.” At times they have had to pay huge sacrifice for defending human, democratic and political rights from violation by the powerful. Often, they have been catalysts for socio-political reforms during apparent lack of public confidence in the efficiency of the polity.

These and other roles the media contribute for the healthy functioning of a democratic society entail that the “relations between media and democratization are complex and interwoven. It is impossible to disentangle them all” (Hyden et al, 2002: 29) and thus we can say that:

“any study of democracy in contemporary condition is therefore also a study of how the media report and interpret political events and issues, of how they facilitate the efforts of politicians to persuade their electorates of the correctness of their policies and programs; of how they themselves

(i.e. editorial staff, management and proprietors) influence the political process and shape public opinion” (Street, 2001: 238).

The relationship between the two factors i.e. media and democracy, as elucidated by Hyden et al, (2002: 8) is “likely to go both ways; communications help shape the political agenda and the way political actors behave, but what the latter do also influence what gets communicated and how it is communicated” In line with this, we can say that the presence (or absence) and development of one of the factors impacts the presence (or absence) and development of the other.

2.4 Media and Politics

2.4.1 Why battle for independence?

“Historically the media were heralded as the ultimate instruments of democracy” says MacNair, 2003: 50) adding, “...they were destined to unite, educate, and as a result, improve the actions and decisions of the polity.” But obviously these roles of the media can happen only in the presence of a favorable political environment that provides media with a remarkable degree of independence from the “threat of political interference” (Ibid: 48).

The 400-year development of the media has passed several socio-political and economic ups and downs.

“Journalism in Europe and elsewhere developed amidst revolutions, be they political (playing a key role in both the US war of independence and the French revolution for example), or economic (first in the industrial revolution and latter in the emergence of information technologies)” (Campbell, 2004)⁴,

Amid all these, the media have brought about or at least catalyzed social, political and economic reform processes in many parts of the world.

Since its inception, the concept of a popular media was unwelcome in many parts of the world. For instance

“the early development of the press in many European nations was stifled by monarchies and empires suspicious of a medium offering the people they ruled information about what was going on in the world” (Campbell, 2004: 28).

The elites in several countries were unsympathetic about the creation of an enlightened citizen who knows its rights and duties; the role and functions of the government; its officials and subsequently demands its rights and challenges the status quo.

In order to preserve their power and keep the status quo, the elites believed that “...control of the flow of information about what the authorities are doing, keeping the public in ignorance, provides a way of preventing political protest...”(Street, 2001: 233)⁵. The motive to keep the public in ignorance has agitated the elites in several countries to exert utmost efforts in compromising or totally curbing the activities of the media. As a result MacNair (2003) quotes Scannell and Cardiff (1991) saying that

“the struggle to establish an independent press both as a source of information about the activities of the state and as a forum for the formation and expression of public opinion was ... an important aspect of the long battle for a fully representative system of democratic government” (MacNair ,2003: 48).

By doing so, the 18th and 19th century the media have laid firm foundations for the independence of the media in contemporary periods.

Currently there is a widely held certainty that no single political party or government can pursue its functions without securing the assistance of the media. MacNair (2003) underscores the growing role of the media in global polity and the attitudinal change of political actors towards the media as dictated by the principle that “...in this age of universal suffrage and digitization governments and politicians realize that... “It is not

⁵ Mass Media, Politics and Democracy

sufficient to govern their own citizens well and to assure the people that they are acting whole heartedly on their behalf. They [political actors] understand that the public opinion of the entire world is important to their welfare... (MacNair, 2003:15)

Being aware of the growing importance of the media in a democracy “the constitutions of almost all modern states include some reference to the role of the media” (Street, 2001: 250), FoE and FoP. These political reforms have paved the way for a fully autonomous media and their increased contribution in a democratic society.

Freedom of the Press, which is an indispensable tool for the operations of the media, is an extension of Freedom of Expression and it is “practiced on behalf of the public”. As stated by Franz Kruger, the media use Freedom of the Press not for their own benefit but for the benefit of the society in general. He says that: “when journalists rush around and push their microphones in to peoples’ faces they are doing it not for themselves but for the public interest” (Kruger, 2004).

These freedoms i.e. Freedoms of Expression and of the Press are also recognized by international documents such as the United Nations Convention on Human Rights (UNDHR), the African Bangui Charter, and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR). Daniel Bekele (2003) quotes the Preamble of the Declaration of Principles on Freedom of Expression in Africa, as reaffirming “the fundamental importance of the freedom of expression as individual human rights, as a cornerstone of democracy and as a means of ensuring respect for all human rights and freedoms...” The first article of the declaration as quoted by Daniel reads:

Under the Guarantee of Freedom of Expression:

1. Freedom of expression and information, including the right to seek, receive and impart information and ideas, either orally, in writing or in print, in the form of art, or through any other form of communication, including across frontiers, is a fundamental and inalienable human right and an indispensable component of democracy.
2. Everyone shall have an equal opportunity to exercise the right to freedom of expression and to access information without discrimination.

The important role of these rights in a democracy has also been asserted in the rulings of international judicial organs. The European Court of Human Rights, as quoted by Daniel “has repeatedly stated” that:

“Freedom of expression constitutes one of the essential foundations of [a democratic] society, one of the basic conditions for its progress and for the development of every man ... it is applicable not only to ‘information’ or ‘ideas’ that are favorably received or regarded as inoffensive or as a matter of indifference, but also to those that offend, shock or disturb the State or any sector of the population. Such are the demands of pluralism, tolerance and broadmindedness without which there is no ‘democratic society’ (cited in Daniel, 2003)”

However, the mere inclusion of these rights in national constitutions or other legal documents by itself will not guarantee the free operations of media institutions. The enactment of these rights should be followed by the commitment of governments and their officials for the effective implementation of the rights. This is especially necessary “given the tendency for these functions to become distorted, whether by executive partiality in a government-controlled system, or by powerful economic interests in a commercialized one” (IPU, 2005: 7). There have numerous concrete evidences from countries in which governments claim to be the absolute vanguards of FoE and FoP while their “Presidents or government ministers have intervened to seize publications, or detain individual reporters responsible for articles that are deemed unduly or unfairly critical of the political establishment (Hyden, 2002: 8). In such cases, as the IPU suggests, “a country’s “parliament has a key democratic role in setting an appropriate legal framework for the regulation of media ownership and practice” (IPU, 2005).

The presence/or absence of these influences; their root causes; extent and consequences shows state –media relationship in a country. These factors have also been used to gauge the scale or quality of a democratic system a country pursues. Vincent Campbell states that:

“while gauging the freedom of a press in a country the freedom house survey used first; the laws and administrative decisions and their influence on journalism: second the extent of political influence or control over the news content is measured, including things such as the attempts at the news management (basically where state institutions try to influence the subjects the news media cover, and the way they cover them). Third, the extent of economic influence and control is examined, including economic control from state institutions and private corporations. The fourth category looks explicitly at the extent of incidents of violations against the news media, including murder, physical attack, harassment and censorship (Campbell, 2004: 44)

Taking incidents from African countries at the wake of democratization Nyamonajah (2005) forwards his observation that “although governments may proclaim democracy and freedom of information as is currently fashionable, in practice most don’t hesitate to sanction even a cabinet minister who makes an un-cleared statement on a burning issue” (Pradip and Nain, 2004:124). These political mismanagements of the legal and democratic stipulations on Freedoms of Expression and of the Press entails the impossibility to gauge the independence of a country’s media by merely looking at the presence or absence of the rights but by the extent to which their bearers enjoyed them.

The next section deals with some of the major tools used by political actors in muffling independent media operations. In doing so the study tries to give some illustrations from African states as they are depicted by various scholars and media freedom organizations.

2.4.2 Political constraints on media

The media has power. And it is self evident that unless managed with responsibility, this power could be used as a tool to disrupt social order and bring massive chaos. The way Radio Mille Collines was used to spread hate and propaganda for war in the 199- Rwanda has cost the lives of over a million people.

The power of the media can also be used to reform or alter a political system. In line with this Street, (2001: 7) writes that,

“...just as media can serve authority they can also subvert it... the power of the media is not just measured by the way citizens may be controlled. That power can be used to unsettle and even unseat the powerful.”

Especially the media’s role as “the voice of the people” and their empowering effects has, according to him, “entitled them to interrogate public figures and scrutinize the actions of public institutions” (ibid) and subsequently play their part in destroying political careers (or at least, catalyzing their destruction).

This empowering function of the media has created “perennial fear” on political actors and agitated them to “endlessly try to maximize their grip over the media”. The saga of conflict between the media and political actors is part of contemporary politics whether in democratic, undemocratic or newly democratizing countries of the world. “Politico-economic

influences on news production are absolutely unavoidable... setting the boundaries of what journalists can print and broadcast ...”, however, the overall degree and nature of crises faced by journalism in the “undemocratic” or “newly democratizing” countries, as noted by Campbell (2004), are “more complex, having to do more with the right of individual journalists to report without fear and intimidation arrest and even torture and murder” (Ibid: 7).

“The media do not operate in a vacuum, but are extensively dependent on how the political system at large is constituted” (Hyden et al 2002: 56). And the devices of state (political) machinery used to muffle media operations are tailored in accordance with the social, political and economic realities of a country.

Some of the major tools used by political actors to influence the independent operations of the media include: monopolization of the media; strict control on the free flow of ideas (official secrecy, censorship, imposing self-censorship, etc); denying access to inputs and audiences debilitating draconian media regulations (such as laws of secrecy, criminal libel charges, sedition and absence of information act); violation of their premises and equipment; physical harassment (threats) and their real implementation; banning private news media from operation; confiscation of their properties and the like. Depending on the type of political system a country follows, all or some of these political constraints can be found as impediments on the operations of the media (Nyamonajah, 2005; Tettey, 2006; Okigbo and, 2004 ,Hyden et al, 2002; MacNair, 2000; MacNair, 2003; Street,2001)

The first and foremost technique of political interference in media operations comes in the form of media ownership. Securing “ownership of the means of communication is an important aspect of what happens in the political domain. It is a factor that tends to work in a linear direction; access to communications through ownership provides a great advantage in politics” (Hyden 2002: 17). It provides political actors the capacity to disseminate their propaganda; create their positive image; attack opponents; conceal or misinform issues of public concern so that they “will have the upper hand in the public sphere, the free flow of ideas and subsequently attain the consent of the electorate” (MacNair, 2003).

The freedom of the early media organizations in Europe and other older democracies was based on the principle of independent economic organization (MacNair, 2003: P.48). The

development of capitalist society, the dominance of democratic principles and liberal market economy has contributed to the private ownership of the media. In some democracies media institutions are owned by public owned corporations that are supervised by an independent board answerable only to parliaments.

Media organizations in several “undemocratic” countries can be categorized under the “Authoritarian” form of media ownership. Furthermore and contrary to the leap the world is making to democratization and digitization, media institutes in some countries are still monopolized by the state.

The political camouflage politicians use “in opting for state ownership and control” as Nyamonajah writes by citing several post-colonial African countries, is the claim that “centralism was necessary for successful nation-building.” He further states that:

“...government ownership and control was justified as being less wasteful of the limited resources, and as guarantying the political stability badly needed for rapid development. Generally, they claimed that once their countries have become more mature and stable, they would loosen their hold over the media. However, even long after independence most governments have not in effect loosened their media monopoly till the early 1990's some of these governments have opted to stick to the colonial patterns of media administration”

(Pradip and Nain, 2004: 120).

This media ownership trend has continued till now in some countries in delicate ways.

In contrast to the state media, John Street (2001) defines, the private media as “a medium which allows for a diversity of ideas and opinion; it is not an agent of a single view or of state propaganda. The media are free precisely in the sense that they are not subject to centralized control” (Street, 2001: 253).

Emanating from their apparent independent, probing and adversarial character in serving as the “voice of the people”, the private media are in an unending conflict with the government in several countries of the world. Hence till very recently, in most of the “undemocratic” countries private media was seen as a serious threat to the political process. The politicians, thus, were unwilling to liberalize the media sector. Private newspapers in these countries, if they existed at all, were few in number. The broadcast media in particular was not allowed to operate.

In order to obstruct the existence of private media undemocratic politicians employ strict licensing procedures, high registration fee and tax, fierce political antagonization, tight

official secrecy, frequent complaints and threats in response to publishing anti-establishment views, criminal libel charges, denying access to advertisement, as well as frequent harassment, imprisonment and murder of journalists (in some countries), among others (IPI,2008; Reporters Sans Frontiers,2007; Tettey, 2006; Okigbo, 2005; Nyamonajah, 2005, Ruddin and Ibbotson, 2003).

Street (2001) argues that the “relationship between politics and mass media has to be understood in terms of the institutions which manage the flow of power, the system of regulations and patterns of control that organize the media” (Ibid: 10).

Another variation of the political tools used by undemocratic governments to muffle media independence is the enactment of anti-media (draconian) laws and administrative actions. Intervention of political officials can also be realized through the use of a country’s legal system. Despite the fact that FoE and FoP are gaining substantial recognition in national and international legal documents, till now their exercise by their bearers (i.e. citizens, media organizations and journalists) has been challenged in many parts of the world.

For instance the enacting of subsidiary laws that contravene the constitution, nonetheless, has been one of the major defects challenging African media independence. “Although the constitution of the land is supposed to be supreme, ordinary laws (media laws enacted in African states) often supersede its authority” (Hyden et al, 2002: 63). Instances of African countries as observed by Tettey (2006) in this regard explicate the fact that “a number of governments on the continent have attempted to prove their democratic credentials through the rhetoric of press freedom. Some have even gone to the extent of enacting laws whose letter seeks to uphold such freedom. In effect, however, they continue to engage in acts that betray their true disposition” (Ibid: 14).

As a result of the efforts to democratize African nations remarkable changes have been witnessed in the legal sphere. However, according to Hyden et al (2002) some of the developments are shallow. He states that “the legal and constitutional reforms that have been introduced in the 1990’s, therefore, tend to look quite impressive in comparison with preceding clauses. On paper, most African states have moved a long way in a short

time...the constitutional promises contained in these reforms, however, has not always been fulfilled” (Hyden et al, 2002: 56).

Added to the enactment of laws contrary to the constitution “the relative weakness of legal provisions for press freedom in African countries, the threat of arbitrary action and other extra-legal measures used against journalists constitutes other serious problems” (Hyden et al, 2002: 66) that are restraining African media from enjoying their independence. Wisdom J. Tettey (2006:15) details this paradoxical development of African state-media relationship saying that:

“ It is ironic that several years after independence, a lot of African countries continue to retain colonial laws which were used to intimidate anti-colonial activists, including some of the current leaders of these countries. These anarchistic laws have stayed on the books because they now serve the political purpose of the post-colonial ruling elite. They have been employed under the guise of the rule of law and state security, to undermine press freedom and freedom of expression, as well as to intimidate journalists” (Ibid).

What’s “especially sinister in African constitutionalism is the existence of claw back clauses that serve as derogable measures” (Hyden et al, 2002: 63). This concern is justifiable as some claw back clauses incorporated in national legal documents have opened the gap for political actors to easily interpret them arbitrarily. The principles of Jurisprudence dictate that FoE and FoP subscribe to the natural theory of law i.e. they are inviolable and inalienable. Apart from this, several constitutions and even some international human rights documents such as the ICCPR are provided with claw-back clauses that limit the exercise of these rights in particular circumstances.

For instance, Articles 19(3) and 20 of the ICCPR state:

Article 19(3): The exercise of the rights provided for in paragraph 2 of this article carries with it special duties and responsibilities. It may therefore be subject to certain restrictions, but these shall only be such as are provided by law and are necessary;

- a. for respect of the rights or reputations of others
- b. for the protection of national security or of public order, or of public health or morals

Article 20 stipulates that:

1. Any propaganda for war shall be prohibited by law

2. Any advocacy of national, racial or religious hatred that constitutes incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence shall be prohibited by law.

Principles of jurisprudence also state that constitutional provisions including claw back clauses have the capacity to serve as sources of subsidiary laws. But in doing so, the later should remain as a subordinate to the supremacy of the constitution. There are, however, cases in which some constitutional provisions and claw back clauses have been misused as the basis for subsidiary laws, which violate the constitution itself.

Similarly, there are instances in which some weak laws with a positive intention towards the media have backfired. In their book *'Media and Democracy in Africa,'* Hyden et al (2002) give examples from countries such as Equatorial Guinea, Niger, and Mali where subsidiary laws, rules and regulations have been misinterpreted to meet the needs of politicians in taking arbitrary administrative actions against the constitutional freedoms.

Strict control on the free flow of information has also been part of the political tools used to influence the media. Laws of secrecy also form major pretexts used to curb the flow of information unfavorable to political actors. The democratic intention of laws of secrecy as can easily be discerned is aimed at protecting the security, safety and stability of a state. However, they have frequently “provided an excuse for censorship” (Street, 2001: 106) and arbitrary official secrecy. According to MacNair, (2000: 26), “Politicians, however, also seek to conceal information from citizens, sometimes for reasons of what is called ‘national security’, and sometimes to avoid political embarrassment.”

These laws have been misused by politicians and their gatekeepers to chase away noisy journalists from accessing, scrutinizing and exposing any malfunction in the political system as well as to punish those who access and publish such information. Laws of secrecy are much more damaging in the absence of Freedom of Information Act. When present this freedom is a major weapon for journalists and media organizations against arbitrary official secrecy laws and a tool in accessing information of public interest.

In some countries the demarcation between state secret and public information is blurred. This, coupled with lack of freedom of information legislation, provides political actors

with the upper hand in curtailing the flow of information by designating any information unfavorable as a state secret. This also provides them with the grounds to charge any journalist or media that somehow accessed and published such stories. Lack of freedom of information legislation leaves journalists with no rights to information held in the hands of politicians. They also enjoy little legal protection if they wish to keep sources of their information unidentified.

FoE and FoP, according to the ICCPR and other national constitutions, can also be restricted in order to protect the honor and reputation of others, privacy of individuals, the wellbeing, moral and health of the society (particularly the youth). However, these well intended claw back clauses have also been used by some countries to frustrate media independence.

“In many countries around the world, criminal laws that seek to punish journalists for practicing their profession have either been removed from the statute books or held in abeyance. Moreover, these criminal sanctions, particularly those concerning criminal defamation and insult laws, have been strongly criticized in courts ranging from the European Court of Human Rights to the Inter-American Court of Human Rights” (IPI,2008).

Contrary to this, criminalizing violations of media law is a persistent tool in which politicians seek to influence newsrooms in several African countries, for instance. In democratic countries, according to Andargachew (2007), “violation of media law normally entails only civil, not criminal liabilities. It entails court or administrative injunctions against publication of the findings of the investigation or payment of compensation to the injured party”. Criminalization of civil offences has been used by undemocratic politicians to file frequent charges against journalists and news media that deviated from the provisions they are provided by the government.

By criminalizing media offences politicians compel journalists to opt self-censorship and deliberately twist news items in favor of (or at least avoid content unfavorable to) the powerful. It also forces journalists to focus on the trivial, avoid investigating politicians. The journalist may become compelled to violate his professional duties rather than facing intimidation; harassment; long terms of jail or heavy reimbursement to the injured.

Though outmoded the tool of censorship and self-censorship are used to impede media independence and to filter information that is disseminated to the public in general. In describing this method Street (2001) says “censorship is the more obvious form of state control...and, typically, such controls are associated with non-liberal regimes” (ibid). Depending on the political reality of the country censorship may be blatant or delicate as the method “can take a variety of forms and it do not require direct intervention. Self-censorship may indeed prove to be a much more common pervasive and insidious form of control” (Street, 2001).

In some countries media institutes and their journalists were obliged to follow the instructions issued by the ministry of information or relevant government authority. Owing to the presses’ claim for self-regulation, several countries have removed articles that permit political censorship of the media.

Cases off blatant censorship on contents of state media and indirect but serious requirement of self-censorship by private media have been reported in various parts of Africa. Tettey, (2006: 12) comments:

“In the circumstances of a lot of African democracies, the parameters freedom of expression and of the press continue to be determined by how well the contents of that particular print or electronic medium portray power brokers in a positive or, at least, neutral light, where these state-defined criteria are not followed, the full wrath of the repressive apparatus is visited on targeted journalists, editors and publishers.”

The repressive apparatus politicians may use can range from simple legal charges to kidnapping or murder of journalists. In this respect the IPI (2007) expresses fear that:

“...Perhaps more importantly, the punishment of journalists may lead to self-censorship or actively dissuade journalists from entering the profession or creating a media organization. Aside from forcing journalists to work under intense pressure, it will also impact upon professional standards. High caliber students who decide to go into other professions will lessen the quality of the journalist profession; while fewer media organizations means fewer voices in the media market, thus enabling the state media to have a greater voice.”

Economic measures such as allocation of funds, appointment of loyal media officials; freebies and brown envelops; forging unwarranted relations with media officials and journalists; instructing editors and journalists what to write and what to drop in exchange for job promotions and salary increments; providing incentives for “tame” journalists and

denying or even dismissing “noisy” journalists are part of the machinery of politicians to make sure that their positive image is propagated by the media they govern (Kruger, 2004; Tetey, 2006; Okigbo, 2004 and Street, 2001).

In contrast techniques of blacklisting *independent* media from accessing government funding; withdrawing advertisement; raising taxes against are economic knives used to consume the fledgling African private media.

Above all, as Tetey, (2006: 16) puts it, in the developing democracies of the world one of the most pressing “problem is that arbitrary actions, extra-legal measures and instruments of violence and coercion are utilized by the state in attempts to curb the right of free expression. Several governments continue to employ the coercive apparatus of the state to combat differing opinions or criticisms from the media.” Subsequently we can say that the use of “coercive force to raid, search and loot news rooms; jail, exile or murder journalists, liquidating media institutions for political reasons”, is becoming key words in the saga of “African media- government relationships (IPI, 2007).”

2.4.3 A Brief Recapitulation of the Ethiopian Media

Ethiopia an ancient state, home for ancient human beings and civilization and 3000 years of social, political and economic record is also “unique in Africa in the sense that it is the only country that uses its own unique alphabet. The country has an age old history of written materials (Pankhrust, 2001; Tsega and Abebe, 2000). More than 80 nations and nationalities constitute the current Ethiopian population. These nations and nationalities have their own culture, identity, and language. The country also houses several religious schools, monasteries, and traditional secular schools that contributed to the civilization the country enjoyed in the previous days.

Despite these fertile grounds, the country like many African countries is a late comer to the media industry. “While the birth of the government press traces back to the 1900s, the private media are recent phenomena of the post 1992 independent press era” (African Media Partners Network). The origin of the print media in Ethiopia has been a point of debate among several scholars. The first officially accepted Ethiopian newspaper

according to documents from the Ministry of Information “*Aemiro*”, which was hand written by *Blata G /Egziabher*, was the appeared in 1901.

On the other hand some scholars like Oadland and Fackler (2003), believe the first Ethiopian newspaper to be conceived by European missionaries. Based on this view the first Ethiopian newspaper (or publication) is the ‘*Lase Maine D’ Ethiopie*’ which appeared around 1905 in the city of Harar and written by a Franciscan missionary.

The establishment of ‘*Brihanina Selam*’ printing press in 1923 helped the emergence of the state owned ‘*Brihanina Selam*’ newspaper and later the two most known Ethiopian weeklies (now dailies) *Addis Zemen* (1941) and the *Ethiopian Herald* two years later (Shimeles, 2000). Since 1945 till the last days of the imperial regime there was reportedly “a gradual but progressive increase in the number of newspapers” (Daniel, 2003). According to these researchers there were “six dailies and eleven weeklies till 1970” (ibid).

“During the 17 years of Menigstu’s (president of the then military regime) rule, the government and party-owned publications, “*Meskerem*” (September), “*Serto Ader*” (Worker) and ‘*Yezareyitu Ethiopia*’ (Ethiopia Today) were published in addition to the previously mentioned ‘*Addis Zemen*’ and the ‘*Ethiopian Herald*’ (Oadland and Fackler, 2003). Proclamation number 26/1967 that was issued by the military regime had the effect of leaving the country without any media outlets that can serve the society in an independent and professional manner (MoI⁶).

The electronic media on the other hand was inaugurated in 1933 (Daniel, 2003; Pankhrust, 2001). Shortly after its introduction, the radio station had fallen under the ownership of the Italian forces who occupied the country for five years. The radio station resumed its service in 1941 and so far it is owned by the government. Ethiopian News Agency (Now part of Ministry of Information) was established in 1942. Ethiopian

⁶ Ministry of Information

television came to the media scene in the 1960's (MoI) and till now it is the only television menu the Ethiopian people is being catered.

A religious radio that was established by the world Lutheran federation in 1963, which was later confiscated by the military regime, was the only private broadcaster till very recently. Currently three private FM broadcasters have come to the scene. But according to observers all of them deal with non sensitive issues (Tsega and Abebe, 2000)" The licensing of these privately owned FM stations is also controversial as they are "sometimes linked to political parties, such as Radio '*Fana*', which is controlled by the ruling EPRDF coalition" (Ibid).

2.4.4 Media-state relationship in pre 1991 Ethiopia

The development of Ethiopian press has been further complicated by Ethiopian political history. Given the undemocratic feature of the previous Ethiopian governments both the monarchy and the military regimes, it is not surprising that they tried everything possible to curtail any of the human and democratic rights of the society, including freedom of expression and of the press. As a result, "except with some short lived deviations the press throughout Ethiopian history till 1991 has been the sole property of the governments" (Dessalegn, 2004; Shimeles, 2000).

In addition "political censorship has, for centuries, been the antagonist of press freedom, Governments notoriously tried to encourage the holding of opinions they favored" (Nahum, 1997: 130). In addition to media ownership and censorship Ethiopian governments have used every possible political and economic ways to ensure the flow of information that may shade negative impact on their activities.

Even if the respective constitutions of the imperial and the socialist military regime have granted FoE and FoP the exercise of these rights country has regarded as subversive and anti-revolutionary. These rights have also been derogated by the arbitrary actions of politicians. "Whatever press existed during the reign of Emperor Haile Sillassie the first (1930-1974) and the following dictatorship behaved, with a few exceptions, like willing mouthpieces for the rulers" (Oyvind and Fackler, 2003). Any attempt to establish a

private press or exercise FoE and FoP were regarded as anti-governmental, anti-revolutionary, and subversive.

The first and probably landmark deviation from this established media ownership pattern appeared during the final years of the imperial regime. The private papers that started to mushroom following the weakening of the government have helped in raising public awareness and agitating social reform that lead to the downfall of the monarchy. These periods which were “known as the golden days of Ethiopian press were short lived and they happened in a sporadic manner,” (Shimeles, 2000).

The short infiltration of the private press during the imperial regime has “continued for a limited time during the military regime” (Shimeles, 2000). However, following the regime’s firm hold of power, the growth of the fledgling media were cut short as “private media wasn’t allowed to exist during the military regime of the Derg (1974-1991) and the State controlled print and electronic media was solely used for communist propaganda and rallying support for its wars with what it called “enemies of the revolution” (Nolawi, 2006). The socialist military regime of the Derg has followed authoritarian and socialist media ownership pattern of the media.

2.4.5 Media-state relationship in post 1991 Ethiopia

Ethiopia is part of the group of countries that joined the democratization process at the beginning of the 1990s. This move came following the military overthrow of the socialist regime in 1991. Describing the fresh start of Ethiopian nation reconstructing author of ‘Constitution for a Nation of Nations the Ethiopian Prospect’, Nahum (1997: xvi) writes “[T]he feudal monarchy that has been its (Ethiopia’s) feature since the pre-Christian time has been swept aside. The short affiliation with communism and the civil war it ushered in is also over, a new reality has emerged symbolized by and reflected in the constitution of 1994.” Attesting to this changing political scenario Oyvind and Fackler (2003) write:

“Ethiopia today is said to be ‘a new Ethiopia in the making’ after decades of resistance and war against totalitarian regimes within, a new model of state governance is being implemented.”

Ethiopian Peoples' Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) and its allies, which joined hands to topple the military regime, formed the Transitional Government of Ethiopia (TGE) in July 1991. TGE has enacted several laws that granted democratic and human rights. Among these laws one is proclamation number 6/1992.

According to Andargachew (2007), this law is one of the most liberal laws enacted by the EPRDF. It is aimed at regulating both the private and state media (print and broadcast included). As part of its move towards democratizing the country the ruling party has designed creative (or "different from the western media laws") ways of handling state-media relationship and media ownership patterns (Oyvind and Fackler 2003). Elaborating on this Andargachew (2007: 1) writes:

"EPRDF had a choice of policies it could have pursued regarding the mass media. On one hand it could have maintained state control of all the media, as its predecessors did.....and on the other extreme, EPRDF could have left all the media to the private sector. ... Instead of pursuing either of the positions, EPRDF adopted a middle of the road option. It retained the pre-existing state media under its control and greatly expanded it, and it allowed the private sector to participate in the media industry."

Another media researcher, Nolawi (2006: 2), also shares the view on the two approaches taken by the government and expounds on it. In his view the government "considers the state-owned media as an appropriate medium to disseminate information, help foster the 'developmental state' and build democratic institutions in the country. Its attitude towards the private press has stayed negative for the most part with some better working relationship promised for the existing newspapers only recently."

One of the first tasks accomplished by the TGE is granting the long-awaited FoE and FoP. As stated by Dessalegn "the immediate effect following the legislation (proclamation 34/1992) was the proliferation of a wide diversity of newspapers, news magazines and other publications in Amharic and other local languages as well as in English (Dessalegn, 2004). A figure issued by Oyvind and Fackler (2003) on the number of publications shows that 385 publications were registered between October 1992 and July 1997, of which 265 were newspapers and 120 magazines. About 20 different papers

were in sale in Addis Ababa on a single day (Oyvind and Fackler, 2003). The ownership patterns of the burgeoning media ranged from “private individuals, political parties, civic associations, religious institutes and civic organizations” (Shimeles, 2000).

The press law also brought “the anticipated end to systematic censorship indicative of the preceding Emperor Haile Sillassie and military regimes” (Dessaiegn, 2004). The 1991 Press Law, states that “freedom of the press is recognized and respected in Ethiopia” (article 3.1) and “[the] Press stands for the pursuit of fundamental freedom, peace, democracy, justice, equality and for the acceleration of social and economic development” (article 4.1).

The unprecedented fast growth of the private media was also assisted by the coming to force of a new constitutional order. This constitution “The Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopian Constitution (or FDRE constitution) that came into force in 1995 drew most of its bases from internationally recognized democratic principles and, classic liberal view of human rights, and international human rights documents” (MoI). “The clear cut departure the constitution of 1994(the year when it was ratified) is based”, according to Nahum (1997: 49) (who was actually member of the steering members of the constitution making): “on the valuations of the previous constitutional experiences.” He further affirms that:

“...it is (the constitution) based on the understanding that the previous constitutional orders whether of a feudal monarchical nature or of a Marxist dictatorial type, have failed to deliver what the society expected of them. What the society expected [and still expects], put in a nut shell is a constitutional order that without sacrificing the fundamental values of the society, propels it towards sustainable political and socio-economic development in an orderly and peaceful fashion.”(Ibid)

Despite its critics by local and foreign scholars for being “too much ethnocentric”, two thirds of the constitutional articles deal with human and democratic rights. As described by Oyvind and Fackler year? “Most of the provisions enshrined in the constitution are designed in a way that harmonizes the Ethiopian reality with the liberal democracy principles of the west” (Oyvind and Fackler, 2003). Out of these bunches of human and democratic rights, one of them firmly stipulated in chapter three of the constitution is, article 29. This article deals with the Right of Thought, Opinion and Expression. The full text of the article reads as:

1. Everyone has the right to hold opinions without interference
2. Everyone has the right to freedom of expression without any interference. This right shall include freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds regardless of frontiers either orally, in writing or in print, in the form of art or through any media of his choice.
3. Freedom of the press and other mass media and freedom of artistic creativity is granted. Freedom of the press shall specifically include the following elements
 - A. Prohibition of any form of censorship
 - B. Access to information of public interest
4. In the interest of the free flow of information, ideas and opinions, which are essential to the functioning of a democratic order, the press shall as an institution enjoy legal protection to ensure its operational independence and its capacity to entertain diverse opinions
5. Any media financed by or under the control of the state shall be operated in a manner ensuring its capacity to entertain diversity in the expression of opinion.
6. These rights can be limited only through laws which are guided by the principle that freedom of expression and information can't be limited on account of the content or effect of the point of view expressed. Legal limitations can be laid down in order to protect the wellbeing of the youth and the honor and reputation of individuals. Any propaganda for war, as well as the public expression of opinion intended to injure human dignity shall be prohibited by law.
7. Any citizen who violates any legal limitations on the exercise of these rights may be held liable under the law.

The constitution has abolished any form of censorship, it has allowed the rights of citizens and the press to seek; receive and impart information of any type without interference. It also provided ways of accessing government held information by the

press. Paragraph 5 Of the constitution also seems to have intended to restructure the state-owned media after the public service media model of the west (Andargachew, 2007).

Several proclamations subsidiary to Article 29 of the constitution have also been issued afterwards. Some of them include: proclamation 113/95 (which created the Ethiopian Press Agency together with its four national newspapers); Proclamation 114/1995(which restructured the Ethiopian Radio and Television Agency (ERTA) and entrusted it with the responsibilities of regulating radio and television services and to prepare and present to the public radio and television programs); Proclamation 75/199 (issued to amend the Ethiopian Press Agency (EPA); Proclamation 178/1999 (established the Ethiopian Broadcasting Agency and liberalized airwaves). Similarly the Ethiopian government has enacted new press law this year the effect of which is too early to be treated for the moment.

For better or worse, the issuing of these proclamations, in addition to the constitution, has restructured the Ethiopian media landscape. However, some of the legal provisions provided by the constitutions are liable to claw back measures and derogation. Also there are complaints that some of the proclamations have been used by politicians and their offices to arbitrarily interfere and limit the independence of the media.

Article 19(3) of the ICCPR states grounds on the basis of which the FoE and FoP can be limited to protect the “respect of the rights or reputations of others”; for the protection of national security or of public order (order public), or of public health or morals.

Similar to the ICCPR provisions, the Art 29 (6) of FDRE constitution states the possibility of limiting the rights so as to protect “wellbeing of the youth and the honor and reputation of individuals; so as to prevent “any propaganda for war as well as the public expression of opinion intended to injure human dignity”.

Art. 29(7) of the constitution also states that “anyone who violates any legal limitations on the exercise of these rights may be held liable under the law.” According to Art.93 (1) and 93(4.B) this rights are also open for limitation in times of state of emergency.

In an effort to avoid arbitrary actions of government officials and power holders, the claw back clauses kept in the FDRE constitutions require adherence to principles of legality and due process of the law.

In contrast, Andargachew (2007) believes that the claw back clauses of art 29 and the derogation under article 93(1) have provided politicians with opening through which to limit the full exercise of these rights by the citizenry and the ,media in particular.

Freeing media organizations from political and economic influence of the powerful is one of the prerequisites towards ensuring the freedom of expression and of the press. In line with this the constitution provides legal protection and operational independence in entertaining diverse opinions. It also legitimized the right of state financed media in entertaining diversity in expression of opinion (FDRE constitution Articles 29(4) and (5))

According to Daniel (2003) these constitutional provisions are provided in line with the Declaration of Principles on Freedom of Africa which states:

- (1) Any public authority that exercises powers in the areas of broadcast or telecommunications regulation should be independent and adequately protected against interference, particularly of a political or economic nature.
- (2) The appointments process for members of a regulatory body should be open and transparent, involve the participation of civil society, and shall not be controlled by any particular political party.
- (3) Any public authority that exercises powers in the areas of broadcast or telecommunications should be formally accountable to the public through a multiparty body.¹⁷

In the absence of these guarantors, political actors can easily gain access to arbitrarily interfere in media operations and execute their will.

Despite these constitutional and international principles, some of the subsidiary laws issued to regulate the media contravene the constitutional principles and open gaps through which political actors and organizations could intervene in the operations of the media through appointment of media officials and budgetary allocation.

For instance proclamations 113/99 and 114/99 provide media budgets to be collected from government, service charges, and license fees. Proclamation 113/99, on the other hand provide ways in which the government (the ruling party) could appoint or dismiss media officials upon recommendation by boards of the respective agencies (Andargachew, 2007).

State media organizations frequently complain on the lack budget, logistics and human power. These lack of resources has been used a sufficient ground for the state media to focus on developmental and national issues. Besides state media Journalists express their dismay that they are not allowed to use resources to cover issues of public interest unless they are in line with the ruling party's ideologies. The private media on the other hand operates with a low start up and running capital ventures (Tsega and Abebe, 2000). The low wages paid for journalists and job insecurities have provided political actors with an opportunity to influence journalistic works (Shimeles, 2008). It also paved the way for journalists to lean on brown envelopes and freebies (Brihanu, 2008).

The claw back clauses on state security and safety have served as grounds in denying access to information especially for private media. Denying the private media access to government held information will not be surprising since the media is seriously antagonized and accused by the government as being "biased", "backing opposing political parties", "sensationalist" "irresponsible and untrustworthy and mouthpieces of oppositional political parties" (Dessalegn, 2004; Nolawi, 2006; Daniel, 2003, Oyvind and Fackler, 2003, and IPI 2007 update). This trend and its implications have been underscored by report of the Ethiopian Free Journalists' Association (EFJA) as:

"A persistent problem facing the free press is government discrimination and harassment. There is open and deliberate discrimination of the free press by the government which has taken the form of refusing to give information to it and not inviting any of the papers for press conferences or news worthy official events. While the 1992 legislation acknowledges the right to information and states that the press has a right to information from government agencies, this is denied in reality ...the press conferences given by the Prime Minister in the last ten years have always excluded the free press. The government media and that of the ruling party are given preferential treatment. Even donors were initially reluctant to provide information and news releases to the private press" (EFJA 2007 report, Daniel, 2003, and Dessalegn, 2004).

These political influences as observed by many scholars

“...has contributed to poor journalism in the free press, for in the absence of news, journalists have turned to the city’s active rumor mill and have even occasionally made their own, often sensational stories... There is, it says, lack of professional ethics in reporting and news management. Often, stories are written without any evidence and without sufficient information. There is alarmist reporting, and reporting that is completely false. News reports often tell only one side of the story and provide no balance at all. Many of the papers suffer from a lack of professionally trained staff” (EFJA, 2007;

Daniel, 2003; and Dessalegn, 2004).

State media reports that are tuned in line with developmental journalism theories are characterized for their reliance on press releases from government offices. In contrast the only source of information on the government information as several journalists of private newspapers came from dismayed government and civil service officials who leak information to the press that is written with the source accreditation “*Wist Awaqi Minchoch*” literally meaning “reliable and knowledgeable informants.”

Even if direct censorship has been banned by the constitution and the practice is said to be no more in place, officials have been ensuring the repression of unfavorable views through forcing the journalist (both state and private journalists) to undergo self-censorship and also direct censorship on the state media. In its review of the Ethiopian media for the year 2007 the IPI mentioned state media journalists saying “the government’s political appointments within the media organisations—for instance Ethiopian Television—shaped the organization’s content by deciding on the story, the story’s angle and who undertook the assignment” (IPI, 2005: page). The role of the journalists in such cases is also limited as a channel of conveying the interview or press releases read by officials as the “planning came directly from the Ministry of Information. Journalists also said that the same story from the same angle would appear across all state media” (Ibid).

Ethiopian state media organizations are also overseen by gatekeepers assigned as top media officials based on party affiliation (Daniel, 2003). Though far from the profession of journalism and communication in some cases these officials decide which news and information should be provided to the public.

Similarly, the fact that state media journalists are part of the country's civil service that is overseen by the government gives political organs easy access to influence journalistic independence as mentioned above (Andargachew, 2007).

The issue of providing instructions to journalists on news content and the preceding direct censorship by top government officials is apparently heavy in the coverage of sensitive political news reports that are critically seen by the government as affecting its positions. This view has been expressed by Nolawi (2006: 4),

“Media and journalist abuse is portrayed by the cascade of fear among the publishing community to express strong political dialogue that is critical of the existing policies and strategies. Many journalists now complain of self-censorship and the complaint hasn't been limited to the media outlets but has echoed further to the public at large. Many people have become increasingly unwilling to comment on political issues and be quoted on anything that risks a chance of running a possible interpretation of political repercussion. This has especially made the task of political journalists extremely difficult.”

At times a journalist refuses to adhere to the instructions of media officials he/she is likely to be regarded as having opposing and subversive political views. This is followed by “full wrath” of officials revealed in various forms ranging from verbal warnings; cutting salary; denying promotion and training opportunities to losing jobs. One such report by Reporters Without borders says:

“Reporters Without Borders has been worried since 2004, about the plight of two journalists working for the Oromo service of public television ETV. They were arrested in April of that year, along with other ETV staff, since released, following a violent crackdown on an Oromo student demonstration on the Addis Ababa University campus, on 4 January 2004. The two journalists were accused of being informers for the separatist Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) (Reporters Without Borders 2006).

Similarly the country is now reportedly “sanitized” from opposing views on the government as the government is suspected of jamming internet sites and bloggers from reaching Ethiopian audiences. This incidence has been described by the 2007 summary of Reporters Without Borders with the words:

“for the first time in its history, the Ethiopian government appears to have launched itself into web censorship. From May to June 2006, most blogs and

opposition websites were inaccessible in the country. The government denied being behind it. However, at the end of November, these online publications again mysteriously disappeared, which makes the hypothesis of political censorship appear more plausible.”

Furthermore the state owned Ethiopian Telecommunications Corporation (the country’s sole telecom service provider) resumed its SMS service on September 12th, 2007 after the service was blocked for alleged misuse in “disseminating anti-government views” during the May, 2005 national election.

The use of coercive power to silence the media is not a recent phenomenon. Ethiopian journalists have been to various prisons frequently. Threats of coercive forces and their actual implementation have also been reported repeatedly. This tool however is targeted at the private press. “Whereas the state media is protected by the laws and the political might of officials who used the media as a tool to play down the role of opposition parties and their leaders, the private media in particular has been usual victims of criminal and civil charges” (Nolawi, 2006: 5).

However, the use of state coercive measures against private media reached its peak following the May, 2005 national elections and the aftermath political unrest. The state that was frequently expressing its dismay over the “unethical practice of the private media (Daniel, 2003) used its police forces to arrest several journalists, editors and owners and curtailed the media almost overnight (IPI, 2006). The arrest was followed by criminal charges in which the state prosecutor “demanded the death penalty for the journalists”. Later the government reversed the charges brought against the journalists through the mediation of elders, who negotiated deals “whereby the prisoners would recognize[d] their culpability in return for a pardon (IPI, EHRCO).

The November 2007 update of Reporters Without Borders that quotes the “exiled” president of EFJA Kifle Mulat accentuates this claim. According to the report: “‘at present [September, 2007], there is no independent media in Ethiopia’. Every reporter and editor in Ethiopia must have been arrested at least once for their work, according to the speaker, with many exercising self-censorship or [fearing] long-term jail sentences.”

3 Chapter three - Research Methodologies and their Justification

3.1 Introduction

A social scientist may decide to use either qualitative, quantitative or both of the research methodologies depending on the nature, objectives, and specific procedures of his study. Preferences for one or the other or some hybrid approach are based on technical issues. In this view the primary consideration is that of dovetailing the appropriate technique to a particular research technique (Bryman, 1988)". Such a decision making allows the researcher to attain his ultimate research objectives.

Qualitative and quantitative research methodologies, as Bryman (1988) argues, are "simply denotations of different ways of conducting social investigations and which may be conceived of as being appropriate to different kinds of research questions and even as capable of being integrated ... they are more or less different approaches to data collection (Bryman, 1988)." On the other hand Deacon (1999: 114) suggests using "more than one analytical method has the advantage that the weaknesses of any single method qualitative or quantitative are balanced by the strength of other methods." He further affirms that "the use of different methods that are appropriate to the different stages and focuses of a research work is a key step towards achieving reliable and valid data, figures, opinions and topic specific information" (ibid: 116).

The intricate nature of the issue raised in this study has required the use of more than one research methodologies. The interwoven steps and focuses of data collection have required triangulating various research methodologies.

3.2 Quantitative Methodologies

As described by Bryman, (1988: 18) "quantitative research is often conceptualized by its practitioners as having a logical structure in which theories determine the problem to which researchers address themselves in the form of hypothesis derived from theories."

Qualitative methods used in this study have the prime objective of gathering a numerical data and figures so as to prove or disprove the research hypothesis.

Responses from attitude measure questioners, professional value judgments, and the content analysis of newspapers would be collected and computed to reveal the relationship between the various variables such as influences of the political officials' vis-à-vis the independent operations of Ethiopian media. Furthermore the method helps make a nationwide generalization on the presence/absence, forms, magnitude, as well as impacts of the political influences.

3.3 Qualitative Research Methodology

Qualitative study as described by Lindolf (1995: 5), helps “make sense of perspectives, and retrieve experiences, to gain expert insights on information to obtain descriptions of events or scenes, that are normally unavailable for observation.” Qualitative methodology stresses the “need to see through the eyes of one’s subjects and for the need to see understand social behavior in its social context ...it is also the most appropriate method for capturing the inside view and the thick descriptions demanded by the qualitative research” (Strelitz, 1994).

The various data gathered through the use of quantitative methods will be subjected to qualitative investigations to explain or contextualize them via professional explanations and interpretations by media stakeholders. Professional perspectives, observations and theoretical explanations on how news desks are impacted by the influences would be studied using this methodology. This method also helps gauge respondents’ opinion on the extent, nature, variations, reasons and impacts of the influences in comparative relation to private vs. state owned media.

Furthermore the method helps to interpret and understand the procedural effects of the influences on Ethiopian media through analyzing the experiences of respondents and news reporting events.

3.4 Self Administered Attitude Measure Questions

Survey methodology, as Strelitz (2005) quotes Harvey and MacDonald (1993), provides the quantitative researcher “access to large amounts of data which are representative of the population and from which one can generalize one’s findings.” This enables the researcher to measure “current attitudes and opinions as well (Deacon et al, 1999). According to Hansen (1998), surveys “are not simply restricted to the collection of information about things, and this makes them a useful method for finding out about individual opinions, attitude, behavior and so on towards a whole range of topics and issues.”

This tool is incorporated in the study with the prime objective of gathering empirically quantifiable value judgments, opinions, attitudes, behavior and experiences of media practitioners on the presence/ absence, comparative degree, various forms and consequences of the influences in relation to private vs. state owned media. This can be achieved using a five point Likert scale that helps gauge the attitudes of 100 media practitioners which are used as representative samples to generalize the issues relating to the influences at national level.

3.5 Content Analysis

In defining content analysis Deacon et al (1999: 115) quote Berelson (1952) as saying “content analysis is a research technique for the objective, systematic and quantitative description of the manifest content of communication.” The authors describe the tool as a method with the objective of “quantify[ing] salient and manifest features of a large number of texts and the statistics are used to make broader inferences about the process and politics of representation” (ibid: 116). Further content analysis as a quantitative tool is appreciated as “better at providing some answers than others to any kind of question you may raise” (ibid: 117).

The need to gauge how much of the news products are affected by the influences of political officials is the underlying cause to undertake content analysis on the two newspapers. Comparisons on coverage of sensitive socio-political and economic news

issues vis-à-vis the political influences by the papers would be the prime focus of this tool.

Investigation on how the influences affect news of public interest and the emphases given to it in terms of news selection, sources, reporting, content, angle, depth, form, orientation, size and location; the type and magnitude of political issues appearing on a page will be discussed. The overall operations and independence of the sample newspapers in covering sensitive social economic and political issues of public interest; political parties; investigative reporting; adversarial news; government propaganda; partisanship is part of the analysis. The papers' commitment in serving the public interest and the constitutional rights of freedoms of information and of the press despite the pressures will also be dealt.

10 editions of the private owned Amharic biweekly '*The Reporter*' and 35 editions of the state owned daily '*Addis Zemen*' would be analyzed to evaluate how the above mentioned issues are reflected on the papers. The analysis is limited to the front pages, editorials, and columns that reflect the ideology of the papers.

3.6 In-depth interviews

In-depth Interviews are a very common research tool used in social science studies. In-depth interviews provide comprehensive explanation and understanding of an issue being addressed through unearthing the opinions, explanations and viewpoints of professional and ordinary respondents that are covered by the study.

Open ended question would be forwarded to two editors and two reporters from each of the sample newspapers; scholars in the field of media, communications and political science as well as a senior government official, (if possible). The interview question for journalists, editors, media moguls and officials seek explanations, experiences, view points and their professional judgments of respondents on the political influences. Interview question for the scholars and government official revolve around theoretical and practical implications of the political influences; their sources, justifications and relation to the political system. The third form of questions to be asked for the political official seeks to reveal the reasons behind the government to impose such political

interventions in the independent operations of the media. Various follow up questions would be raised to probe the responses in depth and give additional dimension for the interview session

Check lists that help ensure the orderly forwarding of the interview questions would be designed in advance. Field notes and sound recorders (whenever possible) would be used to record facial expressions and opinions of the respondents that would be transcribed in later stages of the study.

3.8 Sampling Techniques

“Just as sampling is an integral element of social life, so it is at the heart of all scientific activity, whether in the human or natural sciences...”(Deacon, 1999: 40). Identifying a representative research population and designing an appropriate sampling technique are prerequisites of data collection that require serious attention since the issues concerning sample validity are inevitably more crucial and complicated. Deacon also states that “in communication and cultural studies sampling issues involve all kinds of areas most commonly people, social groups, events, activities, institutions and texts” (ibid).

The sensitiveness of the topic addressed in this study requires maximum care in identifying the research population and designing a sampling technique which is justified as the study makes use of diversified research populations that are somehow affected by the political influences on the media. Journalists, editors, media moguls and officials, as well as contents of newspapers, news production processes and activities are all part of the research populations in this study. As a result various sampling techniques and procedures are incorporated in this study. The sampling techniques and the research populations have been detailed in the following section.

3.8.1 Sampling technique for attitudinal measure questionnaires

Respondents of the survey tool are selected using Stratified Random Sampling technique, which “involves separating the research population into distinct, non-overlapping groups or strata each containing subjects that share similar characteristics” (Deacon, 1999:P. 47). In order to compare and contrast the influences of political officials in government and private, media organizations, the ownership pattern of the media organizations-

government vs. nongovernmental owned- is used as the basic criteria for designing the strata.

50 journalists, editors, media moguls and officials from each of the strata are selected randomly. Government owned media include Ethiopian Radio and Television Agency, Ethiopian News Agency (now Ministry of Information), Ethiopian Press Agency, regional information bureaus, and media organizations that are presumed to be affiliated with the ruling party such as Radio Fanna, Walta Information Center. The non-government owned media, as designated in these strata include privately owned print and broadcast media as well as foreign news companies.

3.8.2 Sampling for content analysis

Sample newspapers that would be compared to reveal the relative degree of the influences on private vs. state owned media are selected through purposive sampling technique. The criteria used to select the sample newspapers include: use of the national language Amharic as their medium; number of readers or subscribers; tabloid vs. spreadsheet; emphasis on socio-political issues; longer years of service in the media industry; national or local; number of editions per week; size of their news desk and organization, among others.

Based on these criteria the state owned daily '*Addis Zemen*' and the private biweekly "The Reporter" have been selected as sample newspapers to be dealt by the investigation. These papers are probably the oldest state and private owned newspapers respectively.

The sampling frame has been delimited to front and inside pages (with some reference to editorials and columns that reflect the ideological standpoint of the papers) that carry socio-political and economic issues. The analysis is limited to political news items only. News items are classified as political or non political using the news classification system of the Ethiopian News Agency. Individual news items are the sampling units used for this analysis.

In line with these criteria, 10 editions of '*The Reporter*' and 35 editions of '*Addis Zemen*' issued in randomly selected six weeks of six randomly selected months of the year 2000 E.C. will be analyzed. Selection of the sample newspapers from the same time frame

eases the efforts to compare the newspapers' coverage of prominent news issues that required their common attention. Thus editions of the two newspapers issued in the first weeks of February and October; the second weeks of April and December; the third week of June as well as the fourth week of August are used as the sample editions. Maximum efforts will be used to compare news items that have been covered by both of the papers so as to show the divergent decisions made by the papers in covering the news items.

3.8.3 Sampling technique for in-depth interviews

Respondents for the in-depth interviews are selected in relation to the results achieved from surveys and content analysis. The in-depth interviews followed these tools on the attitudes of journalist and products of the news papers. Editors and journalist that are part of the news production process will be samples for the in-depth interviews.

Purposive sampling will be employed to select scholars and government officials that can provide explanations on the influences of the political officials. In addition snowball sampling techniques would be employed if the researcher feels necessary to probe the interview findings in further detail.

4 Chapter four - Research findings and analysis

4.1 Introduction

This chapter explores the various research findings obtained through both qualitative and quantitative methods during this study. The results obtained through the use of quantitative research tools have been presented in one section and corroborating each other. The figures and data gathered through the attitude measuring questionnaire and content analysis on the comparative influence of political officials on the two papers have been computed separately so as to show the different magnitude of the influences on the two papers.

The findings from the quantitative methodologies have been corroborated with the findings obtained through the use of a qualitative research tool namely the in-depth interview. This has been done with a view to giving a context and “real world” explanation to the raw data and figures obtained using the quantitative methodologies. It has also been done to give an understanding of the “real world” implementation procedures of the various political influences by political officials.

Some of the quantitative findings were found to be self-explanatory, and have therefore, not been supported by qualitative findings. The raw data and their numerical explanations have, thus been presented in charts and tables.

4.2 Results from attitude measuring questionnaire

A self-administered questionnaire enables the respondents to give their opinions without fear and bias that may result due to the presence of the researcher and other people. The questionnaires distributed to the journalists have been provided with 20 questions which all of them have five alternative options (answers) the respondents can select from. The questionnaire form has been attached in the appendix section.

The attitude measuring questions used in this study have surveyed the opinions of 71 media practitioners working in state and private media organizations. 100 questionnaires (50 for state and 50 for private media journalists) have been distributed. Some 32 of the state media and 39 of the private media journalists have completed the questionnaires and returned. The survey that has been conducted in two rounds as a result has achieved a response rate of 71 percent of the total number of questionnaires distributed to the journalists.

The opinions of the respondents from the state and private media organizations has been computed separately and for each of the 20 questions that are provided with a likert scale⁷

⁷ The Likert technique presents a set of attitude statements. Subjects are asked to express agreement or disagreement of a five-point scale. Each degree of agreement is given a numerical value from one to five. Thus a total numerical value can be calculated from all the responses.(accessed from <http://www.cultsock.ndirect.co.uk/MUHome/cshtml/psy/likert.html> on 20/10/2008

of five-points ranging from “Strongly agree” to “Strongly disagree.” The opinions of private vs. state media that have been surveyed and computed separately and have been compared and contrasted to show the influence of political officials on the respective medium. The comparative research findings from each category have been detailed in the next section.

Having good knowledge of the social, political, cultural and other aspects of a country is presumed to be a crucial step for any journalist in the execution of their duties in the profession. As stated in the previous chapter, FoE and FoP are the daily tools needed by journalists, and they claim these rights, not for themselves but on behalf of the public. Having knowledge of these rights provide journalists with a weapon for defending media rights from violation by the powerful.

Based on the survey results, the state media journalists seem to have slightly better knowledge of the FoE and FoP than their private counterparts. Whereas 43 percent of the private media journalists strongly agreed on their knowledge of the FoE and FoP, close to 60 percent of the state media journalists strongly agreed to the same claim on the knowledge of the freedoms. Additionally, 28.2 of the private and 25 percent of the state media journalists also “agree” on their knowledge of the legal rights on freedom of expression and of the press.

However both state and private media journalists tend to have divergent views on the interpretation of these freedoms. For instance their opinion on the claim that “Ethiopian laws protect the media from abuse by political officials” seems to differ significantly. Some 81 percent of the private media journalists in particular expressed their disagreement (35.8%) and or strong disagreement (46.1%) to the protection given by Ethiopian laws to the media from political abuse. In contrast 34.3 percent of the state media journalists agree that Ethiopian laws are protecting the media. The opinions of the state journalists, in addition, tend to be dispersed across the line with the majority of the respondents tending to “disagree” (28.1%) or “strongly disagree” (15.6) to the claim.

Similarly, the opinions of respondents’ on the claim that “governmental politicians respect and promote media laws” show a significant dissimilarity. The findings revealed

that 15.3 % of the private media and 18.7% of the state media journalists tend to “strongly agree” on the claim while 33% of the private and 34.3% of the state media journalists “disagreed” to the claim. An additional 23% and 12.5% from the respective categories of private and state media journalists expressed their “strong disagreement” to the claim.

Despite the equivocal positions of respondents on the above claim, there is an apparent degree of “strong agreement” held both by the private and state media journalists as to the claim that “political officials are obstructing the independence of the media in serving the public’s right to know”. A stunning response came from 40.6 percent of state media journalist who “agreed” to the claim. In comparison to the diversified opinions of the private media journalists, the response of the state media journalists also tends to be accumulated in support of the claim (some 68% of them supported the claim). This leads us to suspect that Ethiopian state media organizations, more than their private counterparts, are constrained by the political officials in serving the public’s right to know.

Another striking response has been given on the claim that politicians misuse media laws to curtail the free flow of information unfavorable to them. Some 89.7% of the private media together with a striking 96.8% of respondents from state media expressed their “strong agreement” or at least “agreement” to the claim. The majority of the responses by the state media tended to favor “strong agreement (61.5%) whereas the majority of the state journalists tended to agree (53.1%) to the claim on the misuse of media laws by politicians to curtail dissemination of unfavorable news and information. All of the respondents except one respondent from the private media, stated disagreement to the claim.

One of the mechanisms through which political officials could obstruct the independent operations of the media was through the issuing of direct orders and instructions to journalists, editors and media officials that are operating at the mercy of officials. This tool of political manipulation of the media tends to be imposed more on the state owned media that is financed and overseen by the state, than on the private media. An insignificant 7.6 percent of private media journalists in comparison with 56.2 percent

from their state media coworkers, “strongly agreed” that they get orders from politicians on how to write (or totally drop) a sensitive news story. Stated in other words, a sum total of 81 percent of respondents from the private media either disagreed or absolutely disagreed to the claim of receiving orders from political officials. From this it seems more plausible to conclude that state media is more liable to receiving orders on news writing by politicians and that the journalist is serving as a conduit of the ruling party’s political views.

The fact that media organizations are financed by the state seems to be one of the factors that hamper media independence. Media ownership provides political actors with the upper hand in turning the operations of a media organization towards achieving their goal.

The findings revealed that the private media, in comparison with the state media, is less influenced by the economic apparatus of the political officials. This has been attested by the responses of 81.2 percent of the state media journalists who strongly agreed to the presence of strong economic influences of the state officials. This percentage escalates to 93.7% if we add 12.5% of the state media respondents who “agreed” to the presence of such influences. More than 53 percent of the private press journalists on the other hand, strongly disagreed to such forms of influences as impacting their role.

In addition to the misuse of legal provisions and economic might of the state, political officials have throughout generations, been using the coercive power of the state in muffling the independence and operations of media that they regarded as dangers to their positions. The use of criminal libel and sedition charges, though outmoded, is one of the tools used by politicians in curbing the free flow of information and news that is not in line with the political views of the establishment. This is particularly true in the undemocratic and newly democratizing countries of the world where journalists are suffering from arbitrary arrest and intimidation in the hands of the powerful.

The use of criminal libel and sedition charges that are aimed at frustrating the media are more “agreeable” by respondents from the private media journalists. 69 % and 23% of the respondents from the private press correspondingly expressed their “strong agreement

“or mere “agreement,” respectively, to the use of these political weapons in frustrating the media. The responses from the state media journalists, on the other hand, stretched across the line ranging from a 28.1% “strong agreement” to a 9.3 % “strong disagreement” with the response rates of 25, 15.6, and 18.7, across the horizontal points of agreement, neutral position and disagreement. It is most likely that these findings consolidate the repeatedly issued reports of media watch groups expressing the fact that Ethiopian private media are suffering in the hands of the powerful.

Similar to the above mentioned political weapons disguised in the name of legal provisions of Ethiopian law, the arbitrary use of the political coercive force is found to be impacting the operations of media organizations. This has been asserted from the opinions of a respective 56.4 and 40.6 % respondents from the private and state media journalists who expressed “strong agreement” to the claim that “politicians’ use of arbitrary harassment, arrest and intimidation are impeding media independence”. An additional one third of respondents from the private media and 28% of the state media also “agreed” on the impediments the media faced as a result of the coercive force used by politicians.

Having asserted the politicians’ use of economic might to influence media independence, particularly on state media, it would not be surprising that the majority of the state media journalists perceived their organization as the mouthpiece of the political officials and institutions. Alarming 90 percent of the respondents from the state media strongly agreed to the view that “political officials use the media they serve as their mouthpiece”. This figure escalates to 96.2 percent if we add those respondents from the state media who expressed mere agreement to the view.

In contrast, 94.8 percent of the responses given by private media journalists expressed “disagreement” and absolute disagreement on the role of their media organization as the mouthpiece of the political officials. Only a small proportion of respondents from the private media (5.1%) stated full agreement to the claim.

A media organization that is financed, regulated and overseen by the state is likely to have an ideology and editorial policy that is tuned more in a way that favors its financing

and overseeing authority. Editorial policy is the guiding principle for the day to day journalistic activity of the journalist who works in that particular media organization. (This has been substantiated through the opinions of the interviewees-please refer to the interview section) Furthermore the intention of political actors to use media organizations as their mouthpiece becomes easier if the media organization is guided by an editorial policy that favors the political system.

Ethiopian state media are guided more by the principles of developmental journalism (editorial policy of ENA and ERTA). The editorial policies of these media organizations are designed in line with this principle and thus accused of being highly pro-governmental in their approach. The findings from the survey also consolidate this accusation. Almost all of the state media journalists stated “strong agreement” and or “agreement” (90.6% and 9.3% of respondents) to the theory test that states that “The editorial policy of my news room favors the government”. Some 17.9% of the private journalists also expressed their agreement on the favorable nature of their editorial policy to the government.

In addition to the editorial policy the loyalty of Ethiopian state media to the political system is ensured through the appointment of politically affiliated gatekeepers who facilitate the easy use of the media as a mouthpiece of the state organs. This conclusion is drawn from a respective 81.2% and 15.6 percentile “strong agreement” and “agreement” by respondents from state media journalists. In comparison, the appointment of political officials as gate keepers in the private media organizations is found to be low as 97 % of the private media respondents opted to disagree with this claim.

The findings provided in the aforementioned paragraphs have brought another round of divergent views of respondents’ on the claim as to the independence of the media they work for in reporting adversarial news on the government. Two third of the private media journalists in contrast to 9.3 % of their state media colleagues, stated their “strong agreement” in their media’s freedom to run adversarial news on the government. Added to this, a 23 % response by private media and 3.1 % by state media journalists, expressed agreement on their freedom to do so. Mean while, the majority of the state media

journalists (71.8%) expressed “disagreement” while the remaining 12.5 percent affirmed “absolute disagreement” to their organizations’ capacity in doing so.

A simple question that may inevitably follow the above finding is likely to be “if the private media are free to run adversarial news on the government, are they ready to entertain news reports that scrutinize and expose governmental secrecy, mischief and abuse of power?” is the role of the media as a watch dog of the government been exercised in Ethiopia?

The findings in this regard, however, came up with a wide range of responses from the private media journalists. These respondents gave a 10.2% response rate for both of the two extremes of “strong agreement” and “strong disagreement. Similarly a 46.1% agreement and 33.3% disagreement has been gathered from these respondents. This divergence in the opinions expressed could partly be the result of difference in the editorial policies and political stance held by the varied private press the respondents are working for. The singular optimism in the role of the media in this regard comes from the fact that 46.1 percent of the journalists expressed their media’s readiness in serving as the watchdog on the government.

The responses from the state media journalists, on the other hand can be categorized in to two major categories. The majority of respondents from the state media (65.6%) together with one quarter of their fellow workers “disagreed” or “firmly disagreed” to their readiness in investigating the government. Only 6.2 %of the media practitioners working in state media strongly agreed to their organizations’ readiness in investigating the government.

Another round of question that was raised in the study was that “what do journalists gain in response to their violation of journalistic principles and ethical standards? How do the political officials influence individual journalists through economic ways?” This has also been detailed in the study.

The results achieved also confirmed that similar to the media organizations, individual journalists particularly those of state media organizations are challenged by economic might of the officials. One such factor is that half of the state media journalists plus 37.5

percent of their co-workers respectively maintained “strong agreement” and/or “agreement” to the precondition they are provided with by their organization to support the political system in exchange for job promotion, salary increment and training opportunities.

Zero support has been given to this trend by respondents from the private media organizations. Instead the opinions of private media organizations opposed or strongly opposed the claim (20.5% and 79.4% respectively).

One issue that should be considered at this junction is that the private media are still flagellating and operated with few semi trained and untrained practitioners (except some of the reputed ones like ‘The Reporter’, ‘Fortune; and few others), most of them working on contractual basis.

Still another divergence comes in relation to the coverage of various political views, opinions and political parties. A drastic discrepancy in responses favoring strong agreement by the private press 82% vs. a strong agreement of 6.2 5 from the state media has been given to the claim that their media organizations gives equal opportunity in covering opposition political parties regardless of the government’s position. There was no disagreement or strong disagreement meet from the private media, while a respective 28.1 and 59.3 percent of opinions from the state media journalists expressed “disagreement” and “strong disagreement” about the issue of giving equal opportunity in covering opposing political parties and views by the state media.

For several decades political censorship has been the worst enemy of FoE and FoP in Ethiopia. The practice has been outlawed by the constitution and other subsidiary laws. However censorship can take various forms and can be practiced either blatantly or through the use of loyal media gatekeepers and editors.

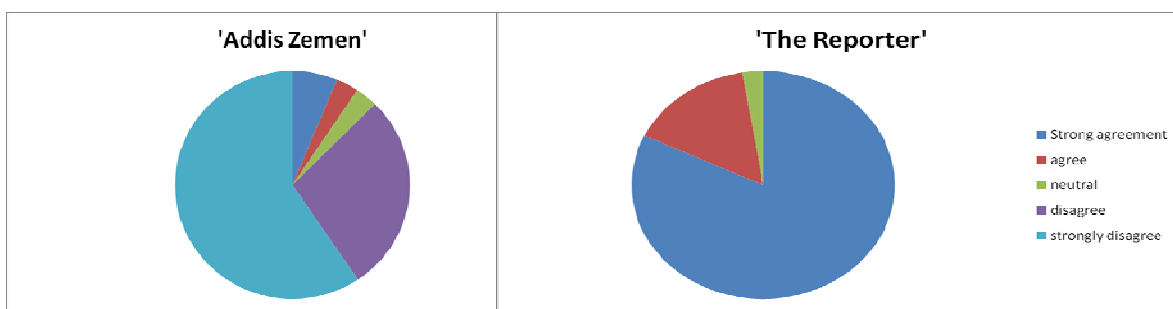


Table 1- percentile results on attitude of respondents on equal coverage given to political parties

The findings of the survey also identified that preliminary censorship that has been outlawed by the FDRE constitution is not practiced on private media by officials. Only 15.3 % of the private journalists agreed to the practice, whereas 84.6% coworkers expressed disagreement on the presence of the measures on their media implemented by politicians.

The reports of state journalists' on the other hand is censored either by political officials, senior media officials (gatekeepers based on previous findings now we can call them so) or party affiliated editors. These has been approved a 40.6 strong and 50 percent normal agreement of state media journalists.

Though free from direct and preliminary censorship, the private media seem to be still imposed in another and subtle form of censorship. The new form of censorship –self-censorship creates an insidious fear on journalists and editors from challenging the powerful and restricts them from stating facts and views freely.

According to the research findings, this form of censorship is practiced by journalists working both in the state and private owned media organizations. 61.5 percent of private media and 59.3% of state media journalists “strongly agreed” that they are compelled to self-censor their stories for fear of political measures against them. An additional 17.9% of the private and 21.8% of the state media journalists also expressed their agreement on being compelled to do so. Only a 12.5% minority of state media journalists expressed strong disagreement or their freedom from such obligations of self-censorship.

As a result of all the above factors the state media journalists are forced to rely on official news sources and routine news formats. This has been expressed by their 68.7%

strong and 21.8 normal agreements. The private media in comparison is free from such uncreative news writing procedures. The private media journalists said they don't agree to such news writing procedures.

Denying access to information is one of the several mechanisms used by politicians to curb the free flow of information particularly those unfavorable to them. As expressed in their strong agreement (69.2%) and agreement (28.2%) private media journalists have been denied access to government held information that is of public interest. The state media on the other hand seems to be enjoying the open gates of political officials. A 68.7 percent response of the state journalists shows that they have never been denied access to information of public interest, though there is a strong likelihood of difference on the meaning and nature of information of public interest as defined by the state and private media. (Sir; I have been trying to insert the interview results next to each of the questionnaire results but the coherence and flow of the interview section gets distorted that way)

4.3 Findings from Content Analysis

The second quantitative tool used in this study is content analysis. This tool, as mentioned in the previous chapter is aimed at showing the impacts of the influences exerted on the media by political officials.

The political news reports of two newspapers from a sample of publication issued in five randomly selected weeks of the year (The first week of February; the second weeks of December and April; third week of June as well as the fourth week of August) have been analyzed. The news items published on the 35 editions of the daily Addis Zemen and the ten editions of the biweekly *The Reporter* have been analyzed separately. The findings from the individual newspapers has been compared and contrasted with the remaining sample newspaper. Individual news reports have been used as sample units. The analysis also focused on the orientation, news sources, news angle and viewpoints expressed by the two sample papers.

The results findings from the content analysis have been presented as follows:

The ten editions of '*The Reporter*' issued in the five sample weeks have provided 179 news items on their front and inside pages. [The analysis doesn't include foreign news reports and sports page] The overall focus of the news paper as seen from these sample editions seems to be attracted more towards economic issues. 56.4 percent of the news reports deal with the economic issues of business, investment and the like.

In its ten editions *The Reporter* published 45 political news items. This constitutes 25.13 percent of the total news coverage. Of these 45 news items 18 of (45%) are printed on the front pages.

The inside pages of '*The Reporter*' published 134 news items. Of these only 27 of them or (20.3 %) have political content. The predominant political issues covered by '*The Reporter*' revolve around: opposition political parties-mainly the disagreement going on among members of the CUD as well as the party's controversy with the government and other opposition parties; reports submitted by senior government officials to the House of Peoples' Representatives (HPR) - the country's lower branch of the parliament; the proceedings of the parliament and various bills; Ethio-Eritrean relations; the military intervention of Ethiopia in neighboring Somalia; killing of Ethiopian civilians and military due to ethnic clashes and "terrorist" attacks; as well as the 2008 elections for kebele, woreda, (lower administrative hierarchies in Ethiopia) and town administrations as well as replacements for members of the two parliaments.

On the other hand the 35 editions of the daily *Addis Zemen* issued in the sample news papers reported 1117 news items. Some 299 (26.7%) of the news items reported in these weeks are clearly political in the content they carried. Of the total 168 news items published on the front pages some 89(52.9 %) are political while the remaining 210 political news are printed on inside pages.

Though the news paper strives to cover a multitude of social, political and economic issues, all of the issues are in one way or the other twisted with the country's political activities and the political programs being implemented by the ruling party. This problem has made the task of identifying the predominant content of the newspaper cumbersome. Thus the study has been limited to itemizing those news reports which according to the

classification used by the Ethiopian News Agency are said to be clearly of political nature.

The predominant focus of the political news issues covered by *Addis Zemen*, on the other hand, comprise of: speech, addresses, and calls made by senior political figures; diplomatic talks senior government officials (particularly, head of the state, head of the government and Minister of Foreign Affairs) held with various delegates of foreign governments and organizations; the various activities of the HPR as well as reports submitted to it by various government institutions; election (preparations for the election and appreciation on its success by political parties mostly by those affiliated to the ruling party and through public comments)etc.

The list also covers the role Ethiopia is playing in African efforts for peace, democracy and development as well in the operations of the African Union; various conferences and activities of AU; visits of foreign delegates and the appreciation they gave for the success Ethiopian government is registering in various fields; calls made by political officials, institutions and nongovernmental organizations for increased public participation; successful activities of various offices to bring good governance, democracy and rule of law; anti terrorist and anti-Eritrean government news, as well as opinion polls (comments) on various successes of the government.

The list excludes the views and activities of all opposition parties that have been covered only on three editions in relation to election. Five news reports have a content that criticizes and shows the opposition parties in negative light. Furthermore the angle and sources of the news focuses on government actors with a repetitive pattern of news writing styles. Throughout the sample newspapers there is found to be no single news reports that tries to investigate government officials or offices. Also there is no adversarial news reported in the paper.

The detailed comparison made on the two papers in order to show their similarities and differences have been presented as follows.

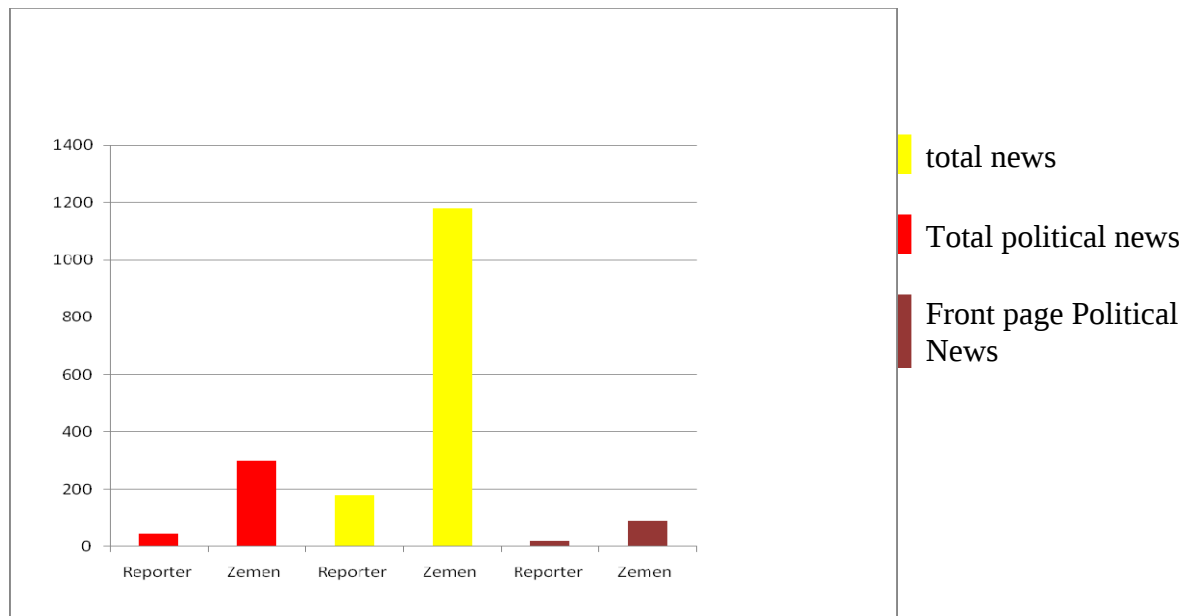


Figure 2- News coverage by ‘Addis Zemen’ and ‘The Reporter’.

4.3.1 Samples from the second week of December:

In this week *The Reporter* presented eight news items on its front pages. Three of the political items published in this week deal with one of the country’s major opposition parties i.e. the CUD. In its front and inside pages the newspaper detailed the contradiction held among members of the party themselves as well as with the government and other opposition parties. The paper also printed a call made by one of the party officials “to save the party from destruction”.

The report has also printed news items that detailed bill being scrutinized by the HPR on the registration of political parties. The report tries to balance its news report by incorporating the view of the government as well as why it was not palatable to opposition political parties.

Addis Zemen, on the other hand has published 61 political news items in this week. The major thrust of the political news items reported in this week tends to be the preparations being carried out by the national electoral board and political parties for election 2008.

Parliamentary news reports and diplomatic talks senior government officials held with foreign delegates take the lion's share from the political news items.

The news sources, angle and style used by *Zemen* in this week's edition show monotony. Almost all of them are based on official sources and press releases. This can be substantiated by looking at the titles of political news items published on December 12th 2000 E.C. Four of the five news reports published on this day have a title that read as: "Permanent administration crucial to solve problems of Addis Ababa: Prime Minister Meles notes"; "Kaunda says Ethiopia contributing for African development and progress"; "Ministry calls upon international community to impose the terrorist Eritrean government"; "Electoral Board and Justice for all Prison Fellowship express readiness to raise capacity of political parties". [Nb. All the translations on the titles of the news reports are unofficial]

4.3.2 The first week of February:

The political news item issued by '*The Reporter*' this week dealt with issues such as the continued disagreement between members of the CUD; the "killing of over 30 civilians and 18 police members in Derashe special Woreda" of Southern Nations and Nationalities Peoples' State due to "ethnic conflict"; the declining (changing nature) of ethnicity and tribalism in Adama town; news report on a bill on urban land re-allotment that is being scrutinized by the HPR.

In its inner pages the paper reported government amnesty for additional members of CUD; the challenge UNMEE faced in its operations inside the Eritrean border; and Al Shebab's (an Islamic group in Somalia) taking responsibility for the killing of 20 Ethiopian refugees in Somali port town, among others. *The Reporter* has given less attention to election 2008 that was due to take in the month of April.

In contrast more than half of the front pages of *Zemen* were dedicated to the election. The focus of the remaining political news items shows similarity to those samples taken from the second week of December. The main news items dealt with diplomatic relations of government officials; discussions, speeches and addresses made by political officials, organizations and political parties; activities and reports of AU officials; etc.

The only political news item reported by both of the two newspapers is the report dealing with the challenge United Nations Mission in Ethiopia and Eritrea (UNMEE) is facing to undertake its activities inside the Eritrean border. This news story has been covered more or less in a similar fashion by the two papers.

The seemingly topical news issues that were covered by '*The Reporter*' (news items on the ethnic conflict in Derashe special woreda and the killing of 20 Ethiopian refugees in Somali port town) have not been covered by Addis Zemen either in this week or the previous week.

A drastic deviation from the routine pattern of *Addis Zemen* in reporting political parties and alternative political views has appeared in this week, most likely in connection with the preparations being made throughout the country for an election. In its two issues published on February 5 and February 7, 2000 e.c. Addis Zemen has given a noticeable coverage of two opposition political parties namely the Oromo National Congress and the Oromo Federalist Democratic Movement. The interviews held with chairpersons of the two parties have been given a full page on February 5 and 60 percent of the page on February 7, 2000 e.c. The deviation is also marked by the paper's reporting of the criticism these politicians made on the ruling party and the electoral board.

Chairman of ONC Professor Merera Gudina (M.P.) for example makes a remark that: "...rather what the election officials are doing is to facilitate the arrest of our members..." in his discussion on what he calls "commercialization of politics" the ruling party gives a right in one hand and chases bearers of the right using its coercive force in the other hand [Unofficial translation]. He also criticizes the national electoral board as being a "partisan".

On February 5, 2000 E.C the paper provides an interview report held with another M.P. and chairperson of OFDM *Bulcha Demeqsa* with his complaints against the National Board of Election. 65 percent of one of the inner page of the newspaper is dedicated to the interview.

Such negative views reported by '*Addis Zemen*' against a governmental body and the ruling party are rare incidents and never appeared for the second time throughout the sample pages.

4.3.3 Analysis on samples from second week of April

Despite the fact that election 2008 had been held in the month of April, the coverage of the biweekly '*The Reporter*' has shown an inclination towards economic issues. This is self-evident as only one of the eight front-page news items issued in the week was on elections. The singular front page news report on election 2008 news is presented on the left margin of the paper with a single column.

The other edition of '*The Reporter*' issued in the same week also provides one political news item that dealt with a request the federal government made to the HPR demanding an additional budget. The political news items published in the inner pages of the paper carried seven political news items. In its coverage of the election posted in the inner pages of the paper '*The Reporter*' covered news issues on National Electoral Boards' admission of mistakes made in one election post in *Addis Ababa* as well as the statement of the board that condemns the decision of OFDM's decision to step out of the election at the "last hour".

In contrast 68.7 percent of the front-page news items published by '*Addis Zemen*' in this week were political. Wide emphasis was given for the election; the "terrorist" bomb blast in Addis Ababa; diplomatic relations and African affairs (most chronicling success of Ethiopian government on various political, economic and developmental fields). '*Addis Zemen*' also carried a statement of the National Electoral Board (NEB) against OFDM (posted twice a week) and statements by Ministry of Information (MoI) against two international media newspapers for disseminating "anti-Ethiopian government" news.

35.2 percent of the political news items reported in the inner pages of '*Addis Zemen*' in this week were dedicated with the story of the election taking the lion's share. The success of the election as reported from various corners of the country; the appreciation given to it by the public, international community, and political parties (all but one

affiliates to the ruling party) and testimonies given by diplomats were the dominant menus catered by the '*Addis Zemen*'.

Table 1-Coverage given to ruling party vs. opposition parties

4.3.4 Samples from the third week of June

Five of the seven news reports posted on the two front-pages of '*The Reporter*' were dedicated to political news items. Of these, two were adversarial news reports on the government. The news reports discussed Auditor General's report to the HPR stating that the government had taken loans from banks beyond the legal limits permitted, while the other political coverage reported the walk out of opposition parties from the parliament protesting NEB's report on the success of election 2008.

An additional six political news reports had been incorporated in the inside pages of '*The Reporter*'. Three of these political news items dealt with adversarial news items on the government and one case of corruption had been reported.

The two editions of '*The Reporter*' issued in the third week of June (June 18 and 21) were dedicated to political news reportage (five political news items on front pages). Two of these items were presented based on the annual report of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Office of the Auditor General presented to the HPR. One report covered opposition political parties' walk out from the parliament protesting a report on by NEB on election 2008. Six political news reports have also been included in the inner pages of the newspaper.

In contrast more than half (18) of the 35 front news items published by '*Addis Zemen*' were clearly political. Two of these reports dealt with similar issues that had been covered by '*The Reporter*' (news coverage on parliamentary report by MoFA and Auditor General). However, the contents of the two publications showed unequivocal differences with those published by '*The Reporter*' in terms of the news angle and the viewpoint expressed.

Some of the divergence in the news reporting of the two papers can be taken as an instance (what does this mean?).

'Addis Zemen' writes its news on the reports of MoFA under the title that literally reads as "HPR calls upon MOFA to further strengthen its activity". *'The Reporter'* on the other hand used a title that reads as "government has made no mistake on the case of *Badime*"- (a disputed land along the Ethiopian /Eritrean boarder).

'Addis Zemen' details the activities of MoFA as they are appreciated by the HPR. Diplomatic relations; efforts to contain the aggression from Eritrean government; contributions made by the ministry to solve various conflicts in Africa; efforts to expose terrorist activities in Somalia and the horn of Africa in general are among the various successful activities that *'Addis Zemen'* listed as accorded with appreciation by the HPR. On the other hand the news coverage by *'The Reporter'* focused on the alleged mistake made by the government in announcing to the public as if the border town of *Badime* has been decided for Ethiopia by an international tribunal. The report includes both the views of opposition political parties and former president of the country who on the one hand requested the government to formally apologize for "misinforming" the public and the stand taken by the Ministry for the correctness of the announcement on the decisions of the international tribunal.

The news coverage on the report of the auditor general also shows similar pattern. The coverage of *'Addis Zemen'* that goes under the title "Office of Auditor General Striving to bring structural change" details none of the reports submitted to the HPR and instead focuses on the structural change and BPR study being carried out by the office.

In contrast, *'The Reporter's'* headline maintained that the "government has borrowed money from banks beyond the legal limits". The paper also listed some of the government offices and agencies, which according to the audit report, have been engaged in excessive expenditures. *'The Reporter'* published the views and opinions of MPs from opposition political parties, as well as the response given to the auditor general by the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development (MoFED).

4.3.5 Analysis on sample papers from fourth week of August.

The total number of news item published by '*The Reporter*' in this week was 38 and of these, five were political. '*Addis Zemen*' on the other hand published 208 news items on its front and inner pages. Of these, the paper printed 16 political news items on its front page while the remaining 24 political issues were printed in the inner pages. The major difference in the coverage of the political issues however, comes not in the number of news items covered but in the way the news angle, sources and viewpoints were tuned in relation to the political system.

The political news items published on the front pages of '*The Reporter*' covered issues ranging from the arrest of its editor in chief and owner (i.e. editor in chief and owner of '*The Reporter*'), statement of MoFA on the case of Somalia, to the judicial appeal made by former officials of the military regime as well as the role Ethiopia played in mediating the disagreement between senior officials of the Somali transitional government and the election of a new president for the CUD, just to mention a few. This shows the equal opportunity the paper gave in covering various viewpoints, political opinions, parties and stakeholders.

'*Addis Zemen*' on the other hand carried 16 political news items on the front pages of its publications issued from August 17 to 24, 2008. Almost all of the news items reported by '*Addis Zemen*' were dedicated to the speeches, addresses and calls of government officials (22 out of the 31 front page news reports) made during various conferences, visits, and diplomatic calls; testimonials given to the success of various governmental projects and development projects; as well as news reports on the re-erection of the *Axum obelisk* and the victory that Ethiopian athletes registered in the Beijing Olympics.

The inner pages of the daily '*Addis Zemen*' were filled with the chronicles of various development activities that were being undertaken in various parts of the country as well as the planned activities. Similar to those on the front pages, the news items in the inside pages of '*Addis Zemen*' have their sources and angle drawn from government offices and

officials. Furthermore, there is no coverage given to opposition political parties their programs and activities.

Such trends mark the difference between the news reporting activities and news products of the two papers. The remarkable difference in the news reports and coverage of similar issues entails the relationship the two papers have with government offices and officials and the comparative impact they are receiving from the political organs.

4.3.6 Results from the interview sessions

N.B. The names of the interviewees have been deliberately changed for the ethical considerations of protecting their confidentiality.

1. How do you evaluate the Ethiopian media laws in protecting the media from abuse by political officials?

The opinions gathered from the interviews held with seven journalists from the state owned '*Addis Zemen*' and the private newspaper '*The Reporter*' affirm that Ethiopian media are protected by the supreme law of the land. According to them the constitution has provided substantial rights. The problem with the legal system comes with the subsidiary laws and their interpretation. The state media journalists stated that the constitution and its subsidiaries are well versed in protecting and promoting the media. Explaining on this Brihanu says: "actually the laws enshrined in the constitution and even policy documents have theoretically provided chances for an independent and free operation of the media". However, he added that "practically there are some issues that I consider as basic flaws that emanated from the media laws".

Meseret a senior reporter of the '*Addis Zemen*' explains these defects of the laws in relation to the state media saying that: "the laws have given remarkable freedom and protection. The state media are guided by their own policies. The policy of most of these media organization is good. Our editorial policy, for instance, is in line with international standards. However, the practical implementation of the policy is doubtful. As a result I

can't think of Ethiopian state media as free. The public is a living witness for this. Not only in our view, but also as compared to other countries, and private media institutions in the country, the media is not free".

The private media also shares this positive development of the constitutional framework on media rights. As explained by *Alemu*, an editor of the private owned '*The Reporter*': The constitution has undoubtedly freed Ethiopian media from the oppression they faced in the previous regimes. This is because the constitution has clearly enshrined freedom of speech and of the press. ... Additional regulations have also been enacted in order to regulate the media. This has brought about the flourishing of hundreds of newspapers and magazines. This development by itself is a great leap. The very newspaper I am serving is the result of the legal and political reform that has been undertaken in the past years. It is a kind of victory for the country.

However, *Bruk* another editor of '*The Reporter*' sees some weaknesses in the legal framework of the country in giving independence for the media. Despite the constitutional freedom of the media, Ethiopian media are not free. To justify his claim, he said: "in our country the media is not allowed to regulate itself. There is no law that provided such self-regulation of the media. It is the government that regulates the media. In this regard the media cannot be claimed to be absolutely free. If there were conditions in which the media could regulate itself there would have been more media freedom. Apart from this, the constitution gives you all the rights. It also clearly states those areas that should be restricted. But it is those subsidiary laws that create problem in violating the media".

2. Do you think government politicians respect and promote media laws or do they abuse it to achieve their interests?

As opposed to the questionnaire results the opinions of the seven respondents seems to agree on the fact that Ethiopian media laws are not respected and promoted by the political officials. According to *Yonas* a reporter from the state owned '*Addis Zemen*' politicians are not even well aware of the role of the media let alone protecting and promoting it he states that: "politicians want the media only to promote their goal. They don't want you to keep the media alive unless it is in their hands." Solomon an editor from the same paper saying has also expressed this view, saying,

"...the politicians in this country consider the press in two ways- the state media is considered as an ally and they are ready to protect it and nurture it.... On the other hand the private media is considered a serious threat and they threat it in a different way to that of the state press. The laws are interpreted in two ways. And the politicians act in similar ways. But we are in the safest side, at least."

The private reporters on the other hand tell us their aggrieved condition by the protection provided to the media. The private press, in particular, is not protected by the laws. In answering to this question *Bruk* gave an outright no and added:

"no they don't protect the media from influences by the officials; rather they make it more vulnerable to these influences. For instance take the recently enacted press law, the fact that someone becomes a government official requires the person of his transparency to the public and also to the press. But the news media law provides ways in which you would be held liable for writing a statement on the activities of the government official. According to the new law such acts entitle the prosecutor to charge you for simple reasons. It's an ordinary individual that should be protected this way, but government officials are public figures, they should undertake their activities in public they should be answerable to their electorates. They are under the public's

scrutiny. But based on the new law you may even not be able to investigate government officials on cases of corruption”.

3. Is there any way you think in which Political officials obstruct media’s independence in serving the public’s right to know? How?

The state media journalists have suggested several ways in which government officials are intervening in their daily activities and independence. These interventions range from the use of the state’s economic might to the issuing of directions and instructions to their media through the Ministry of Information. For instance *Meseret* says that ...

“most of the time there are issues that remain uncovered though they have huge significance not only for the public but also for the government. These issues should be reported freely and fairly. There are also cases in which such issues have been widely covered but later on banded with a small directive from officials. ... Decisions on serious and controversial issues are not made by the editor or the news desk only. They are passed over to the gate-keeper and then to the manger. And this manger is supposed to edit the story not from a professional angel, but with a measure of the interest of the government offices “does it annoy the government?” is the criterion. He will evaluate it interms of the political system and political officials”. This trend, she further maintained, is “eroding the credibility” of the state media and the publics “lack of trust” on journalists.”

However the forms vary when it comes to the private press, the obstructions caused by political officials to on media independence are wide in the private press. A sample opinion can be taken from *Alemu*, who mentioned the efforts of the political officials in constraining media independence in relations to the laws. For him

“the press law that is being implemented has never freed the media from political influences. For instance the law states that government official and their offices have the duty to cooperate in providing information for the media, however, a claw back clause included in this same law contravenes the idea of information act and states nothing that could force government offices to provide information. Most of the government offices are closed... particularly for the private press. It is so difficult for the media to get information from these offices. Some of them are even afraid to provide information however, factual the information is- they are afraid even to give information on the success and profit their organization is making, they want to keep their identities hidden. This is such a miserable condition”.

“Starting from the third national election that took place in 2005, the PM office used to invite members of some private media to attend the PM’s press conferences. But now this has altogether been cancelled. There is a fear and inconsistency of the executives; this is a serious problem on the media. And this entails that the executive is not respecting the very laws it has enacted to be governed with.”

4. Do you think media laws have been misused by politicians to curtail the flow of information unfavorable to them?

The misuse of media laws and regulations seems to be one of the major consensus areas for all the interviewees. The state media journalists in particular maintained the misuse of the entire legal system towards achieving the political intentions of the government and its officials. Brihanu’s opinion summarizes the sentiment of the state media journalists. He said: “...the legal framework has basically provided a way in which you can work independently. Perhaps there are things clearly mentioned in the editorial policy, that everything (except few things that are prohibited by the constitution) can be reported. The

editorial policy gives equal chance of coverage for all political parties and varied political ideologies. We are also allowed to struggle for the protection of human rights, promote development and democracy. Theoretically we are provided with all these, all has been enshrined but practically everything is not given.”

The major pretexts used in misinterpreting media laws are according to *Yonas* derived from the claw back clauses enshrined in the constitution. State security, the rights of nations and nationalities, state secrets have served as pretexts in violating media rights he said: “the politicians have unending legal covers if they intended to convict a journalist or curtail the operations of the media. Think of the situation that happened in 2005 in connection with the third national election. Everything happened for political causes but it has been disguised in the name of law.”

The opinions of the interviewees from the private media, however, express multitudinal pressures that hamper their freedom. As stated by *Alemu* the private press is largely sandwiched between two opposing forces. According to him “political influences don’t usually come from a singular direction. For instance take the ruling party EPRDF, its sees the private press as its serious antagonist. The private press is considered the great enemy of the ruling party. They don’t cooperate. This is a problem that is still persistent with the ruling party. On the other hand take the opposition parties; they think it’s a sin to write something against them. Both of these are indirect influences covered up in legality. Let’s say you printed adversarial news on an opposition party, the next time they will definitely be uncooperative to provide you public information. They label you that you are an affiliate of the ruling party and blame you. The private press is sandwiched between these”.

Henok, a senior correspondent of the paper focuses on the gaps created by the legal system. He consolidates the opinions on the presence of multitudinal influences saying

that: “the role of the government in influencing the government is also realized through the legal system.... some of the laws that are enacted recently have spirits that don’t go in line with the constitution. This is just one influence.”

5. How are the frequently heard accusations on the politicians’ use of arbitrary criminal libel and sedition charges, harassment, intimidation and assault aimed at frustrating the media related to your organization?

A striking opinion has been given by respondents of the interview. The opinions collected are divided along media ownership patterns. The state media journalists feel a freedom from any of the arbitrary harassments, charges and intimidation that is coming from political officials. On the other hand interviewees from the private ‘*The Reporter*’ saw a matter of legality with such influences coming from the government.

Fitsum an editor of ‘*Addis Zemen*’ for instance negates the presence of such influences as hampering its freedom. In his words he said: “I have covered several controversial issues but so far I have never been held legally accountable or charged or imprisoned. So far no government official or politicians has intimidated me for writing a story. I am supposed to work in line with the editorial policy of the agency.... If I wanted to write anything that violates this editorial I have to resign from my post on the paper. A journalist, who violates his editorial policy, I think, is not considered a member of the editorial team of that paper. How is the editorial policy designed is another question”.

The opinions of the private journalists can be summarized using the words of the two editors from ‘*The Reporter*.’ *Biruk* wanted to be more careful in his opinions. He started his opinions with the warning he gave to himself just like this: “here I have to be much careful in giving you this statement for one reason if you claim that you have been harassed you should exactly know who harassed and intimidated you. Because we are journalists we are exposed to a whole lot of interests. Yes you would be intimidated; yes you would be

harassed; yes you may get physically abused; sometimes even individuals may assault you: a politically motivated may order assault on you so that he can defame the government; or even any fanatic supporter of a political party or the government may harass , intimidate or assault you. Thus you should be careful in making the statement as you cannot point your finger on a particular person or institution...”

“The government is an institution that you may challenge it in front. Thus the challenges will become more unhidden. The government may bring legal charges or other measures that are hidden provided with legal articles. The worst harassment that could come from the government side is from the lower level fanatics who feel offended even for the simplest issues. These people can’t go or follow the right track and structure, but rather use their own initiative and measures. This is the worst that can happen from the government’s side and it’s a rare case. There may be the brutality of less aware police officers. For instance this colleague of mine has been faced serious harassment for taking pictures in the premises of the federal court”.

In contrast the other editor of *‘The Reporter’* was outspoken in enumerating the influences. He states that: “ *‘The Reporter’* is part of this impact. Sometimes we are the major victims. Even recently our editor in chief and owner has been imprisoned for six days in a place more than 700 kilometers away from the capital. This has been reported internationally. Still some of my news desk members have been harassed and accused for disturbing the regional president’s office...In addition legal charges filled by individuals are countless. Cases of defamation are daily events. This has been aggravated by the readiness of the state prosecutor that is determined to hamper the operations of the private media in the country. Even insignificant charges are not acquitted by the prosecutor. The journalist is

supposed to face the hardship for two or three years at least before he is acquitted free of charge. There are numerous sacrifices we are paying.”

A middle of the road and unexpected approach has been taken by *Henok*, the senior reporter. In his views the influences that are coming in this regard are not that exaggerated. He answered the question with a question which he answered it after a moment of silence. He seems to downgrade the influences of such measures. He also said the problems have been over politicized. He said: “are you basing your question on the report of international media watchdog groups and EFJA? If you read the reports of IPI, Reporters sans Frontiers or Amnesty International you will immediately conclude that it is completely difficult to practice journalism in the country. You will consider your life as a journalist is in a danger. However, the reality is that you can work. The government also assures this. The government warns you stop only when you are extremely going beyond the limits. You can play between the lines. Clear. But excessive activities aimed at deliberately, and in a calculated way will lead the government to give you warnings. It’s a written warning that you would be provided with not a kind of punch while you are entering your home in the dark. They call you to the Ministry of Justice or the Ministry of Information and give you a clear warning...”

The view that the influence has been politicized more than it really is. This view has been consolidated by *Biruk* who stated that: “It doesn’t mean that the journalists are without its problems. Every one of us has got our problems and agendas. But we have to sort out which journalist is expressing his problems. Everyone has his own agenda and political motive. And the organizations such as IPI Reporters sans Frontiers and the like are receiving their information about the state of the journalist and journalism in the country from those journalists who are not really affected by the influences. The real victim of the

influences is still silent and doing his job amid all the problems. In contrast there are those who are amassing benefits from the noise. We have the evidence. We know what is being done in the name of the prisoner journalists. For instance, two brothers are living in New York using fake passports that carry the names of two prisoner journalists. CPJ has unwittingly transported two brothers who carry fake passports from the Kenyan refugee camps. They facilitated an asylum and flew them to New York. CPJ has been deceived”.

6. Do you think your media organization is serving as the mouthpiece of political officials or the political system as a whole?

This question also brought about another round of divergence in the opinions of the interviewees. Those journalists working for the state owned ‘*Addis Zemen*’ gave a loud nod to the question. Their opinions on this were all similar. One typical response given to the question could be taken as a representative sample of the opinions reflected by state media journalists. Expressing his dilemmas Brihanu states that: Sometimes we decide to make the paper an absolute propaganda machinery of the government. But then shortly, we face problems. For instance we may be ordered by an official to cover a press conference given by opposition political parties and write a balanced story. (This by the way is not a particular feature of these papers -i.e. ‘*Addis Zemen*’ and ‘*Herald*’, but also a problem of ERTA and other state owned media.) Then another top official gives you a direction which kills the story”.

“There are no chances in which the state media journalist could decide for himself and write a balanced story. This is particularly getting tighter starting from the third national election (Though I was not a journalist at that time the experiences of other journalists witnesses this)”. He further stated that “what’s there is more orientation towards covering the political agenda of the government and the remaining task allotted to dealing with

social and economic activities. As I told you this is our major weakness especially after the May 2005 election. We are dedicated to serving the government”.

This view has also been shared by *Brihanu*’s co-worker *Meseret*, she states that: “the existing role of the media is just a scratch. The role is similar to the news reports on the paper “development activities enhanced by the government”, “this has been done”, the “famine is under control” etc. This is what we have been told and we echo it to the public. The situation is this. There is no much contribution and progress registered by our paper”.

On the other hand, an absolute, immediate and short negation has been given by those journalists of the private press. All of the three respondents started their opinion with a serious “no”. For instance *Henok* said: “this we should not answer to you. You should rather refer to the contents of the news paper. We don’t want to state “we have done this and that; we are courageous to this and that extent and the like” there is a simple way for anyone to answer this question; refer to the contents of our paper”.

The view of *Biruk* that is expressed in more indirect ways shows the effort of the newspaper in providing equal coverage to all political parties and the impacts coming thereof. According to him the paper is “devoted” to provide equal coverage and “no impact” is coming on them from the government so long as the news is factual and objective. In answering a follow up question to the question “is there any influence that you receive from the government for covering opposition political parties?” he said: “in fact it’s the other way around. It’s vice versa. The oppositions start to defame and blame you whenever you write anything negative on them. They don’t want us reveal their wrongs to the public. They have their supporter newspapers which they use to attack our organization. This is also practiced by the government. They try to intimidate you but it’s a rare case. What they do most of the time is that they use the state owned TV and radio to

attack your reports. They broadcast a blasphemous feedback on your reporting. But this is mostly practiced by the opposition parties”.

7. Do you think the owner/manager of the media you are serving are politically affiliated gatekeepers?

The opinions expressed in the interview have ascertained that the gates of the state media organizations are protected by loyal officials that are affiliated to the ruling party. None of the interviews from the state owned '*Addis Zemen*' hesitated to agree to this claim. They believe that all the media officials above the rank of editor are filled with loyal officials. While answering the question on the tools used by political officials to hamper media independence, Brihanu said “the influence can also be discerned from the fact that heads of the media organizations are also resistant to any trend of deviation and reform in the media. They are assigned by the government; they have strong relationship with the MoI. Thus they tend to prioritize government policies and strategies or directions; this is not doubtful or surprising”.

He further stated that: “...still I say the media organization is not free from influences so long as it is serving the government. As I told you all officials of the agency kept above our position (he is an editor) are government appointees. There interference is inevitable and visible. It's there. You know it; when they interfere you get dirty or try to avoid. You know how to balance your story, how to do everything. But still you are told how to ...you are given a direction. You can't deviate from that norm and order. Similar view has been expressed by a senior reporter working in the same news desk the manger or head of these agencies are assigned by the government based on their affiliation. However, knowledgeable that person could be on media operations what he can do is what he has

been ordered. He will be devoted to protecting the political system not promoting the profession”.

Similar short responses have been given by all of the three journalists from the private newspaper ‘*The Reporter*’. *Henok* also asked another round of question. “Why do you think our editor-in-chief and owner of the paper as well as our fellow men are imprisoned for a news report they wrote on a beer factory that is owned by the ruling party? Do you think this is because they are affiliated gatekeepers?”

8. How do you explain the role of your media organization in running adversarial and investigative news on the government?

Unanimous responses have been given by state media journalists for this question. The respondents seem to recall their nostalgia from the years during the periods of the TGE during which they said they have performed a role as platform for the free flow of ideas. But now, especially since 1988 e.c. this role of the paper has been removed said the editors *Brihanu* and *Fitsum* as well as the senior reporter *Meseret*. Stating his professional judgment *Fitsum* said: “...to begin with the profession demands you to be credible, objective, balanced as well as free from personal views and political bias. It should reflect the opinions of the majority of the public. Seen from these criteria our performance is a zero sum. I would like to underscore this since it is my profession. ...even government policies are not covered in depth. It’s all superficial. It’s all like throwing away a forced obligation and counting number of news item coverage. This is the focus of the media. It is coverage for the sake of news page coverage not issue coverage. ... Its issue orientation, selection that is required of us... But almost 98% we have done nothing.

In a response he gave to the question *Brihanu* said: “...the other thing is the journalist’s trend of avoiding political affairs. The direction of Ethiopian politics is more or less geared

towards democracy and development. Thus the state media journalist is focusing on development and democratization, of course this is important. However, you can't keep on focusing and writing on the development of industry, tourism, agriculture etc while the public has more burning issues. The public will not be attracted to you cover issues its issues that are in its interest. The public asks itself of its burning issues. You have to reflect the opinion of the public, the political realities; those that the public wants to know. You can't enforce the political system this way".

The private journalists state that they are known for undertaking investigative and adversarial news report not only on the government but also any one that is a stakeholder in the political, economic and social issues of the country. This as stated by *Alemu* this: "...is a particular feature of 'The Reporter'. Our news desk is strong in this regard. We have also registered several successes. Just to mention some of the successes registered recently we have investigated and reported the corruption case of ETC which resulted in the indictment of several senior officials of ETC. Take the case of the " '*Balestra Gold*' (an Amharic name given by journalists to fake gold) that incurred the National Bank Hundreds of Millions of birr. It is our reporting that exposed the fraud. It's our entire task. Previously we have undertaken massive and detailed reporting on the corrupt procedures of the Commercial bank of Ethiopia, suspects are no in prison. We have also covered the EAL. These can tell you our role. ...Though much better in comparison with other Ethiopian newspapers, the task we performed is just the tip of the iceberg as compared to our plans. This is just one drop on the sea as corruption is widely practiced in the country. There are several places and organizations that we should cover. There is the attempt".

9. Have you or your colleagues ever been ordered by political officials to write a news story in a particular fashion or to drop it altogether?

The issuance of directions and orders for the state media organizations is a day to day activity. One of the state media journalists gave a scoop on this saying that: “all state media officials gather in the Mol at least once a day in order to receive orders on which news items should be presented to the public and how to write them. The information flow system now more than ever before seems to be centralized in which orders flow directly from the Mol.”

The other respondent consolidated this view saying that “....our organization is answerable only to the HPR. But sometimes the ministry of information directly intervenes in our activity. News tips and directions are sent to us directly from the Ministry of Information (Mol). And this has its own impact. Government officials as opposed to the ordinary individual or MPs from opposition parties have the capacity to give orders to the state media”. The opinions of the journalists could be summarized using the words of *Meseret* who said: “the fact that we are writing only one-sided news reports is evidence to this. We are doing what we are ordered by the government”.

One more firm opposition has been forwarded to this claim as all of the three interviewees from *‘The Reporter’* negated this attitude as affecting their independence. “Orders” *Henok* said “No. We never receive whatsoever orders from external forces on how to write our story. There is no such order for us. *Biruk* elaborated on this answer saying that: “No, no there is no such a thing in here. If you are asking me about orders from the editors and bosses, any editor in chief has got his roles and responsibilities. Based on that there may be some orders the journalist may receive from him, because wherever in the world it’s the editor in chief that has the last say over news content. Unless he is convinced of your reporting he may not accept. Both of you try to convince each other but if he says “no” he has the right. Even the deputy editor in chief may scan on your reports

and feel some gaps on the report. He also has the right to ban the news from being reported. The journalist is entitled to convince his editor about the story. He is also entitled to refuse orders for news coverage if he feels it violates his journalistic independence. But there is no principle kept for us to do this story or drop others. And there is no gap in which external forces could do so in here”. *Henok*, the senior reporter attests to this view of his editor. He said:

“We have an absolute right to write whatever we wanted. It’s not an influence we are receiving from editors even, they never attempt to influence as do this do that. Say for example some investor who is close friend of the editor shows the editor his investment project that is astonishing to the editor. He thinks that the project is worth reporting and recommends you to write some story on it. It’s just like a news tip he can give us. But even if you feel it is not news worthy you may say I will not cover it. Most of the news reports printed on our paper are nosed by ourselves and written the way we wanted, in fact in line with the editorial policy. Sometimes our boss may tip you. There is no influence. We have an absolute right. Then think of us accepting orders from external forces, while we even dare to face our editor to protect our independence”.

10. How do you evaluate the editorial policy of your media organization in relation to the political system?

The editorial policy of the state media organizations in Ethiopia has most of its basis from the principles of developmental journalism. The editorial policy of ‘*Addis Zemen*’ according to the respondents of the interview is tuned in line with the constitution and subsidiary laws as well as the political and economic policy of the government. The interview respondents from the state media have repeatedly stated the standardized and neutral position of the editorial policy they are guided with. However, they claim that it has been misused to realize governmental policies and strategies. The opinion given by

Fitsum more or less is agreeable by the state media journalists. His views have summarized most of the opinions reflected by interviewees from the state media. He said:

“The editorial policy is mainly designed with the goal of promoting government development and political policy. It is designed in line with the interest of the government and based on the principle of developmental journalism. But developmental journalism principles don’t hamper you from investigating maladministration, lack of democracy and good governance. It has been clearly stated in the editorial policy that you should fight these. You should encourage developmental investors, echo the efforts of the government in doing so, and listen to the public’s interest. ... It’s not the editorial policy, but our lack of motivation and fear of officials that brings such problems” on the media.”

The interviewees from *‘The Reporter’*, in contrast state that their editorial policy is ready to entertain any public issue as it is open for anyone. The editorial policy that Alemu commented as a well developed is also updated and reviewed regularly. Commenting on this he said: “For that matter The Reporter has a better economic status to hire well trained employees. All employees of the news desk have at least bachelor’s degree or Diploma in journalism and communication. There are also some with MA degrees. The staff is like this. In addition, the paper briefs its new employees on its editorial policy. Similarly we have a regular meeting in which we weekly evaluate our editorial performance. Daily meetings are also held to evaluate new plans and other issues. This has provided us the chance to write a balance and objective new reporting. We strive to do so. This, more or less is much better than the remaining papers and we are as a result receiving wider credibility.”

11. Do you think your media organization is giving equal coverage opportunity in covering opposition parties regardless of government’s position?

The state media as seen from the content analysis is devoted to praising the activities of the government and castigating the activities and ideologies of opposing political parties. This partisan role of the media has been asserted by the interviewees. *Meseret* stresses the contradiction between the editorial principles and the way they are implemented in relation to the coverage of opposition political parties. She says “the editorial states that we are supposed to cover any political party and political viewpoint so long as it is in the public’s interest. Now Ethiopia is embarking upon democracy anew. Opposition political parties have mushroomed for the first time. This was not the case in the previous regimes. Now we are supposed to give equal coverage to every political party and write a balanced story. The editorial policy allows this. However, the practice is quite apart”.

The views of *Brihanu* give further explanations on the weakness of the state media in providing equal coverage for opposition political parties. He recalls a time when the paper has been appreciated and by the HPR for providing continuous and equal coverage for opposition political parties. But now he says: still we have a weakness of denying equal opportunity for individual opposition parties, their members and daily activities and press conferences. We don’t cover their programs. This is crucial for the country’s democratization process as the process requires multiparty system and their vibrant activities. We don’t usually cover them the way we cover them during election periods or the way we cover the ruling party. If we could have given them more coverage our readership would have improved significantly. *Meseret* further explains the procedures through which opposition political parties are pushed away from news coverage”.

This processes, as listed by her, may take various forms “for instance say, an opposition political party gives press conference. No reporter would be assigned to cover the conference. Even if a reporter is assigned the news report would be discarded immediately. Or if it is printed somehow, then there will inevitably be a claw back statement issued by

the ruling party attached to it at the end of the report. The governmental statement is aimed at showing the press conference in a negative light, say a statement that states “it is to be recalled that the government has previously said this but the parties were reluctant to do so”. Balancing a story is one thing. But in the name of balancing the motive is distorting the news coverage in favor of the government”.

The views expressed by the responses of journalists from the private press ‘The Reporter’ can be summed up by the opinions given by *Henok*. All of the respondents seem to share his view. The direct words of his opinions have been presented as follows: “we report any one who is newsworthy. We report any political, economic and social life stakeholder, the government as well as oppositions. And the government will never bring impacts on you for reporting Dr. *Brihanu* or Engineer *Hailu Shawel* (leaders of the major opposition party). We face no impacts from the government for doing this. There is no impact at all. Rather it’s a right.”

“For instance, I recall our news reports during the last election. It was the opposition political parties that received the majority of coverage by the private press. First this is due to the difficulty of getting the PRO of EPRDF. It was much easier to access officials of opposition political parties and write a story on them. Thus they received massive coverage, but this never brought dangers from the government side. It’s all the way I told you previously, it’s not the way it’s told by outsiders. The government tolerates us too much. There are few sensitive areas that are hated by the government. Journalistically speaking some of the positions of the government are correct. We are not living in fear, we have the freedom. So many things bad to the government are written. But there is no such ...”

12. Have your news reports been censored by political officials? Do you undertake self-censorship?

There is a clear difference in the standpoints of the state media journalists with regard to censorship and self-censorship. According to *Fitsum* an editor of '*Addis Zemen*' the state media is provided with gatekeepers and editors so as to ensure the legality and correctness of media products, they are not political tools. His opinion reads as this: "Ethiopian law has abolished censorship. On the other hand the profession of journalism demands editing. Any news will not make it to the pages unless it is edited and approved by the editor. Thus the gate keeper should see it. The way the gatekeeper sees it is another issue. The gate keeper is supposed to the highest authority in the decision making process. ... He as an editor is entitled to change words, syntax and prove facts. This doesn't mean implementing censorship. ... It would be better if we don't relate this with political interference. For me political censorship gives the meaning like saying what has not been said".

On the other hand the opinions forwarded by the senior reporter of the paper- *Meseret* however take the other extreme she states that censorship is not practiced on the paper as the journalist is serving as a reporter –a conduit with which to transmit official views. She maintains that: "I don't think there is censorship or self-censorship in the state media. How could these happen when the journalist is adhering to what he has been ordered? Self-censorship happens only when you are dealing with something of your own writing your own creativity, but here we are doing what we have been ordered. I have already been told what I should do then I need not be censored. This is not a problem for us".

The third view expressed by an editor of the '*Addis Zemen*' consolidates the last opinion. Brihanu sees the sever nature of political censorship and self-censorship as impacting the media. He expressed his role as an editor with these words: "...when you return with your news reports that has been well planned, organized and informed, there is the senior

editor who cuts its backbone. You are supposed to get permissions to write a story. (By the way I am also an editor; I am taking myself as part of the problem). Even at this moment I am talking to you I know how I am going to edit a story written by a reporter the way he wanted. I know how to edit it politically. If you ask me where I brought these formats I would tell you that I was not told by an official or politician to do so. But I have lived in the process. It's only recently that I became an editor. But I have lived in the traditional bottle neck of political editing. I have comforted myself in this bottle. I can't break that bottle as there is nothing that I can in doing soI know what could happen for breaking the bottle. I know what could happen. I have been trained this way. This is one problem".

The issue of self-censorship is, however, agreeable to the interviewees from 'The Reporter' too. Despite the several positive claims they made about the possibility of undertaking independent journalism, they turn to be negative on the issue of self-censorship. While answering questions on the impact of the political influences, *Biruk* for instance said: "the immediate impact (of the influences) is self-censorship. Though you may not face influences directly, you may get afraid of the laws, the policies and their consequences and start to self-censor yourself. If you pass the limits, then don't ask me because one of the articles on the laws will be used against you. Based on these articles you may be required to pay damages as much as 100,000 birr for cases of. Do you think there is a journalist who has got this sum of money? If there is one I would ask you what he is doing in the news rooms".

This as stated by *Alemu* is the aggregate effect of the various problems that are hampering the media. Most of these forces according to him are related to the law. He creates a case and effect relationship between the influences and the act of self-censorship as this: "generally speaking the legal framework of the country and the press law that is enacted in 1985 e.c. has been difficult for most newspapers. Defamation and libel

charges have been rampant in the country in those years. Anyone can sue you any time he wanted. They are uncontrollable. There is no limit on them any one be it an individual or a government official can sue you on charges of defamation and libel. Any report can be challenged by such legal interventions. A situation in which journalists have been accused for years and victimized by the powerful has been wide in the past years and still it is going. The charges are most of the time baseless. We have these problems that force us to be careful in our writing more than necessary”.

5 Chapter Five - Conclusions

This research has attempted to investigate the influence of political officials on the independent reporting of the Ethiopian media. To achieve this, the study has employed quantitative and qualitative research techniques and gathered findings in an attempt to answer the questions posed at the beginning of the research. This concluding chapter has been structured in such a way that it attempts to answer these research questions, as well as to validate the hypotheses posed in the same chapter.

5.1 Is there any influence by political authorities in news reporting?

The study's main hypothesis was that there is a remarkable degree of influence by political officials and their offices in the independent operations of the Ethiopian media. The study has confirmed that the influence of political authorities is present in both state and private owned media in Ethiopia, and that it manifests in various forms and affect the media in varying degrees.

5.2 What different forms (if any) does the influence take?

As stated before, the study revealed some of the various forms of political authorities' influence on the media as editorial policies adopted by media organizations, subsidiary press laws, direct orders from officials as well as the use of cohesive force such as harassment, intimidation and assault. These will be discussed in further detail in this chapter.

5.2.1 The Editorial Policy

On the one hand, the editorial policy of the '*Addis Zemen*' has been designed in line with the political system, and its loyalty is strengthened by the determination of the government to strictly regulate it through assigning affiliated political administrators and gatekeepers. On the other hand, however, '*The Reporter*' has designed its editorial policy in a way that provides the paper an opportunity to serve as a platform for the free flow of ideas and opinions. Thus, while the '*Addis Zemen*' is heavily constrained by gatekeepers

and its political affiliation to the state, '*The Reporter*' seems to be relatively free of such political affiliation and gate keeping.

The study has shown that, '*Addis Zemen*'s pro-government editorial policy, affiliated officials and gatekeepers and a high degree of instruction and interference by the state, have violated the professional independence of its journalists. As a result the journalism undertaken by the paper is biased towards showing the government in a favorable light. This has brought about a lack of balance, lack of objectivity and unequal coverage for opposition political views, parties and activities. The paper has also displayed a marked dependence on official views, sources and speeches, that detail success stories (with some trivial) rather than adversarial and investigative reports as well as issues of public interest.

According to the findings of the content analysis and the interviews, the privately owned newspaper, '*The Reporter*,' strives to give equal coverage to both the ruling and opposition parties as well as the various views reflected between and inside the opposition parties themselves. The paper has also shown great courage in publishing adversarial and investigative news reports that have contributed to the fighting of social ills such as corruption and lack of good governance in Ethiopia, as the government has in some cases taken corrective measures as a result of these news reports. The paper's news reports also show a remarkable degree of balance, objectivity and use of multiple news sources and news writing styles. These attributes have lead to the conclusion that the paper has an editorial policy independent from the government and as such, has no political gatekeepers.

5.2.2 Subsidiary Press Laws

According to the research findings, the FDRE constitution has provided enough rights on freedom of expression and of the press. However, the exercises of these rights by the bearers have been constrained due to the proclamations incorporated in subsidiary press laws and regulations that sometimes violate the constitutional principles.

These subsidiary laws that are open for misinterpretation by officials have provided ways of easy interference and violation on media independence. They have also served as a pretext in muffling the free-flow of information, ideas and opinions to serve the self-

interests of authorities. Instances can be taken by looking at how ‘*Addis Zemen*’, despite the constitutional provisions, is economically chained and strictly regulated by the ruling party. Also the frequent legal charges brought against the private owned ‘*The Reporter*’ are supposed to be the result of the subsidiary laws.

The commitment of political authorities towards interpreting, promoting and protecting media laws seem to show some degree of inconsistency in line with media ownership patterns. The findings have shown that political officials do not hesitate to violate the very laws they have enacted to regulate the media in order to protect the political system and their self-interest.

The low levels of awareness by some authorities with regards to the role of the media, coupled with their intentions to use the media for their self-interests, have prompted authorities to promote laws that protect state media and state media organizations. On the other hand, the private media is still antagonized by the government and laws governing these have been distorted to muffle its independence.

However, the protection that is given to the state media and denied the private media seems to have backfired paradoxically as the state media is the one that has become more restricted in exercising the role it could have contributed for the efforts of democratization.

5.2.3 Direct Orders

Findings from the study have indicated that ‘*Addis Zemen*’ finds itself at the receiving end of direct orders and direction from authorities. The paper is said to be a major conduit for centralized government information flow, headed by MoI. Direct orders and instructions, followed by strict self-censorship of journalists whose reports are politically edited (or sanitized if not censored), have been reported by interviewees and the subsequent skewed reporting approach has been identified from its news pages. This has further been aggravated by the perennial fear that news desk staff inherit from the Imperial and Military regimes through hearsays roving consistently in spite of some of the changes achieved as a result governmental, political and legal reforms witnessed in the 17 years of EPRDF regime. However, these trends are less evident in its rival, ‘*The Reporter*’, which, is only faced with the problems of self-censorship and enjoys the

absence of orders coming to the journalists and the organization, and thus free from political censorship. The relative independence of the paper, the courage it displays in soldering on despite all the challenges as well as its adversarial reporting of issues relating to the government, its agencies and officials (with some degree of success), is worth appreciating and a lesson to be adopted by other media institutions.

Government officials –from top to bottom with their spin doctors, offices, and reports are the permanent newsmakers for ‘*Addis Zemen*’. Government offices are wide open for ‘*Addis Zemen*’, but there is no single report criticizing the offices. It’s all what the officials said that is echoed on the paper.

These doors, in contrast are tightly closed for the private papers including ‘*The Reporter*’. Unwillingness and sometimes fear of political officials to give information freely for the private press has been reported as one of the causes for the private press’s reliance on hearsay and little evidence in its news reports. Most of the official sources that the paper gets are through leaks as well as personal contacts with dismayed government officials. Despite this major handicap, ‘*The Reporter*’ still tries to give a balanced account in its reports.

5.2.4 The Use of Cohesive force (Harassment, Intimidation and Assault)

In spite of the frequently claimed cases of the state’s use of its coercive force in muffling media independence, the research findings have indicated that this is not true in the case of the ‘*Addis Zemen*’ while for ‘*The Reporter*’, it has been minimal. This could be because such acts are normally disguised as implementing rule of the law, and thus could not easily be identified by the respondents. Harassment, intimidation and assault are frequently reported forms of political interference. Although responses to the questionnaire indicated a positive response to this claim, the issue still remains a controversial one as detailed through the interview results.

Responses given by some of the interviewees from the private media (which to some degree is acceptable) regarding the over politicized nature of the harassment, intimidation and assault issue needs careful assessment as accusation and counter accusations continue

to fly between the private media and government. While it is undeniable that the use of harassment, intimidation and assault has been constraining the media, it is equally true that this issue has frequently been used as an emergency exit point out of the country, resulting in safe landing on foreign countries.

5.3 How does this political influence affect the state vs. private media?

The state owned media are responding in favor of the political authorities, thus relegating their responsibility of serving the public interests. The private media have been sandwiched between the double pressures of serving the public's interest and the challenges arising from such factors. Unlike '*The Reporter*,' the '*Addis Zemen*' is devoid of any criminalization or libel and sedition charges. This political tool has constantly been used on the privately owned '*The Reporter*' and has been the source of numerous problems that have strangled the paper.

5.4 What are the aggregate effects of such political influence?

Ultimately the paper hypothesized that both the state and private owned media are not efficiently discharging their inherent role of serving the public, watch-dogging the government and its officials, safeguarding FoS, FoE and FoP and their role as a lubricant for socio-political reform and democratization due in part to the political influence exerted on their independent operations. The aggregate effect of political influence by politicians is that the state owned '*Addis Zemen*' has continued with its age-old pattern of serving the government while avoiding any risks from the government and also compromising its responsibility for the public as well as role for democratization. Most of the problems in exercising the independent role of the paper, as expressed, by its employees are not coming exactly from the external pressures of authorities but from the presence of a long tradition of fear and lack of initiative by the journalists to deviate from the routine formats; avoid the perennial fear has swallowed the public media for generations; and demand the independence given to the media. There also seem to be gaps in which state media journalists can make efficient use of

the various advantages they draw from the political system to ensure their independence and bring about change.

In contrast, the form, nature, and relative impact of the influences seem to be more manageable for any private press that can undertake the profession in accordance with the law and fight the battle for absolute victory over authorities. *'The Reporter'* is more likely on this track and it is enhancing its capacity, which will inevitably be followed by remarkable independence. The professional can escape the barbed wire fence of authorities aimed at restricting media independence by making use of legality as a tool. Lack of FoIA; the use of pretexts such as state security, peace, stability, ethnic and religious coexistence; as well as lack of clear cut demarcation as to which information is a state secret and which is not is still giving political authorities the upper hand in curtailing the free flow of information.

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Appendix 1

	Questions	Strongly agree	agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1	I am aware of the freedoms of expression and of the press enshrined in Ethiopian law					
2	Ethiopian laws protects the media from abuse by political officials					
3	Government politicians respect and promote media laws					
4	Political officials obstruct media's independence in serving the public's right to know					
5	Politicians misuse media laws to curtail the flow of information unfavorable to them					
6	Political officials order how I should write a news story or to drop it altogether					
7	Political officials influence the news media I serve through economic measures					
8	Politicians use arbitrary criminal libel and sedition charges to frustrate the media					
9	Politicians' use of arbitrary harassment, arrest and intimidation are impeding media independence					
10	Political officials use the media I serve as their mouthpiece					
11	The editorial policy of my news room favors the government					
12	The owner/manager of the media I serve is a politically affiliated gatekeeper					
13	The media I serve is free to run adversarial news on the government					
14	The media I serve is ready to entertain news reports that scrutinize and expose governmental secrecy, mischief and abuse of power					
15	My media requires me to support the political system in exchange for promotion, salary increment and training opportunities					

16	The media I serve gives equal opportunity in covering opposition parties regardless of government's position					
17	My news reports are censored by political officials					
18	I am compelled to self-censor sensitive news items on government and politicians for fear of political measures against me					
19	I am forced to rely on official news sources and routine news formats					
20	I have been denied access to news sources and government held information					

Appendix 2

Interview Guide questions for editors and media officials

1. How do you evaluate the Ethiopian media laws in protecting the media from abuse by political officials?
2. Do you think government politicians respect and promote media laws or do they abuse it to achieve their interests?
3. Is there any way you think in which Political officials obstruct media's independence in serving the public's right to know? How?
4. Do you think media laws have been misused by politicians to curtail the flow of information unfavorable to them?
5. Is there any economic influence of the political officials that is impacting your media organization?
6. How are the frequently heard accusations on the politicians' use of arbitrary criminal libel and sedition charges to frustrate the media related to your organization?
7. Do you think your media organization is serving as the mouthpiece of political officials or the political system as a whole?
8. Do you think the owner/manager of the media you are serving politically affiliated gatekeepers?
9. How do you explain the role of your media organization in running adversarial news on the government?

Appendix 3

Interview guide questions for reporters

1. Have you or colleagues ever been ordered by political officials to write a news story in a particular fashion or to drop it altogether?
2. Are there any cases of arbitrary harassment, arrest and intimidation you or your colleagues faced as a result of politicians' attempt to impede the independence of your media?
3. How do you evaluate the editorial policy of your media organization in relation to the political system?
4. Do you think you would be able to entertain news reports that scrutinize and expose governmental secrecy, mischief and abuse of power?
5. Have you ever been requested by your media to support the political system in exchange for promotion, salary increment and training opportunities?
6. Do you think your media organization is giving equal coverage opportunity in covering opposition parties regardless of government's position?
7. Have your news reports been censored by political officials?
8. How do you think the practice of self-censorship undertaken by your media colleagues in covering sensitive news items on government and politicians for fear of political measures against them or you?
9. How do you evaluate your news source selection? Do you rely on official sources and routine news formats or do you select according to the requirements of the story?
10. Have you ever been denied of access to news sources and government held information?

Declaration

I, the under signed, declare that this thesis is my original work and all the sources of materials used for the thesis have been duly acknowledged.

Name: _____

Signature: _____

Date of Submission: October, 2008