

**Media and Democracy in Ethiopia: Roles and  
Challenges of the Private Media Since 2005**

**Dagim Afework**

**A Thesis Submitted to the School of Journalism and  
Communication**

**Presented In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the  
Degree of Master of Arts in Journalism and Communication**

**Addis Ababa University  
Addis Ababa, Ethiopia  
June, 2013**

**Addis Ababa University**  
**School of Graduate Studies**

This is to certify that the thesis prepared by Dagim Afework, entitled *Media and Democracy in Ethiopia: Roles and Challenges of the Private Media Since 2005* and submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts in Journalism and Communication complies with the regulations of the University and notes the accepted standards with respect to originality and quality.

Signed by the Examining Committee:

Examiner\_\_\_\_\_ Signature\_\_\_\_\_ Date\_\_\_\_\_

Examiner\_\_\_\_\_ Signature\_\_\_\_\_ Date\_\_\_\_\_

Advisor\_\_\_\_\_ Signature\_\_\_\_\_ Date\_\_\_\_\_

---

Chair of department or Graduate Coordinator

## **ABSTRACT**

### **Media and Democracy in Ethiopia: Roles and Challenges of the Private media since 2005**

**Dagim Afework**

**Addis Ababa University, 2013**

It could universally be agreed that the form of government that is ideal and preferable to any other forms is democracy. Democracy is preferable because it gives an opportunity for the people to participate in decision-making that affects their lives. The process of decision-making would mostly, if not all the time, be facilitated through the provision of information and forum by the media. Being considerate of this notion, this study was mainly conducted to examine what roles the Ethiopian private media are playing in the democratization of the country since 2005 and what challenges are obstructing them when trying to discharge democratic functions. To this end, the study has employed social responsibility theory of the press, the public sphere, media politics theory, and Hallin and Mancini's models of media systems as its theoretical frameworks. The theories in general take into account the democratic roles that media could play in a given democratic governance.

Triangulation of quantitative and qualitative methods has been employed. Accordingly, 40 questionnaires were distributed to journalists who were randomly selected from the private media and in-depth interviews have been conducted with 13 informants who were purposively selected from the media, journalists' professional associations, government offices, and political parties.

The result of the study revealed that the Ethiopian private media are not properly carrying out the democratic roles that they are expected to play owing to both internal and external challenges. The internal challenges included journalists' poor understanding of some of the roles, poor level of journalistic professionalism, and economic and institutional incapacities.

The external challenges, on the other hand, included, among others, the reluctance of government officials to give information for journalists, the government's poor, or no recognition of the private media's democratic roles and lack of support from the government.

The study has also attempted to identify the kind of relationship that the private media have with the government and political parties. Accordingly, it reveals that there is an unfriendly relationship with the government while there is a good relationship with the political parties.

## **Acknowledgements**

First and foremost, I would like to express my heartfelt thanks to my advisor, Dr. Abdissa Zerai, for his unreserved comments and advices that shaped the thesis. What is more, I thank him for his unconditional and wholehearted intellectual advices throughout the two years period that I spent on the study.

I express my sincere gratitude to my family: Afework (my father), Yeworkwuha (my mother), Anteneh (my brother), and Selamawit (my sister) for they are always there for me. I always owe you gratitude for no journey would be possible without having you by my side.

Finally yet importantly, I would like to thank the 9<sup>th</sup> batch students of the school of journalism and communication, with whom I had an enjoyable and unforgettable two years, for their friendship.

## **To: My Father**

### ***Thank You, Dad***

*for always being there  
for being strong  
yet showing you cared.  
For being my protector  
and setting the rules  
for the rides, the money,  
and the help with school.  
For all the times I was grounded  
for my own good  
I may not have been happy,  
but I always understood  
that I am lucky  
to be one of the few  
to have a Dad that loves me  
as much as you do.  
I love you, Dad.*

***[Michael Josephson]***

# Table of Contents

<b>Chapter One</b> .....	1
I. Introduction .....	1
1.1. Background of the study .....	1
1.2. Statement of the problem .....	5
1.3. Rationale of the study.....	6
1.3.1. Why study media and democracy? .....	7
1.3.2. Why study the private media only? .....	8
1.3.3. Why study the period since 2005? .....	9
1.4. Objectives of the study.....	9
1.5. Research questions .....	10
1.6. Scope of the study .....	10
1.7. Significance of the study .....	11
<b>Chapter Two</b> .....	12
II. Literature Review.....	12
2.1. A Brief Overview of the Private Media in Ethiopia.....	12
2.1.1. Private Newspapers .....	12
2.1.2. Private Radio Stations .....	15
2.2. Democracy: Definition and Models .....	15
2.2.1. Democracy Defined.....	16
2.2.2. Models of Democracy .....	20
2.2.2.1. Participatory Democracy .....	21

2.2.2.2. Competitive Democracy .....	24
2.2.2.3. Deliberative Democracy .....	25
2.2.2.4. Procedural Democracy .....	27
2.3. Democratization .....	28
2.3.1. Democratization Defined.....	28
2.3.2. Democratization in Ethiopia.....	30
2.4. Media and Democracy .....	35
2.4.1. Democratic Functions of the Media .....	35
2.4.1.1. Monitorial Role.....	38
2.4.1.2. Facilitative Role .....	39
2.4.1.3. Radical Role.....	41
2.4.1.4. Collaborative Role .....	41
2.4.2. Media and Elections .....	42
2.4.3. The Media in Democracy: Critiques .....	43
2.5. Media—Government/Political Parties Relationships .....	44
2.5.1. Media and Government .....	45
2.5.2. Media and Political Parties .....	47
2.6. Theoretical Framework .....	48
2.6.1. Social Responsibility Theory of the Press.....	48
2.6.2. The Public Sphere.....	51
2.6.3. Zaller’s Theory of Media Politics.....	53
2.6.4. Hallin & Mancini’s Models of Media Systems .....	55
2.6.4.1. The Polarized Pluralist Model .....	57

2.6.4.2. The Liberal Model .....	58
2.6.4.3. The Democratic Corporatist Model .....	58
<b>Chapter Three</b> .....	60
III. Research Methodology .....	60
3.1. Introduction .....	60
3.2. Data Collection Instruments.....	61
3.2.1. In-depth interview.....	61
3.2.2. Questionnaire.....	62
3.3. Sampling Technique.....	64
3.4. Data Analysis .....	65
<b>Chapter Four</b> .....	66
IV. Data Presentation, Analysis, and Discussion.....	66
4.1. Quantitative Data Presentation, Analysis, and Discussion .....	66
4.1.1. Data Analysis and Presentation .....	67
4.1.1.1 Demographic Profile of Journalists .....	67
4.1.1.2. Level of Education and Field of Study of Respondents .....	68
4.1.1.3. Types of Media Respondents Work for .....	69
4.1.1.4. Responsibility of respondents.....	70
4.1.1.5. Experience of respondents .....	71
4.1.1.6. Issues of focus of respondents .....	72
4.1.1.7. Perception of journalists towards their democratic roles .....	73
4.1.1.8. What democratic roles are the private media playing?.....	74

4.1.1.9. The Private Media and the Government .....	76
4.1.1.10. The Private Media and Political Parties.....	77
4.1.1.11. Public Perception towards the Private Media’s Democratic Roles .....	79
4.1.1.12. Challenges of the Private Media .....	81
4.1.1.12.1 Restrictive Laws.....	81
4.1.1.12.2. Lack of Support from the Government .....	82
4.1.1.12.3. Poor level of Journalistic professionalism .....	83
4.1.1.12.4. Democratic Roles Unrecognized.....	83
4.1.1.12.5. Inaccessibility of Information .....	84
4.1.1.12.6. Economic Weakness of the Private Media.....	85
4.1.1.12.7. Weak Development of Private Printing Enterprise .....	85
4.1.2. Summary of Findings .....	88
4.2. Qualitative Data Analysis.....	91
4.2.1. Understanding Democratic Roles of the Media .....	91
4.2.2. Free Press as a Precondition .....	93
4.2.3. Democratic Roles: Carried Out or Neglected? .....	96
4.2.3.1. Monitoring Maladministration.....	96
4.2.3.2. Facilitating Debate and Discussion.....	99
4.2.3.3. Focusing on the Society’s Problems.....	101
4.2.3.4. Collaborating With the Government.....	102
4.2.4. Covering Election .....	103
4.2.5. The Private Media with Government and Political Parties.....	106
4.2.6. Challenges of the Private Media.....	109

<b>Chapter Five</b> .....	111
V. Conclusion and Recommendations .....	111
5.1. Conclusion.....	111
5.2. Recommendations .....	113
References .....	115
Appendices.....	123

## List of Figures

FIGURE 1—LEVEL OF EDUCATION OF RESPONDENTS .....	68
FIGURE 2—TYPE OF MEDIA ORGANIZATION THE RESPONDENTS WORK FOR .....	69
FIGURE 3—EXPERIENCE OF RESPONDENTS .....	71
FIGURE 4—ISSUES OF FOCUS OF RESPONDENTS .....	72

## List of Tables

TABLE 1—AGE AND SEX OF RESPONDENTS .....	67
TABLE 2—RESPONDENTS BY THEIR FIELD OF STUDY .....	69
TABLE 3—RESPONSIBILITY OF RESPONDENTS .....	70
TABLE 4—PERCEPTION OF JOURNALISTS TOWARDS THEIR DEMOCRATIC ROLES.....	73
TABLE 5—DEMOCRATIC ROLES OF THE PRIVATE MEDIA.....	75
TABLE 6—THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE GOVERNMENT AND THE PRIVATE MEDIA .....	76
TABLE 7—GOOD RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE PRIVATE MEDIA AND POLITICAL PARTIES .....	78
TABLE 8—THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE PRIVATE MEDIA AND POLITICAL PARTIES .....	79
TABLE 9—JOURNALISTS’ VIEW OF THE PUBLIC’S PERCEPTION TOWARDS THE PRIVATE MEDIA’S DEMOCRATIC ROLES .....	80
TABLE 10—RESTRICTIVE LAWS .....	81
TABLE 11—LACK OF SUPPORT FROM THE GOVERNMENT.....	82
TABLE 12—POOR LEVEL OF JOURNALISTIC PROFESSIONALISM.....	83
TABLE 13—DEMOCRATIC ROLES UNRECOGNIZED .....	83
TABLE 14—DIFFICULTY TO ACCESS INFORMATION FROM PUBLIC BODIES .....	84
TABLE 15—ECONOMIC WEAKNESS OF THE PRIVATE MEDIA .....	85
TABLE 16—WEAK DEVELOPMENT OF PRIVATE PRINTING ENTERPRISES.....	86
TABLE 17—CHALLENGES OF THE PRIVATE MEDIA WHEN TRYING TO DISCHARGE DEMOCRATIC ROLES .....	87

## **List of Acronyms**

<b>AAU</b>	Addis Ababa University
<b>CUD</b>	Coalition for Unity and Democracy
<b>EBA</b>	Ethiopian Broadcast Authority
<b>FFPJA</b>	Ethiopian Free Press Journalists Association
<b>ENJU</b>	Ethiopian National Journalists Union
<b>EPRDF</b>	Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front
<b>ETV</b>	Ethiopian Tele-Vision
<b>FDRE</b>	Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia
<b>NEBE</b>	National Electoral Board of Ethiopia
<b>OFDM</b>	Oromo Federalist Democratic Movement
<b>TGE</b>	Transitional Government of Ethiopia
<b>UEDF</b>	United Ethiopian Democratic Forces
<b>EDP</b>	Ethiopian Democratic Party

# Chapter One

## I. Introduction

### 1.1. Background of the study

There is no consensus among scholars as to the meaning of democracy (Diamond, 2003, p. 31). Different scholars have identified different characteristics of a democratic rule. However, certain common features may be found in all the various definitions of democracy and characteristics of a democratic government. Robert Dahl (1998, p. 37-38), in an attempt to define democracy, identifies five criteria of a democratic process: effective participation, voting equality, enlightened understanding, control of the agenda, and inclusion of all adults. McNair (2011, p. 16-17), on his part, points out three defining characteristics of a democratic regime. These are; (1) Constitutionality: he explains that there must be agreed procedures and rules that govern elections, the behavior of those to be elected, and the legitimate activities of the dissenters; (2) Participation: according to McNair, substantial portion of the population must participate in the democratic process; and (3) Rational choice: choices have to be available for citizens from which they could rationally select.

Common to both Dahl's and McNair's identification, among others, is participation. Moreover, it could be universally agreed that at the heart of democracy or and democratization lies citizens' participation. For citizens to be informed in all the affairs that have an effect on them and effectively participate, many argued that there has to be a free press. In this regard, Ansah (1988) in his article: *In Search of a role for The African Media in the democratic process*, writes:

In order to educate the people on their civil rights and responsibilities and create in them the political consciousness that will enable them to participate

meaningfully in the governmental process through periodic elections, they need access to information and they should have the right to all possible avenues for obtaining the necessary data to enable them to participate in public discussions and debates so as to be able to influence decisions. (p. 12).

In a democracy, it is not only information that the media is expected to provide for citizens. They are also expected to serve as a watchdog by revealing wrong doings of the government. Anshah (1988) explaining the media's role as a watchdog in democratization, writes:

In a democratic society, actions of the government, which is only a trustee of the collective will and power of the people, are expected to be regulated by the force of public opinion, and the press is the most appropriate medium for gauging and reflecting public opinion. In the absence of any such mechanism for regularly monitoring and evaluating the government's performance before the bar of public opinion, there is a great likelihood of the government falling into complacency, unresponsiveness, and irresponsibility. (p. 12).

In the same vein, Thomas Jefferson's 1787 speech, "The basis of our government being the opinion of the people, the very first object should be to keep that right; and were it left to me to decide whether we should have a government without newspapers, or newspapers without a government, I should not hesitate a moment to prefer the latter" (American Newspaper Association Foundation, 2005), signifies how important newspapers are for democracy through playing democratic roles in a society.

Democracy assumes adequately educated and well-informed citizens that could make rational and effective use of the information circulating in the public sphere in their participation in

decision-making (McNair, 2011, p. 20). The media have to be free to carry out its democratic functions, for it is when there exists free media that the assumed 'well educated' and 'well informed' citizens could exist.

In Africa, the current democratization process is believed to have been started in the early 1990's, which has brought a sort of media pluralism with multipartyism (Nyamnjoh, 2005, p. 53). In the same period, Africa has seen a dramatic increase of private newspapers and later in 2005; most countries of the continent have opened up the airwaves as well which helped radio stations flourish all over the continent (ibid). On how this democratic process has raised a hope for independent media that have an important role in the process itself, Tettey (2001, p. 7) writes 'following the triumph of democratic forces in the late 1980's and early 1990's, there was renewed hope that Africa would once again see the rejuvenation of the mass media as 'watchdogs' over the political establishment and as the marketplace for trading in ideas'.

Democracy as a popular form of government, distinct from popular government, that most states in the world aspire to put into practice and that states have been criticized for its ill implementation, has been a debatable issue.

The downfall of the former military regime, and the coming to power of EPRDF promised a democratic rule in the country. According to Shimelis (2000, p. 14) 'EPRDF's takeover of power in May 1991 and the following proclamations related to the press (Proclamations No. 1/1991 and No. 6/1991, Article 4[1]) were considered by many as marking the beginning of a new period of openness and democratization in Ethiopia.' Writing about this and the political event in Ethiopia in the year 1991/92, Waal (1992) states:

This marked a high point for democracy in Ethiopia. ...[the] Transitional Charter, a document enshrining the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and promises of democracy and self-determination for Ethiopian nationalities. It promised swift regional elections and national elections by the end of 1993, following the adoption of a permanent constitution. (p. 721).

Following the adoption of the transitional charter, a proclamation to provide for the freedom of the press (proclamation No. 34/1992) was proclaimed. This proclamation was very important to the private media especially in that it recognized the roles that an independent media could play to promote democracy. This was reflected in the third paragraph of the preamble of the proclamation:

Whereas free press, not only provides a forum for citizens to freely express their opinions, but also plays a prominent role in the protection of individual and peoples' rights and the development of a democratic culture as well as in affording citizens the opportunity to form balanced views on various topical issues and to forward their opinions on the directions and operations of government (Proclamation No. 34/1992).

Following the charter and the press proclamation of the FDRE, private newspapers have started to flourish in the newspaper market. The number of independently owned newspapers and magazines reached 287 by the year 1997 (Tedbabe, 1990 cited in Shimelis, 2000, p. 10). In 2008, the 1992's and later the 2003's press proclamation has been replaced by a proclamation named 'Freedom of the mass media and access to information.' Following this proclamation, currently, (until august 2012) there are 39 publications, of which 19 are newspapers and 20 are magazines.

The private media in Ethiopia is ideally believed to have indispensable roles in creating an informed citizen that would actively participate in the democratic process and in serving the society as a watchdog over maladministration. Studying the political history of the private press in the democratic Ethiopia in the period between 1991 and 2007, Hallelujah (2008) concludes:

...the Ethiopian independent press failed to play its role as an independent institution in the new system as it acted irresponsibly and unprofessionally against internationally accepted ethical and professional yardsticks of journalism creating a negative state-press relation where one considers the other as an archenemy. (p. 11).

However, the researcher believes that it is difficult to conclude as such having only 15 informants that do not fully represent the private press. Hallelujah's study has also ignored, to some extent, the major challenges that the press faced. Hence, this study tries to examine, in light of the normative roles that the private media are expected to play, the actual democratic functions that the Ethiopian private media have in helping the country move towards a democratic state. The study also looks at the challenges that these media face when playing their roles.

## **1.2. Statement of the problem**

If the roles of the media in general and journalism in particular are to be stated in a single statement, it would be 'to provide citizens with information that they need to be free and self-governing' in a democratic society (Kovach & Rosenstiel, 2007, p. 12). Ideally, the independent media have two major roles in a democratic process. First, the media provide citizens with information on matters pertaining to elections. Election is key to democracy in that citizens are

provided with choices to select from and this determines the kind of government they will likely have. What is more, to elect among the choices citizens need to be informed, through critical reporting by the media about which choice is best for them. In addition, the media create forums for policy debates. Second, for democracy is not all about election but also about the respect of civil and political rights, the media ought to function as an investigative agent of the wrong deeds of the government, which is traditionally referred to as ‘watchdog’ role.

However, when it comes to the actual practice of these independent media, the roles are constrained by multifaceted challenges. In Ethiopia, it has been more than a couple of decades now since democracy is declared and private media have started to proliferate. From the time of their emergence, the private media have played their own, both positive and negative, roles in the democratization process of the country. Since 2005, the media landscape is believed to have been subject to changes due to the change in the legal environment in which the media function. As a result, they have faced many challenges.

Thus, the current study attempts to examine the actual roles that the Ethiopian Private media play in the democratic process being carried out in the country, since 2005, in light of the roles they are expected to play. More importantly, it tries to identify the major challenges the private media face in striving to pursue a democratic function.

### **1.3. Rationale of the study**

Writing on the why of studying media and democracy in Ethiopia, referring to the roles that the private media are playing and the challenges they are facing since 2005, it would be apt to divide the rationale into three parts and give reasons separately for: (1) why study media and democracy

in Ethiopia? (2) Why study the private media only precluding the government media? Finally, (3) why study the period since 2005?

### **1.3.1. Why study media and democracy?**

As it is explicated in the background of the study of this paper, the media is believed to be the principal institution in the democratic public sphere that work to create an informed citizen, which is expected to have the ultimate power in decision-making through representation. In Ethiopia, it has been more than a couple of decades since democratic government has been declared. In this period, the media especially newspapers have emerged as one of the key actors in the process of democratization albeit challenges, both from within and from without the profession, have thwarted them time and again. Shimelis (2000, p. 4) notices that the relative freedom of the media that came because of the political and economic liberalization has enhanced the process of democratization. Today's democracy (democratization) of Ethiopia, many claim, is not thriving as it was expected and the promised democratic rule is not yet achieved. Moreover, the opposition political parties express their ceased passion of waiting for democracy in the country questioning why still the country is in the process of democratization (Pausewang, Tronvoll & Aalen, 2002a, p. 2). Due to the change in the democratic public sphere, the challenges and the actual roles of the private media in the democratization process of the country change. It is universally believed that the form of government that gives citizens an ultimate power in decision-making is democracy. Citizens exercise their power through electing representatives and thus media's role in informing them as to whom to elect is as vital as their participation in the process of electing representatives and in decision-making.

In Africa, various researches have been conducted to examine the contribution of African media to democratization in the continent as a whole. However, as an individual African country, very little has been done to show or examine what relationship media and democracy have in Ethiopia. Only a handful of researches have been conducted still leaving a gap to be filled. Hence, it would be appropriate to study, in a broader way, what roles the private media play in Ethiopia's journey to democracy and what challenges they face.

### **1.3.2. Why study the private media only?**

For the media to play important roles in the democratic process of a given country, they have to be free and independent first. To be able to entertain the views of different political parties, which are key actors in a democracy, the media need to be free from the control of the government. The so-called government media in Ethiopia do almost nothing more than flattering those in power. In support of this view, Shimelis Bonsa (2000) explains:

Journalists in the state-owned print medium were then let loose to pursue their traditional function, which they did with great vigor and dedication: praising and glorifying the government, at times beyond reasonable proportions, and condemning and castigating actions of previous governments as well as those of current political opponents of the regime in power. (p. 14).

Based on the aforementioned reasons, the researcher assumes that the Ethiopian state owned media, be it The Ethiopian Herald or Ethiopian Radio and Television Agency, may not have a significant contribution in Ethiopia's transition to democracy through playing the democratic roles. As a result, the research only focuses on the private media.

### **1.3.3. Why study the period since 2005?**

The year 2005 could be taken as a turning point in Ethiopia both in the democratization process and in the private media's roles. Some newspapers that functioned before the election period were forced to be closed after the election. The reason for this according to the government was their irresponsible function and unfair reporting on issues pertaining to the 2005 election. After the election, some other independent newspapers have started to emerge. Thus, the reasons for why the study examines the period since 2005 are twofold. First, studies conducted on the private media before 2005 have directly or indirectly showed what roles the media played in the democratic process in the period. Therefore, the need to study that period is very minimal. Second, the year 2005 has marked a point in the change of the private media's roles due to the closure of many newspapers that functioned before the election period. It is also since 2005 that private radio stations started to function in the country. Therefore, the study focuses on the private media's roles in the democratization process and their challenges since 2005.

### **1.4. Objectives of the study**

The general objective of the study, as indicated above, is to examine what roles the private media are playing in the democratization of Ethiopia since 2005 and what challenges are constraining them when trying to pursue a democratic function. The specific objectives of the study are the following:

- To examine how far the roles of the Ethiopian private media are from the roles they are expected to play to contribute to or to promote democracy in the country,
- To demonstrate the relationship that exists between the media and the government and the media and political parties as well,

- To assess the perception of journalists towards the media's democratic roles and review how journalists see the perception of the public towards the democratic roles of the media.
- To identify the major challenges that the private media in Ethiopia are facing in the course of pursuing democratic roles.

## **1.5. Research questions**

In consideration of the objectives, the study seeks to provide answers for the following major research questions:

- What actual roles are the private media playing in Ethiopia's walk to democracy since 2005?
- What relationship do the private media have with political parties on one hand and the government on the other hand?
- How do Journalists perceive their democratic roles?
- How do journalists see the public's perception of the private media's democratic roles?
- What challenges are the private media facing in playing democratic roles to promote Ethiopia's move towards democracy?

## **1.6. Scope of the study**

The research only focuses on the private mainstream media (Newspapers, Magazines, and Radio stations) that are both functioning and that have vanished due to many problems. Some papers, for example "*Addis Neger*" (Amharic weekly), "*Awramba Times*" (Amharic weekly) and "*Fetehe*" (Amharic weekly), have vanished from the market after a year or two of existence in the newspaper market. However, for it helps to examine the challenges that have forced them out

of the market and the roles they were playing during their time and for they have functioned in the period since 2005, they are part of the study. Both the private print media (newspapers and magazines), and private or commercial broadcast radio stations, as there is no private TV station, are the focuses of the study. It is worth mentioning that unless stated to explain about the private media, the government owned media are not the focus of this study.

### **1.7. Significance of the study**

This research, as it tries to examine the private media's contribution to or roles in promoting democratization would be significant in providing insight into the area for those who want to study the relationship between media and democracy in the years to come. Since very little has been researched in this regard, this study would contribute to an academic understanding of the issue of media and democracy in Ethiopia.

The study would also be significant to the Ethiopian private media organizations in that it not only attempts to identify the roles they are expected to play and the actual roles they are playing with respect to the country's democratization but it also identifies the challenges they are facing when striving to play their roles. Therefore, they could learn from the challenges and make themselves ready to ameliorate the situation by their side and put some pressure on the government to make things better by its side.

Finally yet importantly, the research would be significant for the government, the major actor in the country's democratization process, in that it examines the relationship of the government with the media and identify what challenges are impeding the media from contributing to the democratization process so that the government would address the issue as long as it has an objective of creating a democratic state.

## Chapter Two

### II. Literature Review

#### 2.1. A Brief Overview of the Private Media in Ethiopia

The private print and broadcast media in Ethiopia do not have a similar history and they also have differential status; hence, the following overview is structured separately. It would be worth mentioning as well that for the focus of the study is newspapers and broadcast radio stations that have been functioning since 2005, newspapers that are not in the market currently but have functioned in the period under study are part of this overview.

##### 2.1.1. Private Newspapers

According to Shemelis Bensa (2002, p. 6), the beginning of the proliferation of private newspapers and magazines came into being by ‘taking advantage of the government’s declaration of intent’. By the same token, Skjerdal (2012, p. 17) documents that “the media situation during EPRDF is significantly different from that of the two previous regimes, especially with regard to formal media policy and openings for independent journalism.”

Shemelis (2002) writes that after the declaration of a press proclamation in 1992, which was entitled *A Proclamation to Provide for the Freedom of the Press No. 34/1992*, a number of private newspapers and magazines emerged in the market. Writing about the positive changes that the proclamation brought about, Skjerdal (2012) writes:

...the press law guaranteed a number of rights associated with a free media society. Two principles were deemed particularly important: the abolishment of

pre-publication censorship (article 3(2)), and the right for any Ethiopian citizen to open a media outlet (article 5(1)). (p. 18).

According to Shemelis (2002), about 200 private newspapers and 87 magazines were registered in 5 years—from 1992 to 1997. However, Aadland and Røe (quoted in Skjerdal, 2012, p. 18) assert that in the period between October 1992 to July 1997, about 265 newspapers and 120 magazines were given license from the then Ministry of Information. No matter how different the figures are, this period could possibly be referred to as the ‘golden time’ for those who had the interest to engage in the publishing market.

Skjerdal (2012, p. 19) contends that such proliferation of private media is evident in many countries that freed their media system after many years of oppression. However, the problem of these rapidly proliferating media in Ethiopia, according to him, was accompanied by a volatile characteristic of the media in that most of the ‘renowned publications’ were ephemeral. He explains, “Some barely made it to the vendors before folding, while others stayed for a couple of years or more.” In relation to what features best characterized the Ethiopian private newspapers during this period, Shemelis (2002) chronicles:

The private press in Ethiopia, as in other developing countries under similar circumstances, could be said to be reminiscent of the press in more developed areas a century ago. This applies to its multiplicity, urban concentration, economic insecurity, limited advertising, comparatively small circulation, relatively untrained staff and, frequently, modest equipment. (p. 199)

Most of the papers were also politically motivated (Skjerdal, p. 19). When we look at the current private media, especially newspapers, a very similar feature is being manifested, which implies that the late 1990's peculiarities have had a lasting impact on today's media system of Ethiopia. According to Skjerdal (2012, p. 22), later in the period from 1999-2005, the media environment started to improve and evolve into an environment where the reporting of the private press became investigative based, sensationalism abated and areas that happened to be untouchable in reports started to be utilized unlike the previous years.

In the period behind 2005, the private media have been subject to change due to the closure of a number of critical papers with the claim by the government that they have malfunctioned during the 2005 national and regional elections. With reference to the defunct papers during this period, Skjerdal and Hallelujah (quoted in Skjerdal, 2012, p. 25) writes, "A number of publications were forced to close as a result of the detentions of their managers and editors, including critical outlets such as Addis Zena, Ethop, Menelik, Meysisaw, Meznagna, Netsanet, Satenaw and Seife Nebelbal."

According to the then Ethiopian Ministry of Information, department of press licensing (cited in Berhanu, 2006, p. 59), the number of newspapers with political, economic, and social issues (current affairs) from 8<sup>th</sup> July 2004 to 7<sup>th</sup> July 2005 were 63, whereas the total number of newspapers that included sports, culture, and arts newspapers, were 134 and the total number of magazines were 46. According to the recent report of the EBA, the total number of newspapers circulated on January 2013 was 18 while the magazines were 21. Of the 18 newspapers, 12 focused on political, economic, and social issues whereas the rest focused on sports and health. Moreover, only eight magazines focused on political, economic, and social content and the

remaining 13 magazines focused on fashion, art, culture, and sports issues. This figure reveals that the political press has diminished through time.

### **2.1.2. Private Radio Stations**

The emergence of commercial radio stations is a very recent phenomenon in the Ethiopian media system. There has been government owned radio stations established very earlier during the reign of Hailesilassie. The coming to power of EPRDF did not bring about a change in the licensing of private or commercial radio stations as it did concerning newspapers and magazines. According to Netsanet (2007, p. 18), it was later that the government announced that private owners would be given the chance to establish radio stations. He explains that the first radio stations, which were given the license in February 2006, were *ZAMI Public Connections (Zami 90.7 FM)* and *Adey Promotions and Entertainment (Sheger FM 102.1)*. However, he stated that these radio stations were not on air as soon as they were given the license.

Currently, there are five commercial radio stations namely, *Fana Broadcasting Corporate*, *Sheger FM 102.1*, *Afro FM 105.3* (English radio station), *Zami 90.7 FM*, and *Dimtsi Woyane* (Tigrigna radio station based in Mekelle). Most of the commercial or private radio stations are often decried for the overriding treatment they give for entertainment and related content than other serious issues such as political, social, and economic issues.

## **2.2. Democracy: Definition and Models**

To put a definition for democracy, one needs to go through the various definitions of the concept given by different scholars, work on the similarities and differences of the varying meanings attached to it, and finally provide one perhaps agreeably comprehensive operational definition.

The researcher does this in the present section. For, an enquiry into the meaning of the term would help find out that democracy has been and still is understood in a multitude of diverse ways with probably a common foundation but not the same (Arblaster, 2002, p. 6). In order to understand the diverse conceptions of democracy and the roles that media are expected to play in each model, participatory, procedural, deliberative and competitive models of democracy are also part of the discussion in this section. What is more, for the models are not mutually exclusive and for it could hardly be said that the Ethiopian practice falls under a certain model, reviewing the models would help understand the democratic exercise of Ethiopia.

### **2.2.1. Democracy Defined**

Before looking at the definitions of democracy, it would be of greater importance to start with its discovery and its classical meaning. To begin with, Anthony Arblaster (2002) in his book entitled '*Democracy*' clearly puts the origin of the term 'democracy' and its meaning as follows:

'Democracy', like so many central terms of politics (including 'politics'), is in origin a Greek word, combining two shorter words, *demos* and *Kratos*. Both terms had more than one meaning. *Demos* could mean the whole citizen body living within a particular polis, or city-state, but might also be used to mean 'the mob' or 'the rabble' or 'the lower orders'. *Kratos* could mean either 'power' or 'rule': the two are not the same. (p. 15).

Based on the above etymological meanings prescribed to *demos* and *kratos*, by 'democracy' Greeks meant 'a rule by the people'. However, during the Athenian times of democratic exercise, albeit directly, not all were given an equal opportunity to participate in decision-making. In support of this view, Anthony H. Birch (2001, p. 71) writes that the Greeks only provided us

with the word not with a model of democracy. Strengthening this argument, Birch continues, ‘the assumptions and practices of the Greeks were very different from those of modern democrats. The Greeks had little or no idea of the rights of the individual, an idea that is tied up with the modern concept of democracy.’

According to Birch (2001, p. 72), the word ‘democracy’ was started to be used in its modern sense during the nineteenth century to denote a representative system of government wherein free competitive elections are used as measures implemented to choose representatives agreed that most male citizens are permitted to cast their vote. This assertion would lead us to the review of definitions of modern democracy.

Rozumilowicz (2002, p. 9-11) chronologically presents twelve political scientists’ different interpretations of the term ‘democracy’. Of these varying definitions of democracy by different scholars, the researcher prefers to bring Pennock’s, Huntington’s and Vanhanen’s definitions.

**Pennock (1979)** (cited in Rozumilowicz 2002) defines democracy as:

“Rule by the people (all adult citizens) in which “rule” means that “public policies are determined either directly by vote of the electorate or indirectly by officials freely elected at reasonably frequent intervals by a process [of] one man, one vote and in which a plurality is determinative.” (p. 10).

In this definition, what seems to be Pennock’s accent is the ultimate power that citizens are given to rule themselves, of course, through free elections at frequent intervals. The remaining elements of democracy situated in the definition are a one-man one-vote process of electing officials and plurality or majority vote that is considered decisive.

**Huntington (1991)** (cited in Rozumilowicz 2002, p. 10) defines democracy as: ‘A system in which “the most powerful collective decision makers are selected through fair, honest, and periodic elections in which candidates freely compete for votes and in which virtually all the adult population is eligible to vote.”’ In this definition, Huntington highlighted the supremacy of elected representatives, on whom citizens put the onus of verdict through election, in decision-making. In addition to the free and periodic characteristics, as it is in Pennock’s assertion, that election in democracy should bear, Huntington includes ‘competition’ in his definition. The researcher emphasizes on competition for it brings forth a role for the media in articulating clearly, who has what to give if elected. And this is somehow what is missing in Pennock’s definition if not claimed to be expressed implicitly with election.

**Vanhanen 1996** (cited in Rozumilowicz 2002, p. 11) defines democracy as: “Democracy is a political system in which different groups are legally entitled to compete for power and in which institutional power holders are elected by [...] and are responsible to the people.”

It could straightforwardly be recognized from the aforementioned definitions that they are seemingly different but have common elements with varying points of stress or an accent. Common to all the three are *elections* for representation, citizens’ *participation* in electing their representing would be incumbents, and *competition* among contenders of power. An inclusion of one last assertion by Dahl on ‘what is democracy’ would help to get at a final definition.

Robert A. Dahl (1998), an American Professor who has been researching and writing on democracy for more than half a century and who is extensively cited in many works related to democracy, in his relatively recent work, preferred to identify criteria of democratic governance than to situate a single set of definition for democracy. In doing so, he points out five criteria that

‘a process for governing an association [-a state] would have to meet in order to satisfy the requirement that all the members [-citizens] are equally entitled to participate in the association’s [-the state’s] decisions about its policies’ (Dahl, 1998, p. 37-38). These criteria are:

- \* **Effective Participation:** according to Dahl (1998), in democracy, before policies and decisions are churned out, equal and effective opportunities have to be provided for all citizenry in order to make their voices heard concerning what the policies should be and what decisions should be made.
- \* **Voting Equality:** ‘when the moment arrives at which the decision about policy will finally be made, every member must have an equal and effective opportunity to vote, and all votes must be counted as equal’ (Dahl, 1998, p. 37).
- \* **Enlightened understanding:** Dahl asserts that every member (citizen) must be offered equal and effective opportunities for learning about issues as to the relevance and the likely consequences of alternative policies within reasonable limits of time.
- \* **Control of the agenda:** according to Dahl, for democracy to thrive, citizens must be provided with the exclusive opportunity to decide how and, if they choose, what matters are to be placed on the agenda that citizens must have them for the policies are always open to change.
- \* **Inclusion of adults:** Dahl explains that all, or at any rate most, adult but of permanent residence should have the full rights of citizens that are implied by the aforementioned four criteria.

It follows from Dahl's (1998) assertion that democracy is a system of government wherein effective participation of citizens, equality of not only voting but also of votes when counted, access to understanding the significance and aftereffects of policies, and control of the agenda are granted for citizens—adults of permanent residence.

Therefore, the operational definition of democracy for this research, which is used to understand and measure roles of the mainstream media, is: 'Democracy is a form of government in which the privilege of ruling is offered to representatives competitively elected by citizens through fair and recurrent elections, and a continuum of public deliberation is held before decisions and policies are made.' The concept 'democracy' will further be explained in detail in the next section, which discusses the different models of democracy: participatory, procedural, competitive, and deliberative and the differing normative expectations of media performances according to the models.

### **2.2.2. Models of Democracy**

Different models and theories of democracy exist in a wealth of literature. According to Strömbäck, it has been 15 years since an interest in models of democracy increased (Strömbäck, 2005, p. 333). There is not a single and consensual set of model of democracy and even the existing varying models are complex and profusion in the literatures (Elster, 1998/1999; Cunningham, 2002; Strömbäck, 2005; Held, 2006/2008; Dahl, 1956/2006).

David Held (2006/2008, p. 3) for example, discusses about nine models of democracy which he divided into two divisions. Part one, where classic models are categorized includes; classical model (*the classical idea of democracy in ancient Athens*); republican model (*the republican conception of a self-governing community*); liberal democracy and the Marxist model (*the*

*Marxist conception of direct democracy*). Part two, where recent models are categorized, includes; competitive elitist democracy, pluralism, legal democracy, participatory democracy and deliberative democracy.

When looking for a classification of models of democracy to be relied up on for this research, Strömbäck's appears to be exploitable in that, it not only prescribes roles the media could play, which has not been given emphasis in many literatures of political science, but also it embodies the frequently mentioned models of democracy. In an article '*In search of a standard: four models of democracy and their normative implications for journalism*', Jesper Strömbäck identifies four models of democracy adding a fourth model—procedural democracy—to the often discussed three models namely participatory democracy, competitive democracy, and deliberative democracy (Strömbäck, 2005, p. 333). The next sections discuss these models with the normative roles that media ought to play.

### **2.2.2.1. Participatory Democracy**

Jane Mansbridge, quoted in Cunningham (2002, p. 123), states that the term 'participatory democracy' was coined by a man named Arnold Kaufman in 1960. While a large measure of 'apathy' and 'political inactivity' on the part of ordinary citizens is considered essential to democracy in approaches like liberal democracy, in participatory model democrats aspire to break down such apathy and maximize active participation of citizens in political affairs (Cunningham, 2002, p. 123). Of the criticisms of democracy, the feasibility critique lies partly on the fact that citizens, in real terms, are politically apathetic and ignorant in that they do not actively participate in decision-making and even sometimes in electing their representatives.

Therefore, what participatory democrats work on to change is this apathy, albeit it seems unattainable, so that active participation could be ensured.

According to Strömbäck, (2005, p. 336) while activities of the political elites are considered highly important and democracy is contingent up on these elites than the people in competitive democracy, in participatory model of democracy:

...people are...expected to be engaged in civic and public life. They should participate in different kinds of community activities, and learn how to cooperate in order to achieve collective goals. The more people are politically interested, the more they engage in associations and civic organizations, the more they vote, the more they develop attitudes and norms of generalized reciprocity, the better (cf. Putnam, 2000).

It is palpable in the above explanations that central to the concept of participatory democracy is the explicit opportunity provided for citizens to an active engagement in the political sphere where policies and decisions are made, and elections are conducted, which is explicated in democratic theory as well.

### **Roles of the Media**

What the media ought to function in participatory democracies is dependent up on what is expected of citizens on one hand and of the state on the other. It is clear that citizens are expected to be active role players in politics. On what citizens need in order to have these roles, Strömbäck writes (Strömbäck, 2005):

To fulfill the role ascribed to them in the participatory model of democracy, people need the kind of knowledge and information that facilitates collective action, participation, and engagement. This means that they need knowledge about how to participate in and how to influence political decision-making and how to find like-minded people. (p. 336).

Of the mechanisms that citizens rely upon to get the necessary knowledge and information, media could be taken as one and important, if not the only. Strömbäck's observation on what roles the media ought to have could be summarized as follows (ibid, p. 339-340):

- \* News should provide information about important societal problems and about how society and the decision-making process work. In addition, it should not only dwell on societal problems but also show when problems are solved.
- \* News should let people set the agenda for their coverage in that it allows ordinary people to speak for themselves.
- \* News should frame politics in a way that mobilizes people's interest and participation in politics.
- \* The news should not frame ordinary citizens as passive victims of forces they cannot change, but as active subjects with possibilities as well as responsibilities to change what needs to be changed.
- \* Journalists must be 'a fair-minded participant' in democracy that they should be attached to it within which they work and need for the sake of their freedom and independence.

### **2.2.2.2. Competitive Democracy**

Competitive democracy, which considers elections as normatively essential elements in democracy wherein candidates struggle to win votes of the electorate and which in other words is electoral democracy, stems from Schumpeter's definition of democracy (Diamond, 2003, p. 31; Strömbäck, 2005, p. 334). Schumpeter's definition reads as 'the democratic method is that institutional arrangement for arriving at political decisions in which individuals acquire the power to decide by means of a competitive struggle for the people's votes' (Schumpeter, 1975 [1942], p. 269 cited in Strömbäck, 2005, p. 334).

As Strömbäck states, in competitive democracy, the onus of competition for election lies heavily on political candidates who are the actors and the vote on citizens who are the reactors (Strömbäck, 2005). The functions, he identifies, that election serves in democracy include; it produces government, it is a mechanism through which the will of the people could be heard, and its competitive nature makes it likely that winners will be more qualified than they would be without elections.

#### **Roles of the Media**

To put normative expectations of media performances in this model of democracy, it would still need to figure out what citizens are required to do and to know as well. In this regard, Strömbäck clearly puts that citizens are expected to elect from the contending political candidates for which they need information and knowledge about differences between the political alternatives. Accordingly, his explanation of the roles of the media in competitive democracy is summarized as follows (*ibid*, 338-339):

- \* News journalism should provide information that people can trust and act upon.

- \* The news should be proportional, so that it does not direct peoples' attention in the wrong directions,
- \* Media and journalism should focus their attention on the words and actions of political alternatives.
- \* Media and journalism should monitor political elites, both in what they have done, what they promise to do, and whether they have done what they promised to when elected,
- \* Media and journalism should provide basic information about how society and the political system function.

### **2.2.2.3. Deliberative Democracy**

‘The idea of deliberative democracy and its practical implication are as old as democracy itself. Both came into being in Athens in the fifth century B.C’ (Elster, 1998/1999, p. 1). David Held (2006/2008, p. 237), quoting Bohman, puts the definition of deliberative democracy as ‘any one of a family of views according to which the public deliberation of free and equal citizens is the core of legitimate political decision-making and self-governance.’ Strömbäck on his part points out three important characteristics of deliberative democracy as follows (2005):

What is important in the deliberative model of democracy is that (1) the decisions are preceded by discussions in the public sphere as well as in smaller settings; (2) that the discussions are committed to the values of rationality, impartiality, intellectual honesty and equality among the participants; and (3) that the deliberative discussions can be seen both as ends in themselves and as means of producing agreement or at least a better understanding of the values underlying a conflict. (p. 336).

In general, what makes deliberative democracy different from the aforementioned models of democracy is that it makes discussion its overarching mechanism by which citizens engage themselves in deliberation on public policies amongst themselves and with their representatives as well.

### **Roles of the Media**

Similar to the participatory model of democracy, deliberative democracy expects upon citizens a role that they should actively be engaging themselves in the public deliberation. For this, media could serve two main functions; *informative function* through which media could provide information on the political discussion and *facilitative function* by which the media themselves serve as a forum for policy debates (Ettema, 2007; Strömbäck, 2005). Overall, roles that media ought to play in deliberative democracy could be summed up from both Ettema's and Strömbäck's explications as follows (*ibid*);

- \* Journalism should promote debate thereby providing citizens with information and an access to public discussions.
- \* The media should not merely record the process of deliberation but also act as a reasoning participant.
- \* Journalism should actively foster political discussions that are characterized by impartiality, rationality, intellectual honesty, and equality among participants.
- \* Journalism should provide an arena for citizens with strong arguments and direct its attention to those who can contribute to a furthering of discussion.
- \* Journalism should frame politics as a continuous process of finding solutions to common problems either consensually or at least acceptable to everyone.

#### **2.2.2.4. Procedural Democracy**

In the words of Strömbäck (2005, p. 334), in procedural model of democracy unlike in the other models, the discovery and establishment of democracy is a novelty, and an enormous success in itself (2005, p. 334). What citizens and politicians are required to do in this model is just respect the established democratic rules and procedures (*ibid*). Strömbäck (2005) further stipulates that as long as the right to vote, freedom of expression and of the press, and other basic requirements are respected, it is not the concern of a procedural democrat whether citizens are making the most of their rights or not. Normative expectations such as in participatory and deliberative democracies that citizens should proactively take part in political discussions and deliberations do not exist in procedural democracy. However, it is overtly stated in Strömbäck's (2005) explanation that this model gives a chance for citizens to act whenever they have objections as to the democratic freedoms and rights (*ibid*).

#### **Roles of the Media**

One can understand from the above description that procedural democracy does not put any normative demand on citizens because of which no active functions are sought from the media. Nevertheless, media practices should not undermine the democratic rules and procedures (Strömbäck, 2005, p. 334).

Now that democracy is defined and models of democracy are explained in a way that they are appropriate to the research, issues related to democratization are discussed next.

## **2.3. Democratization**

Countries that are still on the transition stage of democracy distinct from the established democracies of the West—specifically U.S.A and Britain—are said to be on the process of democratization. Ethiopia is one of these countries being probably on the transition stage. In addition, the regime in power in Ethiopia claims that it is democratizing the country. This section is meant to review the definition of democratization and the state of democratization in Ethiopia.

### **2.3.1. Democratization Defined**

Democratization, when compared with established democracy, is a process through which countries attain stable democracy (Pauseweng, Tranvoll, & Aalen, 2002a; Ciprut, 2008; Whitehead, 2002; Grugel, 2002; Rozumilowicz, 2002). On the book '*Democratization: A critical introduction*', Grugel (2002, p. 3) writes 'initial studies of democratization in the 1970s and 1980s presumed that the meaning of democratization was self-evident: it meant simply a transformation of the political system from non-democracy towards accountable and representative government'. It is palpable in this assertion that once a country lived up to a representative and accountable government—democratic government in other words, it would no more be in democratization for it has already got there at democracy.

Democratization has also been defined differently according to the minimalist and maximalist approaches. Grugel (2002) puts these definitions as follows:

The basic minimalist definition sees democratization as the regular holding of clean elections and the introduction of basic norms (e.g. an absence of intimidation, competition from at least two political parties, and an inclusive

suffrage) that make free elections possible. A slightly more inclusive definition demands the introduction of liberal individual rights (freedom of assembly, religious freedom, a free press, freedom to stand for public office, etc.) or the creation of a polyarchic order. (p. 5).

The minimalist conception of democratization seems to be corresponding to the procedural and competitive models of democracies whereas the maximalist one fully corresponds to liberal democracy. Whitehead (2002, p. 27) on his part puts a relatively comprehensive definition of democratization. Whitehead writes ‘democratization is best understood as a complex, long-term, dynamic, and open-ended process. It consists of progress towards a more rule-based, more consensual, and more participatory type of politics’.

According to Huntington (Quoted in Shin, 1994, p. 143), there are four stages of democratization. These are: (1) decay of authoritarian rule, (2) transition (3) consolidation, and (4) the maturing of democratic political order. Shin (1994) explains that the second and the third have received the most attention from the scholarly community.

By and large, it could be inferred from the above definitions that democratization is (1) a series of actions not a success that is completed right after implementation, (2) it is a path that takes to democracy, (3) it is the period between the transition stage and consolidation stage of democracy, (4) and it is a way out from authoritative rule and it is a beginning of a journey to democratic governance.

### **2.3.2. Democratization in Ethiopia**

Ethiopia has never seen a light of democratization during the times of both the Imperial regime and the socialist Derg. However, it does not mean that no attempts have been made to bring democratic reforms in the country. Men like Ras Imiru (also named as the Ethiopian Tolstoy), Girmame Neway (referred to as the mastermind behind the 1960 coup) and Tilahun Gizaw (leader of student movements of the time) had tried to force the then Ethiopian leaders to bring about democratic changes in the country albeit the attempts were fruitless even some were left killed (Pauseweng, Tranvoll, & Aalen, 2002a, p. 3).

The institutionalization of democratization in Ethiopia, then, dates back to the time that EPRDF overthrew the military Derg and proclaimed the 1991 Transitional charter and later declared the 1995 constitution. Multi-party politics was also introduced during this period. In his article '*Identity politics, citizenship and democratization in Ethiopia*', Tesfaye Aaron (2006) writes,

The multi-party system of politics was introduced to Ethiopia by the EPRDF as soon as the group gained power in 1991. It needed to legitimize its allies within its organization and permit smaller opposition parties to exist within a one-party-dominant system. Pursuant to the Transitional Charter, the new leaders established an election commission and criteria for regional elections for a transitional government. (p. 61).

However, it is important to note that though the elections took place to form the transitional government, they did not go smoothly as expected in that the pre election environment was apprehensive, nullification of election results took place, and opposition parties in small regions were unwilling to participate in the elections for the dominance of EPRDF was observed (*ibid*).

Following the formation of the TGE, the House of Representatives gave the mandate of preparing a draft constitution for a commission established right away. ‘The drafting of the constitution was a protracted process that took three years. It revealed cleavages between pan-Ethiopianists and ethnic nationalists within the commission’ (Tesfaye, 2006, p. 62). Finally, the parliament approved the draft constitution in 1995. Soon after the declaration of the 1995 Ethiopian constitution, elections were held in the same year--the 1995 national and regional elections of Ethiopia.

Pauseweng, Tranvoll, & Aalen, (2002b, p. 38, quoting Tronvoll and Aadland, 1995, p. 1), write on the report of the Norwegian team on the 1995 elections as follows,

The report stated that the 1995 elections were ‘intended to stand as the democratic culmination’ of the transitional period, but finally dismissed the elections as ‘neither fair, free nor impartial’. The elections were not competitive but exclusive, preventing many legal political actors from participating; violations of the electoral law occurred in all areas observed; and ‘government structures acted in such a way as to create apprehension in the rural population. This subdued pluralistic thinking and expression, which led to conformity in voting’. (p. 38).

In this election, EPRDF won 90.7% of the seats in the parliament, others won 7.3%, and independents won 2.6% (Tesfaye, 2006, p. 63). Though reports of foreign observers of the elections claim that many problems have been observed, the mere fact that the elections were conducted promised democratization would carry on in the country.

Five years later on May 14, 2000, the second national and regional elections were held. What made these elections different from the previous was; (1) ‘the country was at war with Eritrea’; (2) the opposition parties have organized themselves in a better way than they did in the 1995 elections; and (3) ‘the opposition parties managed to rigorously challenge the ruling party, especially in urban centers and most notably in Addis Ababa’ (*ibid*, p. 64). These changes were also somehow evident in the result of the election; Opposition parties won 2.4%, while EPRDF won 87.9% (a 2.8% reduction), others won 7.3%, and independents won 2.4% seats in the parliament. Other than these changes, the 2000 elections were similar to the 1995 elections when it comes to EPRDF’s dominance, intimidation and harassment of opposition political party members and candidates, and freeness, fairness and impartiality (Pauseweng, Tranvoll, & Aalen, 2002b; Tesfaye, 2006).

In 2005, during the third national and regional elections, Ethiopia has experienced new phenomenon in its process of democratization. According to Lahra Smith (2007, p. 55), ‘one of the most striking things about the most recent election in Ethiopia is that both the ruling party and the main opposition parties presented voters with distinct and substantive policy platforms.’ Smith (2007) explains that this was not only unique in Ethiopia but also continent-wide. It was also during this election that for the first time opposition parties were given airtime in the government media—especially ETV, albeit the opposition claimed that there was an unfair distribution of airtime in which EPRDF was given much time—twice the time given for the opposition—which led to an iniquitous competition.

The major contending parties during this election were the Ethiopian People’s Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF), and the two coalition parties; United Ethiopian Democratic Forces

(UEDF), and Coalition for Unity and Democracy (CUD). In addition, the main issues of the campaigns were ethnic federalism, Article 39 of the Ethiopian constitution which grants the right to secession, land ownership, private sector development, liberalization of economic sectors, the case of Asseb port, nationalism—united Ethiopia, and human rights cases (Smith, 2007; Tesfaye, 2006).

The results of this election were released ambiguously. A premature announcement made by EPRDF claimed to have won the election while CUD claimed it won the election. However, when NEBE announced the final results, it appeared that EPRDF won 296 seats, CUD 109 seats, UEDF 52 seats, OFDM 11 seats, others 24 seats and independents 1 seat. Moreover, the post election period was met with a protest that took the lives of hundreds and the oppositions did not take the seats they already won claiming that the elections had been rigged so that a provisional coalition government comprising all parties should be established to work for two years to resolve issues and hold a nationwide election again. However, EPRDF rejected it and the opposition was left to choose from either to take the seats or to boycott it. In the end, only a few joined the parliament (Tefaye, 2006, p. 68-70).

In an article entitled '*Implications of the 2005 elections for Ethiopian citizenship and state legitimacy*', Lahra Smith (2007,) writes

The questions of vote fraud on Election Day, the neutrality of the National Electoral Board (NEBE) and the legitimacy of the post-election fraud investigation process managed by the NEBE, with the participation of all political parties, remain in some sense outstanding issues. (p. 65).

Ethiopia has also seen its fourth national and regional elections in 2010, which was not as influential as the previous elections were in that the electorate happened to be politically apathetic and political parties did not actively campaign owing to their financial shortages, the perpetuated barriers created by the regime in power itself and other problems. Nevertheless, issues that used to be the main campaigning issues during the 2005 election still remained contentious.

As it is stated above, it has been more than a couple of decades since a democratic state has been declared through a constitution, which is said to have followed a modern understanding of democracy. Pauseweng, Tranvoll, & Aalen (2002c,) rightly express the state of democratization in Ethiopian as,

The constitution follows a modern ‘Western’ understanding of democracy. It provides for a division of powers and for the protection of human rights, and it declares all human rights covenants and instruments ratified by Ethiopia as integral parts of Ethiopian law. The essentials for a democratic development in political practice are thus in place. But unfortunately, our analyses have demonstrated that the democratic institutions are not allowed to work according to the spirit of democracy. (p. 230).

Generally, if Ethiopia’s democratization is measured referring to the minimal conception of democratization, it seems that the country is on the right track of democratizing its governance and its society as well, for a democratic constitution and elections are already there. Nonetheless, if the measurement is made based on the liberal conception, the country has still a long way to

go, for the constitution has to be translated into practice in a way that freedoms as freedom of assembly and freedom of the press are respected and elections are conducted democratically.

## **2.4. Media and Democracy**

Modern democracy—representative democracy—heavily depends on the media in order for reaching the represented large electorates. If all what democracy needs is an informed citizen that could actively engage itself in political life, it would mainly, if not solely, come true through the media. On the other hand, media have also been criticized for not making ‘creating citizens that democracy needs’ their center of attention, and even sometimes they are blamed for contributing to the creation of ‘politically apathetic’ public through a trivialized content. However, with all the critics and the challenges, the media still have a lot to play in democracy. This section discusses the democratic functions of the media, media and elections and the critics on the media.

### **2.4.1. Democratic Functions of the Media**

It could commonly be agreed that for the media to pursue democratic roles, freedom of the press has to be guaranteed (McNair, 2000; McConnell & Becker, 2002; Tetey, 2001). ‘The normative model of a free press is one in which there is freedom from any government regulation and control that would suggest censorship or limits on the freedom to disseminate information, news, and opinion’ (McConnell & Becker, 2002, p. 3). With this presumption, scholars have differently expressed, but with common foundations, the democratic functions that a free press could have in democracy.

According to John Wilson (1996, p. 176), in countries where aggressive newspapers and advanced broadcasting systems exist, like America and Britain, democratic accountability works through the media than it works through the parliament. What Wilson's assertion manifests is the important, and inexorable for that matter, contribution that media could have in a democratic state. It is also evident in the account that for the media to have the articulated contribution to democratic accountability, they need to be strong and aggressive.

Brain McNair (2011, p. 18) puts five functions of the media in societies that he called an 'ideal-type' democratic societies. These are; (1) *informing* citizens of what is happening around them ('surveillance' or 'monitoring' functions), (2) *educating* citizens as to the meaning and significance of the 'facts', (3) providing a *platform* for public political discourse and facilitating 'public opinion' formation, (4) giving *publicity* to governmental and political institutions, and (5) serving as a channel for the *advocacy* of political view points.

James Curran (1991/1997, p. 29), in what he categorized as the liberal approach against the radical approach, asserts that the media in democratic societies are 'permanent guard duty patrolling against the abuse of executive power and safeguard individual liberty.' Later in 2005, in a contribution to the book '*The Press*', Curran (2005) broadly writes the roles as:

...the media should keep people informed about public affairs so that individuals are adequately briefed when they take part in the process of self-government. The media should be fearless watchdogs, vigilantly examining the exercise of power and protecting the public from wrongdoing. The media should also provide a platform of open debate that facilitates the formation of public opinion. In

addition, the media should be the voice of the people, representing to authority the citizenry's views and expressing the agreed aims of society. (p. 120).

The other scholars, whose explanation on democratic media functions is worth noting, are Gurevitch and Blumler (1990/1995, p. 270). They identify eight functions and services that media provide for a political system. Some of these functions, in addition to the ones that the previously mentioned scholars point out, include, (1) 'incentives for citizens to learn, choose, and become involved, rather than merely to follow and kibitz over the political process', (2) 'a principled resistance to the efforts of forces outside the media to subvert their independence, integrity, and ability to serve the audience', and (3) 'a sense of respect for the audience member, as potentially concerned and able to make sense of his or her political environment'.

All the aforementioned roles are mainly what media in democratic societies ought to play to endorse the established democratic administration. However, in states that are on the process of democratization, the media might be expected to play a slightly different roles during the pre-transition and transition period. Bennett (quoted in McConnell & Becker, 2002, p. 9), for example, observes two crucial roles that media in such democratizing states could play during the pre-transition period; *witness role* and *reifying role*. By witness role, Bennett means 'the process of making public the transformations that are taking place in society, as the old regime starts to lose its hold on power.' And the reifying role is 'to confirm and legitimate the changes taking place through providing a variety of images and information that coincide with one another, which in effect makes the shift in society seem real.' Whereas, during the transition stage, media are sought to educate the public, promote political and social cooperation, and present in a fair manner competing political messages' (*ibid*, p. 10).

In general, media's democratic functions could be summarized under four broad roles; *monitorial*, *facilitative*, *radical* and *collaborative* (Christians, Glasser, McQuail, Nordenstreng, & White, 2009). These roles appear to be somehow embodying the scattered functions situated in many literatures. Thus, discussing each at this point would help to understand in a bit elaborated way what democratic roles the media is expected to carry out. Hence, the next sections discuss these functions individually.

#### **2.4.1.1. Monitorial Role**

By monitorial role, Christians, Glasser, McQuail, Nordenstreng, & White (2009) mainly referred to the surveillance function of the media in general, which as a matter of fact encompasses the watchdog role of the media. Curran (2005, p. 129), however, separately points out the watchdog role of the media and explains it as one of the functions that democracy requires of the media. This research does not overlook the importance of the informational role of the media in democracy, but assumes that it is commonly found in all the roles. In addition, the informational role, in relation to election, is explained in the section that discusses media and elections (section 2.4.1.2.). As a result, the researcher focuses on the watchdog role of the media in the current section. The monitorial function of the media is what most commonly referred to as 'watchdog role'. Bennett and Serrin (2005) put the definition of 'watchdog journalism' as,

(1) independent scrutiny by the press of the activities of government, business, and other public institutions, with an aim toward (2) documenting, questioning, and investigating those activities, in order to (3) provide publics and officials with timely information on issues of public concern. (p. 169)

It is apparent in this definition that when one refers to the watchdog function of the media, it does not necessarily mean that the media only inspect actions of the government. Nevertheless, it also means that other institutions'—the powerful ones'—actions are also under the examination of the media. The thinking that media are watchdogs of the state only seems to stem from the belief that the state is the seat of power, which is accountable for all the misgovernance. However, other political institutions—'non-state forms of power, such as that exercised in the boardroom'—could also be sources of abuse for which the media need to commit more of its resources to scrutinizing, and holding to account these institutions (Curran, 2005, p. 129).

By the same token, Ansah (1988, p. 14) contends that 'the press in its watchdog role should, as a matter not only of right but also of duty, expose and criticize bureaucratic incompetence, corruption, abuse of power and the violation of human rights'. Ansah (1988) further explains that in a democratic society, if there is no such mechanism of regulating, monitoring, and evaluating the deeds of the government, 'there is a great likelihood of the government falling into complacency, unresponsiveness, and irresponsibility' (*ibid*, p. 13). It is for this reason that the media have always been described as the fourth estate of the political realm that monitors power.

Thus, of all the democratic functions of the media, watchdog role may be considered overriding in importance in that it helps promote and further strengthen a democratic government being an independent institution that uses its power to ensure that self-governance is prevailing, and rights of the citizenry are respected.

#### **2.4.1.2. Facilitative Role**

This democratic role of the media includes the information and facilitative functions. Curran in his book *Media and Power* (2002, p. 225) documents that the watchdog role of the media are

protective in that they divulge any wrong deeds that may have a detrimental effect on democracy. However, he writes, the media could also be an agency of information and debate which facilitate a better functioning of democracy. ‘The media provide a forum of debate in which people can identify problems, propose solutions, reach agreement and guide the public direction of society’ (*ibid*).

Since democracy assumes an active public concerned about political issues and discussions in order to best influence decision-making, it is normative that the media should serve the role of facilitating the public debate.

In the same vein, Merritt and McCombs (2004, p. xiv) contend that for self-government and a discussion on problems for solutions, a democratic society needs information that is relevant and that could be shared among the citizenry, and a forum to be relied upon for the discussion of the implications of the information. They assert that these functions—information and forum—could only be provided by journalists.

Focusing on how this role should be carried out in accordance with the fundamental principles of journalism, Kovach & Rosenstiel (2007) write

Yet in a new age, it is more important, not less, that this public discussion be built on the same principle as the rest of journalism, starting with truthfulness, facts, and verification. For a forum without regard for facts fails to inform. A debate steeped in prejudice and supposition only inflames. (p. 167).

It could be deduced from the above accounts that media can preeminently serve and as well facilitate democratic governance through provision of information that citizens inescapably need and a forum through which public deliberation would best be served.

#### **2.4.1.3. Radical Role**

Christians, Glasser, McQuail, Nordenstreng, & White (2009, p. 179-195) argue that there always exist imbalances of wealth, education, and access to information and communication in societies that are based on the competitive market principle. Accordingly, they explain, “the radical role of the media and journalism insists on the absolute equality and freedom of all members of a democratic society in a completely uncompromising way.”

Furthermore, they assert that journalism or the media in a certain democratic society would contribute to the well functioning of the society through discharging a radical role thereby ensuring that the society’s problems, which could generally be called ‘injustices’ are never and ever tolerated.

#### **2.4.1.4. Collaborative Role**

The idea of collaborative role of the media is based on the assumption that the media’s relationship with the government and other powerful institutions would be favorable so that the media can carry out what is expected of them. Christians, Glasser, McQuail, Nordenstreng, & White (2009) write that the media’s relationship with the state and other ‘power centers’ is what the very notion of collaboration suggests. This role, according to Christians, Glasser, McQuail, Nordenstreng, & White (2009) is a role that is not given an emphasis. This is, they assert, is owing to the nature of the role in that it happens to be contradicting with the ‘libertarian ideal of

a free and autonomous press.’ The media in many parts of the world, and mainly based on the liberal conception, media are considered to be monitors of power. Where such thinking prevails, collaborating with the state would seem cooperating with it in times of abuse of power or maladministration.

However, if the media is collaborating with the government specially when such collaboration is deemed important and proved that it serves the ends of democracy, then it would no more be a threat to the very free nature of the media. One of the areas that could be argued that it is a good area to collaborate is the national interest of a country.

#### **2.4.2. Media and Elections**

What the media ought to function during election times is contingent upon what elections require from both the candidates that are participating in the elections and the electorate. It is also important to note, then, what the electorate needs to participate in voting. Obviously, elections call for an informed citizenry that can make a genuine choice from the political alternatives. In this regard, Marquis de Condorcet (2003) documents:

For a man who chooses alone and who wants to adhere to a strict procedure, an election is the result of a series of judgements comparing all the candidates two by two. The candidates to whom he restricts his choice are, in this case, the men he considers worthy of the place. (p. 315).

Political candidates too are required to promote their platform thereby addressing issues as to how theirs is dependable against the other contending candidates in order to win the people’s votes.

It could then be argued that the media typically facilitate all these. Nayyar (2007, p. 136) contends that during elections, the mass media have so many duties that equally apply to all the media. These duties according to Nayyar are; the duties to prevent misuse of press freedom, to comply with the prescribed timing of election campaign, and to duly publish opinion poll findings. Lange (2004, p. 209) on his part observes, ‘the media have a crucial role in covering the political process and in shaping and contributing to the formation of public opinion, as expressed most importantly in the time of campaigning before elections and during elections themselves.’ Lange (2004) explains that ordinary people—the large electorate—mostly get the information, as to what former achievements the candidates have, their future programs, and ‘issues under current debate’, that they rely upon for voting via the press and broadcast media (*ibid*). What is more, some media—especially newspapers—may have an advocacy function during elections wherein they actively endorse one or the other of the parties competing in election (McNair, 20011, p. 20).

### **2.4.3. The Media in Democracy: Critiques**

Not all the democratic functions of the media are carried out successfully. These days, the media are highly decried for the remarkably increasing commodification of their content because of which political issues are driven out of the focuses of media practice and instead entertainment is taking a superseding coverage. Other criticisms on media performances as ‘political journalism has become too *elitist* or *insider-oriented*’ and political reporting has tended to be cynical could be mentioned (McNair, 2000, p. 5).

According to Kasoma (2000, p. 46), the ‘independent press’ in Africa didn’t perform its functions in promoting multiparty politics and democracy to perfection. He points out three

critiques of the ‘independent press’ in the section that he labeled ‘faults of the independent press’. The first is the failure of the press to perform its watchdog journalism for its focus has turned into reporting based on hatred and dislike. This blunder would cause bogus claims from the state and regulations made to curb this would be detrimental for the future practices of the media. The media, therefore, need to make distinction between ‘hate speech’ and legitimate allegation of the state.

The second fault, in the words of Kasoma (2002), is that the independent press does not sometimes produce a factual report; it rather focuses, sometimes, on sensationalizing issues and producing opinion pieces. The third fault is that the African press was guilty of arrogance and use of abusive language when it comes to reporting on political matters and political leaders.

## **2.5. Media—Government/Political Parties Relationships**

The relationship between media and government and political parties is very important in defining a role for the media in the political process. This relationship inevitably affects the media practice either positively or negatively. When the government learns from the media practices, the relationship could be said to have a positive effect. However, when the government puts illegitimate sanctions, including censorship, on the media, the negative effect prevails. Similarly, when the media tend to report truthfully and objectively, positive relationship could be secured and when the reverse happens, the relationship would turn out to be unfavorable. As far as media’s relationship with political parties is concerned, the political parties are one of the major sources of political information and actors in the political sphere that the media make use of when pursuing the ideal democratic functions they are expected to. This section discusses these relationships.

### **2.5.1. Media and Government**

Ansah (1988, p. 9), observing the African media during 1988, chronicles that the relationship between the government and the press in Africa generally have been characterized by tension and conflict where there appears to be no tension. The reason for this, he notices, is that either the press has been cowed into submission or it has become the ruling parties' appendage. This problem could still be observed in Ethiopia.

Graeme Burton (2005) accounts that albeit it is not entirely equal, the relationship between media institutions and the government is mutual self-interest. Burton further notes

The attitude of media institutions to government is partly defined by degrees of interference, which are in turn defined by the terms of regulation for a given media industry. It is also partly defined by the ideological position of given media business, or even their proprietors, towards the rights of the state, within their own idea of the media-audience relationship. (p. 20).

Kumar and Jones (2005, p. 226) explore five aspects of the relationship between media and government focusing on the American experience (it would also apply to the African and the Ethiopian situations) to demonstrate the relationship. Of these aspects, the researcher wants to focus on the three: Nature of the relationship, impact of the press on government and influence of government on press operations.

#### **Nature of the Relationship**

When we talk about the relationship between media and government, we are talking about a relationship that is illustrated by 'a mutual need of politicians to appear in the media to have a

platform for their positions’, and that of the media ‘to have the politicians appear so that they might attract an audience by having access to authority figures’ (Burton 2005, p. 20).

Kumar and Jones (2005, p. 227) argue that the government-media relationship on the surface is an ‘acrimonious’ one and the ideally thought ‘cooperation’ is far from what actually exists in the ‘operating mode’. They assert that this relationship is multilayered; (1) ‘government officials and news organizations spend a great deal of time and resource making use of the presence of the other, even if there is mutual mistrust of motives and actions’, (2) there are personal and institutional relations that define the conduct of how the two sides relate to and consider each other, and (3) ‘the continuing character of the relationship is based on the consistent nature of the information needs, and the institutional responses, of both partners’ (*ibid*).

According to Kumar and Jones (2005), the personal relationship is that between government officials and reporters which appears to be bellicose in that they are sometimes critical of one another. However, they explain, the institutional relationship—between media organizations and the government—is continuous in which cooperation between the two prevails with the intent of getting the most out of it.

### **Impact of the Media on Government**

In the preceding sections, it is discussed that the media, in addition to their function of carrying information between the government and the public, influence political decisions and functions by disclosing what officials usually prefer to hide from the public and by monitoring the government and other governmental political institutions’ power. It is due to this—watchdog function—that the media are considered the fourth estate added to the traditional three organs of a government that are the legislative, the executive and the judiciary.

Kumar and Jones (2005, p. 230) see four central ways in which the ‘combined’ and ‘singular’ media can influence the government and the process of governing it follows as well. First, the media inform the public of the actions of officials elected to rule. Second, the information provided influences the workings of the government for the public would act according to the information. Third, through the works disseminated to the wide public, the media inform people the deeds of other governmental institutions. Fourth, ‘information provided by the media serves as an early warning system for government officials of problems they may not have recognized or issues coming to the surface that they did not see coming.’

### **Influence of the Government on Media**

The influence—chiefly regulatory—that the government has on media mostly affects the conduct of media organizations harmfully as it puts an impediment on freedom of expression and of the press. However, a certain positive influence could be seen in some regulations on the media that are made to secure the protection of human rights. Kumar and Jones (2005) in support of the view that the government pressures the media, write,

All three branches of government consistently serve as an influence on the organization, operations, and actions of news outlets. Government actions run the gamut from measures taken to regulate news organizations to procedures used to protect the routines and products of news media. (p. 234).

### **2.5.2. Media and Political Parties**

Media also have a relationship with different political parties that take part in the democratic process. This relationship might not be discordant as it is the case with the relationship between

media and government. Politicians that are not incumbents but work to be, also have to use the media in order to reach the public. In so doing, they relate with the media. Three areas of nexus could be manifested in the relationship between media and political parties. First, the media resort to the parties as one of their major political sources that they need to perform their democratic functions. Second, as it works in their relationship with the government too, the media inspect platforms of different political parties in which they evaluate and present to the public the likely effects of the programs of the parties if the people are to elect them. Third, the political parties draw on the media to address the public as to what the public needs to know about their programs. In addition, fundamentally, it is through the media that the parties can maintain a regular connection with their public. However, the parties might sometimes influence the media profoundly and the media may turn out to be serving some parties than working for the citizenry.

## **2.6. Theoretical Framework**

This section discusses the theoretical underpinnings of the argument that media serve the ends of democracy. Social responsibility theory of the press, the public sphere, John Zaller's theory of media politics and Hallin and Mancini's models of media systems are the theoretical frameworks of the study. The theories clearly stipulate that the media ought to function responsibly, as they are the principal institutions of the public sphere, in order to play a crucial role for democracy differently in different media system.

### **2.6.1. Social Responsibility Theory of the Press**

Social responsibility theory stemmed from the 1947's report of the Hutchins commission, which was officially known as 'Commission on Freedom of the Press' (Siebert, Peterson, and

Schramm, 1956; McQuail, 1983; Nerone, 2006; Baran & Davis, 2012). The commission was formed in the midst of the Second World War by the request of Henry Luce, publisher of *Time* and *Life* magazines, to Robert Maynard Hutchins, the then president of the University of Chicago, ‘to recruit a commission to inquire into the proper function of the media in modern democracies’ (Nerone, 2006, p. 185). The commission was comprised of leaders from many areas of society, including academics, politicians, and heads of social groups (Baran & Davis, 2012, p. 114). According to Nerone (2006, p. 185), the reasons for the urgency of the creation of the commission include ‘the vigorous atmosphere of press criticism of the past few decades, the outbreak of the war, widespread fears of propaganda and totalitarianism, and the expected rise of a generation of new media technologies in the post world war’.

The commission has conducted interviews with people from the media, government and the academia and has taken four years of deliberation to release the report in 1947, which is used as a benchmark for the social responsibility theory of the press. The commission in its report has pointed out five things that the society needs. These are; (1) a credible, a comprehensive coverage and an intelligent report of events in a way that it is meaningful to them; (2) a forum for exchanging comments and criticisms; (3) a means of communicating opinions and attitudes of different social groups to each other; (4) a method by which values and goals of the society could be presented and clarified; and (5) a way of reaching each member of the society through the flows of information, thought, and feeling that the press supplies (Commission on Freedom of the Press, 1947, p. 20-21). Thus, the report emphasized on ‘the need for an independent press that scrutinizes other social institutions and provides objective, accurate news reports’ that can best serve the needs of the society (Baran & Davis, 2012, p. 115).

The main foundations of social responsibility theory of the press, according to Dennis McQuail (1983), are:

...an assumption that the media do serve essential functions in society, especially in relation to democratic politics; a view that the media should accept an obligation to fulfill these functions—mainly in the sphere of information, and the provision of a platform for diverse views; an emphasis on maximum independence of media, consistent with their obligations to society; an acceptance of the view that there are certain standards of performance in media work that can be stated and should be followed. (p. 90).

According to social responsibility theory, the media, in order to contribute to the democratic processes of a given political system and to meet the needs of the society, should not be influenced by an ever-increasing commodification of news and other media content and the negative freedom that came owing to an unregulated press. McQuail (1983, p. 91-92) stated the main principles of the theory as follows:

- \* Media should accept and fulfill certain obligations to society
- \* These obligations are mainly to be met by setting high or professional standards of informativeness, truth, accuracy, objectivity and balance
- \* In accepting and applying these obligations, media should be self-regulating within the framework of law and established institutions
- \* The media should avoid whatever might lead to crime, violence or civil disorder or give offence to ethnic or religious minorities

- \* The media as a whole should be pluralist and reflect the diversity of their society, giving access to various points of view and to rights to reply
- \* Society and the public, following the first named principle, have a right to expect high standards of performance and intervention can be justified to secure the, or a, public good.

Social responsibility theory guides this study in that it is considerate of the democratic roles that media could have in democratic societies for which it demands the media to be free and responsible for the society in order to play their part in a democratic politics.

### **2.6.2. The Public Sphere**

By ‘the public sphere’, Habermas writes (1974, p. 49), we mean ‘a realm of our social life in which something approaching public opinion can be formed’ and access is guaranteed to all citizens. He asserts that the communication that exists in a large public body needs a means for transmitting information and influencing those who receive it which is nowadays facilitated by what he called ‘the media of the public sphere’ that are newspapers and magazines, radio and television (*ibid*). According to Habermas (1997, p. 49), a segment of the public sphere exists in every discussion where private individuals come together to form a public body and the individuals behave neither like business or professional people transacting private affairs, nor like members of a constitutional order subject to the legal constraints of a state bureaucracy. ‘They rather behave as a public body when they confer in an unrestricted fashion-that is, with the guarantee of freedom of assembly and association and the freedom to express and publish their opinions-about matters of general interest.’

James Curran (1991/1997) explains that according to classical liberal theory

The public sphere (or, in more traditional terminology, ‘public forum’) is the space between government and society in which private individuals exercise formal and informal control over the state: formal control through the election of governments and informal control through the pressure of public opinion. (p. 29).

Based on the above assertion, it could be argued that the democratic ideals such as effective representation, public deliberation, a government answerable to the people, and rational choice could be achieved through the public sphere as it is in the classical liberal theory. Habermas (1974) labels this kind of public sphere as ‘political public sphere’ in contrast to the literary one. According to him, this distinction comes when the public discusses on issues that are connected to the activities of the state.

Habermas (1974, p. 50) further explains that the public sphere as a sphere that is mediator between the society and the state, ‘accords with the principle of the public sphere—that principle of public information which once had to be fought for against the arcane policies of monarchies and which since that time has made possible the democratic control of state activities.’

The public sphere needs information that it could hinge on to carry out its functions. In this regard, Habermas (1974, p. 49) contends that the political public sphere could win an institutionalized influence over the government wherein law-making bodies are the instrument only when the democratic demand that the public should access information comes first to the political function of the public sphere. For the same reason, Curran (1991/1997, p. 29) notes that the media are the principal institutions of the public sphere thereby distributing information necessary for a reasonable choice of citizens and by facilitating public opinion formation through the provision of discussion forums.

Therefore, Habermas' (1974) theory of 'the public sphere' guides the current study for two major reasons. First, it clearly articulates the functions that the public sphere, so to speak, as an institution that helps citizens exercise control over the ruling, has in strengthening democracy through keeping governments accountable. Second, it considers the media (newspapers, magazines, and radio and television stations) as the principal institutions that facilitate the information needs of the public sphere so that it can successfully carry out its political functions.

### **2.6.3. Zaller's Theory of Media Politics**

The theory of media politics, which is developed by John Zaller (1999), is an extension of Antony Downs' study of 1957, *An Economic Theory of Democracy* that, according to Zaller (1999), hardly mentioned journalists and gave them no independent political role. Zaller (1999, p. 6) writes that he creates a theoretical role for journalists in his theory of media politics unlike Downs.

The theory was backed by a study conducted on the political system and the media mainly in the United States of America. As a result, it would seem inappropriate for an African context. However, it could be taken as an ideal model that helps to understand what relationship journalists have with politicians and what functions they serve for citizens with regard to politics.

In the words of Zaller (1999, p. 1), media politics means 'a system of politics in which individual politicians seek to gain office, and to conduct politics while in office, through communication that reaches citizens through the mass media'. According to him, what makes media politics distinct from 'party politics' is that in party politics, politicians seek to win elections and govern as members of party teams (*ibid*). Though such a difference is evident between media politics

and party politics, Zaller (1999) admits that party politics is in no way non-operational, rather it exists with media politics on the political sphere.

According to Zaller (1999), there are three principal actors in media politics with their own goals. These actors are; politicians, journalists, and citizens. Zaller (1999) explains the goal of each actor in media politics as follows:

For politicians, the goal of media politics is to use mass communication to mobilize the public support they need to win elections and to get their programs enacted while in office. For journalists, the goal of media politics is to produce stories that attract big audiences and that emphasize the "Independent and Significant Voice of Journalists." For citizens, the goal is to monitor politics and hold politicians accountable on the basis of minimal effort. (p. 2).

By journalists, Zaller (1999) primarily focuses on elite journalists that are specialists in covering national politics. However, he acknowledges the contribution that local journalists, who are not specialists on national politics, may also have a contribution in media politics. Explaining about the want of these elite journalists, Zaller (1999, p. 25) writes, 'what elite journalists want is a profession that adds something to the news—a profession that not only reports, but also selects, frames, investigates, interprets, and regulates the flow of political communication.'

Zaller (1999, p. 28) observes three major conflicts between the actors in media politics. These are; conflict between the interests of journalists and citizens—journalists tend to produce news that is more sophisticated than many citizens do not like to consume; conflict between the interests of politicians and journalists—both have an interest of controlling the news; and

conflict between the interests of politicians and citizens—citizens are interested in holding politicians accountable on the basis of politicians accomplishments. Zaller (1999) explains that these conflicts do not necessarily create problems. The example he provides for this is that ‘politicians have an interest in bamboozling the public but are unable, because of journalists’ interest in exposing them, to do so’ (ibid).

Zaller (1999,) concludes on the subject of mass communication in media politics as follows:

The quality of mass communication in media politics is certainly not high. This is because the large majority of citizens is not interested in, and probably never has been interested in, high quality political communication. But mass communication seems to be mostly fair and honest, at least insofar as it is in the interest of majority opinion for communication to be honest. (p. 135).

The theory of media politics guides this research in that it acknowledges the media as one actor in media politics along with the remaining two actors; politicians and citizens and clearly stipulates the functions of the media that they make policies known and keep politicians accountable to the citizens.

#### **2.6.4. Hallin & Mancini’s Models of Media Systems**

Hallin and Mancini (2004, p. 21), in their book *‘Comparing Media Systems: Three Models of Media and Politics’*, develop three models of media systems in Western Europe and North America: The Mediterranean or Polarized Pluralist Model, the North/Central European or Democratic Corporatist model, and the North Atlantic or Liberal Model. They compare these

models based on four major dimensions, which are used as a framework for the classification of the models as well. These dimensions, according to them, are:

1. The development of media markets, with particular emphasis on the strong or weak development of mass circulation press;
2. Political parallelism; that is, the degree and nature of the links between the media and political parties or, more broadly, the extent to which the media system reflects the major political divisions in society;
3. The development of journalistic professionalism; and
4. The degree and nature of state intervention in the media system.

### **Media Markets**

Hallin and Mancini (2004) used the weak and or strong development of media markets as one of the dimensions used to compare and classify the three models of media systems by observing that such developments of mass circulation press have shown a difference in the functioning of the media. For example, in countries where the media is characterized by a strong development of mass circulation press, the press tended to function freely and professionally for it needed no subsidy from either the government or political parties. Whereas, in countries where there is a weak development of mass circulation press, the press highly depended on subsidies from the government and or political parties, which affected its practice and made it a press that political instrumentalization impeded its well functioning.

### **Political Parallelism**

Hallin and Giles (2005, p. 6) write that political parallelism is the broadest expression of what has been referred to as 'party-press' which is used to refer to the degree to which the structure of

media system is parallel to the system that a political party is organized and the different media organizations reflect political views of different political parties. 'Political Parallelism can be manifested in the ownership of news media; in the affiliations of journalists, owners, and managers; in readership patterns; and in media content' (Hallin & Mancini, 2004, p. 156). Hence, it is used as a framework for comparing the systems in that media systems with a high degree of political parallelism and low degree of political parallelism are distinguished.

### **Journalistic Professionalism**

The understanding of Journalism as a profession has long been debatable (Hallin & Mancini, 2004; Hallin & Giles, 2005). However, Hallin and Mancini (2004, p. 34) argue that journalism shares important characteristics with the ideal type of the liberal professions as much as it departs from them, thus, it still remains very significant to compare the models of media systems in terms of the degree and form of professionalization of journalism. They state three characteristics of journalism that it commonly shares with other professions: Autonomy, which journalism does not enjoy as much as law and medicine do but has some degree of differentiation; distinct professional norms that include ethical principles; and public service orientation. Accordingly, the models are classified as one with a high degree of journalistic professionalization and the other with a low degree.

#### **2.6.4.1. The Polarized Pluralist Model**

According to Hallin and Mancini (2004, p. 73), elite oriented press with relatively small circulation and a corresponding centrality of electronic media characterizes this model. In addition, a common instrumentalization of the media by the government, by political parties, and by industrialists with political ties; a weakly developed professionalization of journalism; a large

role of the state as an owner, regulator, and funder of media; and government or parliamentary models of broadcast governance system in which public broadcasting is subject to the direct control of the government or the political majority are the basic hallmarks of this model. The countries whose media systems are classified under this model are France, Greece, Italy, Portugal, and Spain.

#### **2.6.4.2. The Liberal Model**

Unlike the polarized pluralist model, the liberal model is characterized by an early development of press freedom and the mass-circulation of press albeit the circulation has now become lower than in the democratic corporatist countries (Hallin & Mancini, 2004, p. 75). According to them, dominance of commercial newspapers, low political parallelism, a relatively strong professionalization of journalism, internal pluralism and limited role of the state are the defining characteristics of this model. Hallin and Giles (2005, p. 7) argue that the limited role of the government as owner, funder, and regulator of the media does not necessarily explicate the less influence of the state on media content. The media system that is found in the United States of America, Britain, Canada, and Ireland is classified under liberal model.

#### **2.6.4.3. The Democratic Corporatist Model**

According to Hallin and Mancini (2005, p. 74), this model is characterized by the early recognition and development of press freedom and newspapers with a very high circulation. This model mostly combines the features of the liberal model and the polarized pluralist model. In this regard, Hallin and Mancini (2004) asserts that a number of characteristics of the media systems that often appeared to be incompatible have historically coexisted in this model. For example, while the polarized pluralist model is characterized by party papers and the liberal model by

commercial papers, the democratic corporatist model is known for both kinds of papers. However, in its early stages of development, strong party papers that are diminishing through time characterized it (ibid). Hallin and Mancini (2004) summarize the coexisted features of the democratic corporatist model as follows:

Strong commercial media industries have coexisted with politically linked media and a high degree of political parallelism; high political parallelism has also coexisted with a high degree of journalistic professionalization; and a strong liberal tradition of press freedom and freedom of information has coexisted with strong state intervention in the media sector as in other sectors of society. (p. 14).

According to Hallin and Giles (2005, p. 13) explain, the term *democratic corporatism* refers to ‘a political system that was created in most of the small countries of northern Europe early in the twentieth century in an effort to prevent polarization and the collapse of democracy.’ Denmark, Belgium, Austria, Netherlands, Norway, Switzerland, Sweden, Finland, and Germany are countries whose media systems are classified under this model.

## Chapter Three

### III. Research Methodology

#### 3.1. Introduction

This research examines what roles the Ethiopian private media are playing in strengthening democracy and what challenges they are facing in discharging their responsibilities. What is more, it assesses the perception of journalists towards their democratic roles. To this end, this section discusses the methodological approach, data collection methods, and sampling technique.

The study employed triangulation of quantitative and qualitative methodologies. As Miller and Brewer (2003, p. 326) point out, “proponents of triangulated approaches to research assert that the results of combining varied approaches is a net gain – the strengths of each contrasting approach more than cancel the weaknesses of their counterpart.” Being considerate of this, a questionnaire that aimed at assessing the perception of journalists towards their democratic roles, identifying what roles they are playing, and pointing out their challenges were distributed to 50 journalists of the private media. Of these questionnaires, only 40 were complete and considered for the study. Moreover, a qualitative approach was also employed.

One of the five features of a qualitative research identified by Yin (2011, p. 8) is that “it represents the views and perspectives of the participants in a study”. According to Yin (2011), getting the perspectives of the research participants could be a major purpose of a qualitative research. “Thus, the events and ideas emerging from qualitative research can represent the meanings given to real-life events by the people who live them, not the values, preconceptions, or meanings held by researchers” (*Ibid*).

Thus, for an examination of the Ethiopian private media's roles in the process of democratization, it would be appropriate to employ both qualitative and quantitative methods and the methodological tool that used to collect the qualitative data is in-depth interview.

## **3.2. Data Collection Instruments**

To gather the necessary data that the research required, in-depth interviews and questionnaires were used.

### **3.2.1. In-depth interview**

Newcomb (1991, p. 93), explaining the potency of interviewing, writes, "The primary strength of interviewing as a method is its capacity to range over multiple perspectives on a given topic." He further explains that conducting manifold interviews helps to increase the information and broaden a point of view. Interview data also make possible the gathering of historical viewpoints on the subject area of the study (Ibid). For this research, in-depth interviews were conducted with 13 key informants, which mainly included Editors and journalists of the Ethiopian private media, a political party leader, an academic and leaders of journalists' professional associations. These key informants were selected purposively. The need to conduct the in-depth interviews as explained above was to get a thorough view of those interviewed regarding the Ethiopian private media's democratic roles and the challenges constraining these media when playing their role.

As to the type of questions that were used for the in-depth interviews, semi-structured questions were used. Miller and Brewer (2003) clearly stipulate:

Semi-structured interviews involve the interviewer deciding in advance, what broad topics are to be covered and what main questions are to be asked.

Flexibility plays a key part in structuring the interaction. The interviewer may ask certain major questions the same way each time but may alter their sequence and probe for more information. (p. 167).

According to Miller and Brewer (2003, p. 167), using semi-structured interview questions would help the interviewer “adapt the research instrument to the individuality of the research respondent” and would allow the respondent to provide answers by their own terms at a length and depth of their choice. All the questions were open-ended for such questions, according to Miller and Brewer (2003, p. 251), have an advantage in that they help the researcher elicit elaborated answers. The interviews were conducted from March to May 2013.

### **3.2.2. Questionnaire**

According to Ruane (2005, p. 123), questionnaire is an extremely efficient data collection tool, which is self-sufficient and the most popular survey option. In view of that, 50 questionnaires were distributed to private media journalists and 40 were appropriately filled and returned while three were incomplete and seven were completely unfilled. The questionnaires were distributed to the following media organizations:

- *The Reporter* and *Reporter* (English weekly and Amharic bi-weekly newspapers)—9 questionnaires
- *Addis Admass* (Amharic Weekly)—4 questionnaires
- *Fortune* (English Weekly)—5 questionnaires
- *Fana Broadcasting Corporate* (Radio Station)—9 questionnaires
- *Sendek* (Amharic Weekly)—2 questionnaires

- *Sheger FM 102.1*—4 questionnaires
- *Ethio Channel* (Amharic Weekly)—3 questionnaires
- *Addis Guday* (Amharic weekly magazine)—4 questionnaires
- *Fetehe* (later *Addis Times* and *Lelina*)—2 questionnaires
- *Zami 90.7 FM*—1 questionnaire

The number of questionnaires collected from *Reporter* and *Fana Broadcasting Corporate* are nine from the total 10 questionnaires distributed for each medium that is greater than the questionnaires distributed to the rest of the media outlets. This is mainly due to the fact that these two media organizations are very large in that there are many journalists, who, in fact, are incommensurable with the number of journalists found in the rest of the media houses. What is more, these two outlets are institutionally well-organized outlets with a relatively long year experience. The total number of questionnaires listed above is 43. However, as explained earlier in this chapter, three questionnaires were incomplete and were not considered in the study.

The questionnaires were prepared based on Likert-scale where every item has five scales ranging from 1 which stands for strongly disagree to 5 which stands for strongly agree. Sapsford and Jupp (2006, p. 101 & 121) explain that Likert scale, which is named after its inventor, R. Likert, is used in such a way that items are provided for respondents to rate their responses in terms of agreement and disagreement. According to them, responses in Likert scale could be coded to five or seven mutually exclusive categories. This researcher used the five categories coding: Strongly agree (5), Agree (4), Neutral (3), Disagree (2), and Strongly Disagree (1).

The items provided in the questionnaire were categorized in to six themes, which are: the perception of journalists towards the media's democratic roles, the democratic roles that the

private media in Ethiopia are playing, the relationship between the Ethiopian government and the private media, the relationship between the private media and political parties in Ethiopia, how do journalists see the perception of the public towards the democratic roles of the media, and the challenges that the private media face when trying to discharge their democratic roles.

### **3.3. Sampling Technique**

As indicated above, the sources of data for this research were both primary (key informants) and secondary (documents). Moreover, the data were collected mainly through purposive sampling method. With a purposive sampling method, the researcher selects a sample from a population that contains different people with certain characteristics, in which the researcher is interested, or media or other sources of data or content of interest to the researcher (Rubin, R., Rubin, A., Haridakis, & Piele, L., 2010).

Of the different types of purposive sampling, stakeholder sampling was preferable for this study. Stakeholder sampling “involves identifying who the major stakeholders are who are involved in designing, giving, receiving, or administering the program or service being evaluated, and who might otherwise be affected by it” (Given, 2008, p. 697). Hence, for the stakeholders in the democratization process of Ethiopia are the sample population, among which the major stakeholders are in the private media industry, and political parties, it would be apt to use this type of purposive sampling. When it comes to the questionnaires, though the media outlets were purposively selected, it was on a random basis that they were distributed to journalists.

### **3.4. Data Analysis**

First, the quantitative data were analyzed using SPSS tool. After feeding the data into the SPSS tool, frequencies and mean values were computed to analyze the scores of the scales for each item. For most of the topics, mean values are presented in tables and for a few topics, frequencies are presented. An attempt has also been made to employ interpretive analysis for the qualitative data obtained through the in-depth interviews.

## **Chapter Four**

### **IV. Data Presentation, Analysis, and Discussion**

As it is explicated in the third chapter of this paper, the study is conducted based on both quantitative and qualitative data. A questionnaire, which aimed at assessing the perception of journalists towards the democratic roles that they are expected to play, identifying what democratic roles the private media are actually playing and finding out what challenges the private media are facing pursuant to their roles, was distributed to 50 newspaper, magazine, and radio journalists. In addition, in depth interviews were conducted with 13 informants purposively selected from different media organizations, journalists associations, and political parties. Hence, the presentation and analysis of the quantitative and qualitative data is put separately. The first part of this section discusses the quantitative analysis and the second part deals with the qualitative analysis.

#### **4.1. Quantitative Data Presentation, Analysis, and Discussion**

Of the total number of questionnaires, which is 50, 40 were correctly filled and returned. Seven questionnaires were returned completely unfilled and three questionnaires were incomplete. Accordingly, only 40 questionnaires were considered for the study.

In this part, demographic information of respondents, mean and frequencies of the variables categorized under six themes, which are the perception of respondents towards the democratic roles of the media, the democratic roles that the private media in Ethiopia are playing, the relationship between the Ethiopian government and the private media, the relationship between the private media and political parties in Ethiopia, journalists view of the perception of the public

towards the democratic roles of the private media, and the challenges that the private media are facing when discharging their democratic roles, are presented.

#### 4.1.1. Data Analysis and Presentation

##### 4.1.1.1 Demographic Profile of Journalists

###### Respondents by Age and Sex

Table 1 depicts that 57 percent of the respondents were found in the age groups between 26 and 30 years. 22.5 percent of the respondents were in the age group between 31 and 35 years. 7.5 percent were between 20-25 years. Two respondents were under the age groups between 36-40 and another two above 50 years. Only one informant constituting 2.5 percent was between 45-50 years of age. It could be understood from this that around 23 journalists constituting 50 percent of the respondents, which is, more than half were young journalists.

The majority of the respondents, as Table 1 summarizes, were males making up 77.5 percent of the total respondents. Only nine of the 40 respondents were females.

**Table 1—Age and Sex of Respondents**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
<b>Age</b>	20-25 years	3	7.5	7.5	7.5
	26-30 years	23	57.5	57.5	65.0
	31-35 years	9	22.5	22.5	87.5
	36-40 years	2	5.0	5.0	92.5
	41-50 years	1	2.5	2.5	95.0
	>50 years	2	5.0	5.0	100.0
	Total	40	100.0	100.0	

<b>Sex</b>	Male	31	77.5	77.5	77.5
	Female	9	22.5	22.5	100.0
	Total	40	100.0	100.0	

#### 4.1.1.2. Level of Education and Field of Study of Respondents

**Figure 1—Level of Education of Respondents**

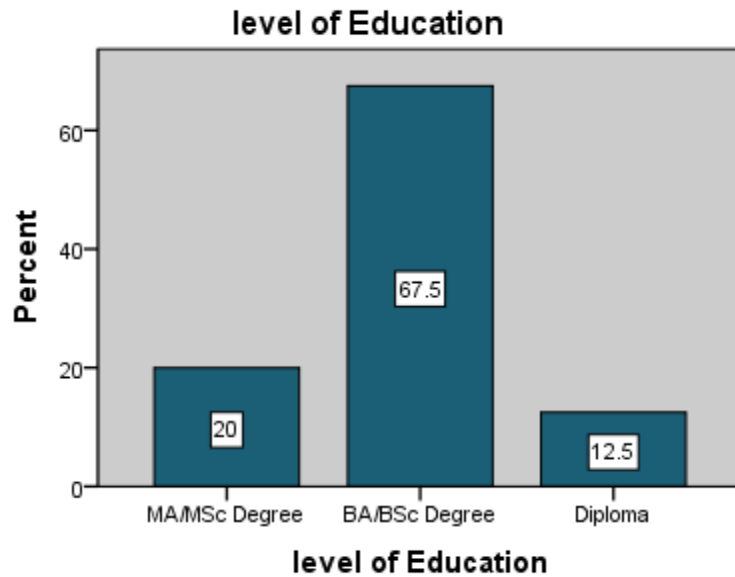


Figure 1 illustrates that majority of the respondents were BA/BSC degree holders, making up 67.5 percent of the total respondents. Ranked next to BA holders is Masters Degree holders with 20 percent and 5 respondents that constitute 12.5 percent were Diploma holders. Table 2 shows that respondents who studied journalism and communication were 13 (32.5%). Majority of the respondents' field of studies (about 60%) are in the 'other social sciences' category with 60 percent. Only one respondent is has a field of study under the natural sciences and two others in the 'others' category making up 2.5 percent and 5 percent of the total respondents, respectively.

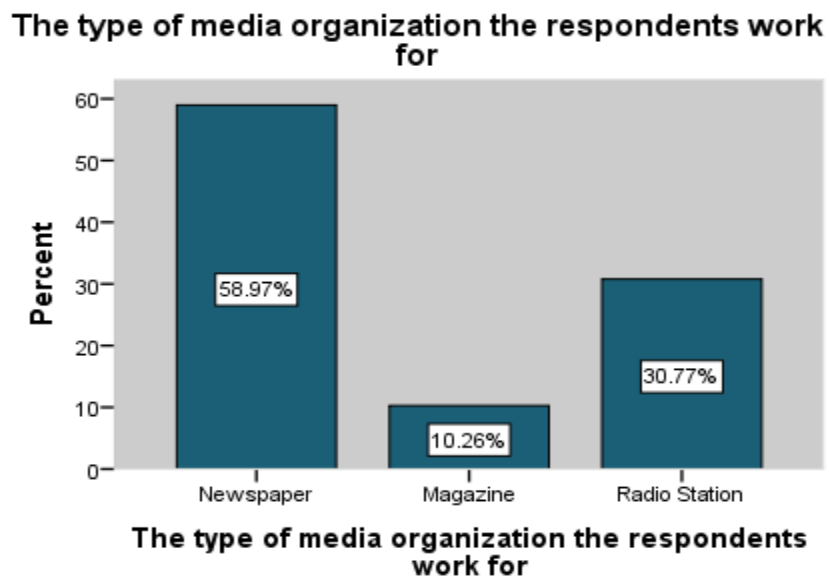
**Table 2—Respondents by their Field of Study**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Journalism and Communication	13	32.5	32.5	32.5
	Other social sciences	24	60.0	60.0	92.5
	Natural Sciences	1	2.5	2.5	95.0
	Other	2	5.0	5.0	100.0
	Total	40	100.0	100.0	

**4.1.1.3. Types of Media Respondents Work for**

When we look at the media organizations that the respondents were employed at (Figure 2), journalists working for different newspapers are 23 (59%) while 12 (30.8%) journalists were from radio stations and 4 (10.3%) journalists were from magazines. For there is one missing response in this variable, the total number of respondents is 39.

**Figure 2—Type of media organization the respondents work for**



As there are a few commercial radio stations in Ethiopia, stations selected as samples for the study were *Fana Broadcasting Corporate*, *Sheger FM 102.1*, and *Zami FM 90.7*. Only 12 questionnaires were distributed to journalists in the sample radio stations. More questionnaires were distributed to journalists of the print media, as there are more newspapers and magazines than radio stations. Consequently, most of the respondents were newspaper journalists.

#### 4.1.1.4. Responsibility of respondents

The respondents included journalists with different responsibilities ranging from Editors-in-Chief to Reporters. Table 3. Reveals that 15 respondents that represented 38.5 percent of the total number of respondents were senior reporters. Respondents with other responsibilities, which included research editor, OP-ED editor, director, media manager, program producer, senior program producer, and multi-media editor, were 10 constituting 25.6 percent of the total number. Deputy Editors-in-Chief were 5 (12.8%) where as reporters were 4 (10.3) and editors were 3. Moreover, there was one Editor-in-chief and one managing editor. One respondent did not identify what responsibility s/he has. Thus, the total number of respondents for this variable is 39.

**Table 3—Responsibility of respondents**

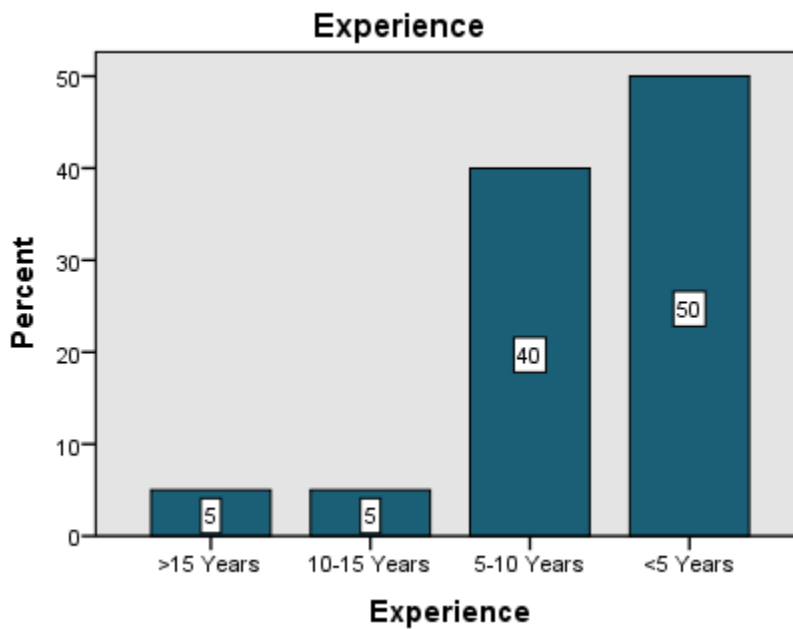
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Editor-in-Chief	1	2.5	2.6	2.6
	Deputy Editor-in-Chief	5	12.5	12.8	15.4
	Editor	3	7.5	7.7	23.1
	Senior Reporter	15	37.5	38.5	61.5
	Reporter	4	10.0	10.3	71.8
	Managing Editor	1	2.5	2.6	74.4

	Other	10	25.0	25.6	100.0
	Total	39	97.5	100.0	
Missing	System	1	2.5		
Total		40	100.0		

#### 4.1.1.5. Experience of respondents

Experience is one of the variables that make one respondent different from the other. In view of that, about 20 (50%) respondents had an experience of less than five years while 16 respondents had 5 to 10 years of experience. There were four respondents that had more than 10 years of experience, which amounts to 10 percent.

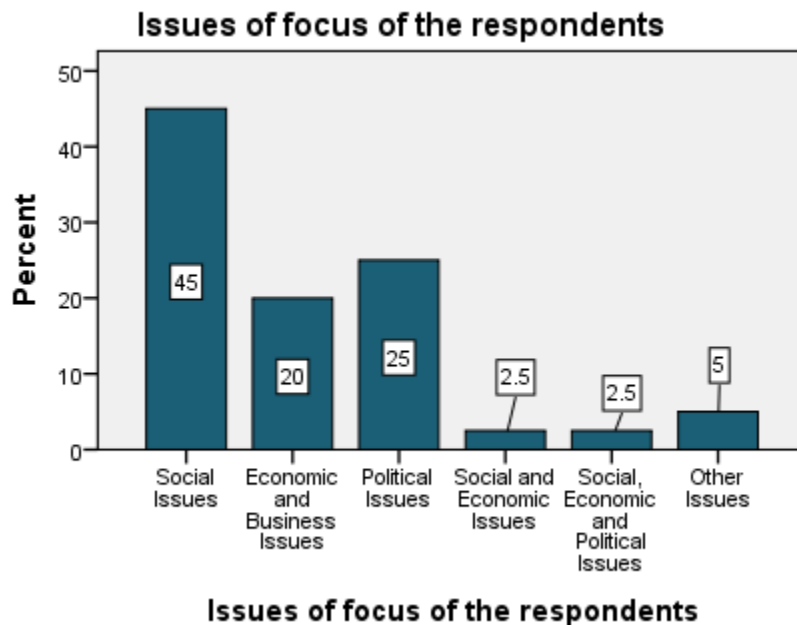
**Figure 3—Experience of respondents**



#### 4.1.1.6. Issues of focus of respondents

According to the report of the Ethiopian Broadcasting authority released on its website ([www.eba.gov.et](http://www.eba.gov.et)) on February 2013, there were 39 publications of which 18 are newspapers and 21 are magazines. When we look at the content of the publications, eight papers focus on social, cultural and art issues, five are sports newspapers, 21 are focusing on social, economic, and political issues while the rest focus on issues of health, construction and crime. These figures show that majority of the papers are reporting on political, social and economic issues.

**Figure 4—Issues of focus of respondents**



Be that as it may, respondents were asked to identify issues they focus on when writing a newspaper or magazine article or when producing a radio program. Knowing this helps understand what connection the respondents had with the issue under study-democratic roles. Figure 4 clearly shows that 45 percent of the respondents focused on social issues. Political issues were the focus of 25 percent of the respondents, next to social issues, and 20 percent

focused on economic and business issues. 2 respondents focused on two and three of the issues, making up 5 percent of the total respondents while another 5 percent focused on other issues. As all the issues have a relationship with democratic roles of the media, more than 90 percent of the respondents meet the requirements in that their focuses were in the domain of political, social, and economic issues.

#### 4.1.1.7. Perception of journalists towards their democratic roles

In order to assess journalists’ perception towards their democratic roles, six Likert-scale questions were grouped under one category in the questionnaire. The scale ranges from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). Thus, a mean value close to five would show that most of the respondents strongly agree with what is specifically said. According to Table 4, the mean for all the variables is predominantly above four. This shows that most of the respondents agreed that they are well aware of the democratic roles of the media and believed that media should play democratic roles. With reference to the watchdog role of the media, the respondents strongly agreed that media should play such a role ( $M= 4.66$ ).

**Table 4—Perception of journalists towards their democratic roles**

Items	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
During election times, media should not only inform the public regarding the candidates running for office but also aware the public about the likely effects of different political platforms.	40	1	5	4.00	1.198

Media should focus on the deep-rooted social problems and influence the government and other institutions for solutions.	40	1	5	4.30	1.067
Media should collaborate with the government at times when the country faces problems like natural disaster and war.	40	1	5	4.35	1.167
Media should serve as a forum for discussions and debates.	39	1	5	4.41	1.117
I am well aware of the democratic roles of the media and I always work to achieve them.	39	2	5	4.44	.852
Media should serve as a watchdog over maladministration or wrong deeds of the government and other powerful institutions.	38	2	5	4.66	.781

\* **The scale ranges from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). Thus, a mean value close to five would show that most of the respondents strongly agree**

#### **4.1.1.8. What democratic roles are the private media playing?**

As it is depicted in table 5, the mean value for the listed variables ranges from 2.77 to 3.46, which shows that the respondents were neutral when it comes to the actual democratic roles that the private media are playing. They were neutral as to whether the private media are serving as a forum for debate and as a watchdog over maladministration ( $M= 2.77$  &  $2.86$  respectively). The mean value for the item *‘the private media in general are contributing to the democratization process of the country by creating informed citizens that the process requires’* is 3.20 which still reveals that the respondents on average were neutral. Consequently, the response does not indicate anything as to whether the private media are playing their democratic roles.

**Table 5—Democratic roles of the private media**

Items	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
The private media in general are providing a forum for discussion and debate.	39	1	5	2.77	1.423
The private media are fairly representing different views.	39	1	5	2.82	1.335
The private media are serving as a watchdog over the wrong deeds of the government and other powerful institutions.	37	1	5	2.86	1.357
The private media are providing citizens with the necessary information that they need to have on matters pertaining to elections.	39	1	5	3.03	1.224
The private media in Ethiopia are often inclined towards the opposition during election times.	39	1	5	2.72	1.555
The private media disclose various societal problems.	39	1	5	3.46	1.274
The private media are collaborating with the government and other institutions at times when such collaboration is needed (on matters pertaining to national interest).	39	1	5	3.23	1.135
The private media in general are contributing to the democratization process of the country by creating informed citizens that the process requires.	40	1	5	3.20	1.265

\* **The scale ranges from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). Thus, a mean value close to five would show that most of the respondents strongly agree**

#### 4.1.1.9. The Private Media and the Government

Of the different factors that define democratic roles of a certain media system, one is the relationship that the media have with the government. In accordance with this, respondents were asked to rate statements that they believe best described the relationship between the Ethiopian government and the private media. Accordingly, on average, the respondents did not agree that the relationship is favorable in that the government does not provide support for the private media ( $M= 2.03$ ). The respondents were neutral when it comes to the assertions that the relationship is unfriendly because the media attack the government based on bogus claims ( $M= 2.74$ ), the private media misuse government information ( $M= 2.74$ ), and the private media do not want to entertain government views ( $M= 2.74$ ). On average, respondents agreed that the relationship is hostile in that the government takes unnecessary administrative measures ( $M=3.76$ ), government officials often intimidate journalists of the private media ( $M= 3.87$ ), and government officials are reluctant to give any kind of information for journalists of the private media ( $M= 3.92$ ).

**Table 6—The relationship between the government and the private media**

Items	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
The relationship between the government and the private media is favorable in that the government provides support for the private media.	39	1	5	2.03	1.308
The relationship between the government and the private media is unfriendly in that the media attack the government based on bogus claims.	38	1	5	2.74	1.178

The private media misuse the information they get from the government	38	1	5	2.74	1.288
The private media do not want to entertain the views of the government on different issues.	39	1	5	2.74	1.251
The relationship between the government and the private media is hostile in that the government takes unnecessary administrative measures than tolerating and providing a counter argument.	37	1	5	3.76	1.234
Government officials often intimidate journalists of the private media based on stories that are critical about the officials.	38	1	5	3.87	1.070
Government officials are reluctant to give any kind of information for journalists of the private media.	39	1	5	3.92	1.133

\* **The scale ranges from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). Thus, a mean value close to five would show that most of the respondents strongly agree**

#### **4.1.1.10. The Private Media and Political Parties**

In order for the private media to contribute to democracy, they need to have a good relationship with political parties, which are one of the actors in democracy. This relationship defines the media's democratic roles in that it helps the media use political parties as information sources and as participants of discussions. In line with this, respondents were asked to identify what kind of relationship the private media have with political parties. Table 7 shows that 14 respondents (36.8%) agreed and 6 (15.8%) strongly agreed that the private media have a good working relationship with political parties. About 26.3 percent were neutral while 7.9 percent and 13.2

percent strongly disagreed and disagreed respectively. Therefore, it could be said that more than half of the respondents agreed that the private media have a good working relationship with political parties.

**Table 7—Good relationship between the private media and political parties**

Item—The private media have a good working relationship with political parties.					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	3	7.5	7.9	7.9
	Disagree	5	12.5	13.2	21.1
	Neutral	10	25.0	26.3	47.4
	Agree	14	35.0	36.8	84.2
	Strongly Agree	6	15.0	15.8	100.0
	Total	38	95.0	100.0	
Missing	System	2	5.0		
Total		40	100.0		

According to the majority of the respondents (89.7%), it is through the private media that political parties are making their voices heard. The mean value for the first item in table 8 shows that on average, the respondents did not agree that political parties give an indirect financial assistance to the private media. On the other hand, the mean value for the third and fourth items is 3.31 and 3.39, respectively, which shows that the respondents were neutral as to the assertion that the private media focus on showing the public the pros and cons of political programs of political parties. Respondents agreed when it comes to reliance of the political parties on the media to make their voices heard ( $M= 4.18$ ).

**Table 8—The relationship between the private media and political parties**

Items	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
The political parties give an indirect financial assistance to the private media.	38	1	5	2.16	1.263
The private media always tilt towards the opposition political parties in their reporting.	37	1	5	2.62	1.299
The private media do not focus on showing the public the pros and cons of political programs of the political parties.	39	1	5	3.31	1.239
The private media have a good working relationship with political parties	38	1	5	3.39	1.152
The political parties often rely on the private media in order to make their voices heard	39	1	5	4.18	.854

\* **The scale ranges from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). Thus, a mean value close to five would show that most of the respondents strongly agree.**

#### **4.1.1.11. Public Perception towards the Private Media’s Democratic Roles**

Journalists were asked to rate on items about the perception of the public towards their democratic roles. Table 9 depicts that the public relies on the media to get political information ( $M= 3.95$ ). However, the respondents did not agree that the public supports the media in the struggle for discharging democratic roles ( $M= 2.54$ ). The respondents also disagreed with the notion that the public does not want the media to play their democratic roles, rather wants to read/listen to entertainment ( $M= 2.40$ ). According to the respondents, the public labels the private media as 'allies of the government' or as 'against the government' and overlook their

democratic roles ( $M= 3.82$ ). Moreover, when it comes to reluctance of the public to give information and its understanding of the media’s democratic roles the respondents rated neutral.

**Table 9—Journalists’ view of the public’s perception towards the private media’s democratic roles**

Items	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
The public does not want the media to play their democratic roles. It rather wants to read/listen to entertainment.	40	1	5	2.40	1.336
The public supports the media in the struggle for discharging democratic roles.	39	1	5	2.54	1.047
The public participates in different discussions and debates that the private media organize.	40	1	5	2.58	1.196
The public is reluctant to give information as to what problems it is facing.	38	1	5	2.89	1.269
The public understands the democratic roles of the media and promote them.	39	1	5	2.90	1.046
The public labels the private media as 'allies of the government' or as 'against the government' and overlook their democratic roles.	39	1	5	3.82	1.073
The public relies on the media to get political information.	39	1	5	3.95	1.025

\* **The scale ranges from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). Thus, a mean value close to five would show that most of the respondents strongly agree.**

#### 4.1.1.12. Challenges of the Private Media

The aforementioned finding (see Table 5) reveals that the respondents neither agreed nor disagreed on the democratic roles that the private media are playing. Besides, for the item ‘*the private media in general are contributing to the democratization process of the country by creating informed citizens that the process requires*’, the mean value is 3.20.

The private media inexorably face challenges in the course of striving to discharge democratic roles. This challenges range from restrictive laws, inaccessibility of information from a public body, intimidation of journalists by government officials to poor development of journalistic professionalism, economic weakness of the media institutions and weak development of private printing enterprises. This section separately analyzes the rating of each challenge by respondents.

##### 4.1.1.12.1 Restrictive Laws

One of the areas in which governments influence the media is regulation. Respondents were asked whether there are restrictive laws that do not open the field for the private media to play democratic roles. The result (Table 10) shows that according to the majority of the respondents (72.5%), there are restrictive laws impeding the private media from playing their democratic roles (25% agreed & 47.5% strongly agreed). Only three (7.5%) respondents disagreed on the existence of restrictive laws while eight (20%) respondents were neutral.

**Table 10—Restrictive Laws**

Item—There are restrictive laws that do not give the private media a chance to play their democratic roles.					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Disagree	3	7.5	7.5	7.5

	Neutral	8	20.0	20.0	27.5
	Agree	10	25.0	25.0	52.5
	Strongly Agree	19	47.5	47.5	100.0
	Total	40	100.0	100.0	

#### 4.1.1.12.2. Lack of Support from the Government

Concerning the support of the government in terms of providing subsidies and tax exemptions, more than half of the respondents (56.4%) strongly agreed that there is no such a support. Only one respondent disagreed whereas five others were neutral. Another 11 respondents (28.2%) also agreed that lack of support is a challenge. One respondent questioned the need to have a support from the government. Others, however, believe that the ever-increasing printing cost is a great challenge for newspapers and magazines to be published regularly. It is evident in Table 11 that according to 33 (84.6%) respondents, the fact that the government does not provide support in different forms ranging from subsidies to tax exemptions is a challenge.

**Table 11—Lack of support from the government**

Item—The government does not support the media industry by providing subsidies and tax exemptions.					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Disagree	1	2.5	2.6	2.6
	Neutral	5	12.5	12.8	15.4
	Agree	11	27.5	28.2	43.6
	Strongly Agree	22	55.0	56.4	100.0
	Total	39	97.5	100.0	
Missing	System	1	2.5		
Total		40	100.0		

#### 4.1.1.12.3. Poor level of Journalistic professionalism

With reference to the poor level of journalistic professionalism, seven (17.5%) respondents disagree that it is a challenge. However, according to the majority of the respondents that make up 67.5 percent of the total number of respondents, the poor level of journalistic professionalism in Ethiopia is a challenge.

**Table 12—Poor level of journalistic professionalism**

Item—The level of journalistic professionalism is very poor.					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Disagree	7	17.5	17.5	17.5
	Neutral	6	15.0	15.0	32.5
	Agree	11	27.5	27.5	60.0
	Strongly Agree	16	40.0	40.0	100.0
	Total	40	100.0	100.0	

#### 4.1.1.12.4. Democratic Roles Unrecognized

With reference to recognition of the democratic roles of the private media by the government, it was found—according to 24 respondents (61.6%)—that the government does not recognize the democratic roles, which happened to be obstructing the private media from living up to their democratic roles.

**Table 13—Democratic roles unrecognized**

Item—The government does not recognize the democratic roles of the private media.					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Disagree	6	15.0	15.4	15.4
	Neutral	9	22.5	23.1	38.5

	Agree	9	22.5	23.1	61.5
	Strongly Agree	15	37.5	38.5	100.0
	Total	39	97.5	100.0	
Missing	System	1	2.5		
Total		40	100.0		

#### 4.1.1.12.5. Inaccessibility of Information

Looking at how access to information from a public body is becoming difficult, which creates a barrier for the private media not to play their democratic roles, one can learn from Table 14 that journalists (69.2%) agreed that access to information from a public body, though granted through a proclamation, is still in a very poor stage and is a challenge. Only 10.3 percent of the respondents did not agree that getting information from public bodies is difficult, and, thus, they thought it could not be a challenge.

**Table 14—Difficulty to access information from public bodies**

Item—Access to information from a public body, albeit granted through proclamation is still in a very poor stage.					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Disagree	4	10.0	10.3	10.3
	Neutral	8	20.0	20.5	30.8
	Agree	11	27.5	28.2	59.0
	Strongly Agree	16	40.0	41.0	100.0
	Total	39	97.5	100.0	
Missing	System	1	2.5		
Total		40	100.0		

#### 4.1.1.12.6. Economic Weakness of the Private Media

With regard to economic weakness of the private media as a challenge, only three respondents disagreed (7.5%) and 9 rated neutral. The remaining majority of the respondents (70%) believe that the private media are economically weak that they could not fully accomplish democratic roles.

**Table 15—Economic weakness of the private media**

Item—The private media are economically weak that they cannot fully discharge their democratic roles.					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	1	2.5	2.5	2.5
	Disagree	2	5.0	5.0	7.5
	Neutral	9	22.5	22.5	30.0
	Agree	11	27.5	27.5	57.5
	Strongly Agree	17	42.5	42.5	100.0
	Total	40	100.0	100.0	

#### 4.1.1.12.7. Weak Development of Private Printing Enterprise

According to 37 (92.5%) respondents, the private printing enterprise is developing very weakly, for which reason the private media are mostly forced to print their papers in the government printing houses. However, one respondent did not agree that it is a challenge whereas two respondents rated neutral. Thus, the finding shows that the weak development of private printing enterprises in Ethiopia is a challenge.

**Table 16—Weak development of private printing enterprises**

Item—The development of private printing enterprises is very weak.					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Disagree	1	2.5	2.5	2.5
	Neutral	2	5.0	5.0	7.5
	Agree	16	40.0	40.0	47.5
	Strongly Agree	21	52.5	52.5	100.0
	Total	40	100.0	100.0	

As it has been shown from table 10-16, the preponderance of the respondents agreed that all the items provided for rating were truly the challenges of the private media. As far as the challenges are concerned, comparing the mean value of all the challenges would help us understand which item was more rated as a challenge than the others were. In other words, for the mean value of each item is different from the other and for it could be put in its ascending order, comparison of the means would be helpful in understanding which challenge was more bothering than the others did.

Consequently, it could be discerned from table 17 that the mean value of the items is very similar in that it ranges from 3.85 for the item ‘*The government does not recognize the democratic roles of the private media*’ to 4.43 for the item ‘*The development of private printing enterprises is very weak*’. Restrictive laws, lack of support from the government, and weak development of private printing enterprises ( $M= 4.13, 4.38, \text{ and } 4.43 \text{ respectively}$ ), in the ascending order, were found to be more challenging. The government’s poor or no recognition of the democratic roles of the private media and poor level of journalistic professionalism ( $M= 3.85 \text{ and } 3.90 \text{ respectively}$ ), in

the ascending order, were still challenges of the private media but less than that of the preceding ones.

**Table 17—Challenges of the private media when trying to discharge democratic roles**

Items	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
The government does not recognize the democratic roles of the private media.	39	2	5	3.85	1.113
The level of journalistic professionalism is very poor.	40	2	5	3.90	1.128
Access to information from a public body, albeit granted through proclamation, is still in a very poor stage.	39	2	5	4.00	1.026
The private media are economically weak that they cannot fully discharge their democratic roles.	40	1	5	4.03	1.050
There are restrictive laws that do not give the private media a chance to play their democratic roles.	40	2	5	4.13	.992
The government does not support the media industry by providing subsidies and tax exemptions.	39	2	5	4.38	.815
The development of private printing enterprises is very weak.	40	2	5	4.43	.712

\* The scale ranges from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). Thus, a mean value close to five would show that most of the respondents strongly agree.

## **4.1.2. Summary of Findings**

### **Role Perception of Journalists:**

The finding shows that the surveyed journalists were perceptive of their democratic roles. According to the finding, 25 (64.1%) respondents strongly agreed that they were well aware of the democratic roles of the media and they work to achieve them. While seven respondents agreed with this, only one disagreed and six were neutral. Thus, about 82 percent of the respondents were well aware of democratic roles of the media.

When we look at the specific ideal democratic roles, the respondents agreed that media should serve as a watchdog, serve as a forum for discussion and debate, and collaborate with the government when such collaboration is needed. What is more, they believe that media should disclose deep-rooted social problems and should provide the public with information as to which candidates are running for office thereby evaluating the political programs in times of elections.

It could commonly be agreed that journalists that are not well aware of the democratic roles they are expected to play and that do not believe in the argument that media should play democratic roles, would not be playing any of the roles in the first place. Therefore, the fact that the surveyed journalists were aware of their democratic roles and believe that media should play these democratic roles would predictably help them realise the roles.

### **Is the Private Media Playing Democratic Roles?**

It has been argued from the outset that media have democratic functions of serving as a forum for debate and discussion, as a watchdog over maladministration, disclosing various societal problems and collaborating with the government on matters pertaining to national interest.

However, when it comes to the private media in Ethiopia, the mean values for the items that state democratic roles shows that it ranges from 2.77 to 3.2, which is close to 3, a value in the Likert scale that stands for neutral. Thus, as far as these democratic roles of the private media are concerned, the finding shows that the respondents neither agreed nor disagreed that the private media are playing democratic roles.

### **The Private Media with the Government and Political Parties:**

The finding proves that the relationship between the private media and the Ethiopian government was very unfriendly in that government officials were reluctant to give any kind of information for journalists of the private media, intimidate private media journalists based on stories that are critical about them, and the government takes unnecessary administrative measures than tolerating and providing counter arguments (with mean values 3.92, 3.82 and 3.76 respectively). Respondents neither agreed nor disagreed as to whether the poor relationship would be the attack of the private media on the government based on bogus claims, the information misuse by the private media and unwillingness of the private media to entertain government views on different issues. However, the respondents, on average, disagreed that the government provides support for the private media. Consequently, it could be argued that the more unfriendly the relationship is, the more challenging it would be for the private media to play democratic roles.

With reference to the private media's relationship with political parties, the finding shows that it was not as unfriendly as it is with the government. About 52.6 percent of the respondents agreed that there was a good working relationship. Moreover, 89.7 percent of the respondents believe that the political parties were dependent upon the private media to make their voices heard. There has been a claim that political parties finance some of the private media. As regards to

this, respondents, on average, did not agree that such a relationship existed. When it comes to the private media's inclination towards the opposition political parties, respondents, on average, were neutral. This finding clearly implies that the private media have a good relationship with political parties than with the government.

### **The Private Media and the Public:**

For whom the private media play democratic roles is the public. James Curran (1997, p. 29) contends that the 'basic requirement of a democratic media system should be that it represents all significant interests in society.' He further explains, "It should facilitate their participation in the public domain, enable them to contribute to public debate and have an input in the framing of public policy." Curran's explication suggests that the public relates to the media to participate in public debates that the media organize.

According to 52.5 percent of the respondents, the public did not participate in different discussions and debates that the private media organize. Majority of the respondents also believe that the public did not support the private media in the struggle for discharging democratic roles. Yet, it is found that the public relies on the private media to get political information. The finding reveals that the public labels the private media as 'allies of the government' or as 'against the government' and overlook the democratic roles they could play. This suggests that the public needs to be supportive of the democratic roles of the private media instead of being one of the challenges.

### **Challenges of the Private Media:**

The finding reveals that restrictive laws that do not give the private media a chance to play democratic roles, lack of support from the government in the form of subsidy and tax exemption and the weak

development of private printing enterprises were the major challenges of the private media. The fact that the government does not recognize the private media's democratic roles (61.1%), inaccessibility of information from a public body (69.2%), and poor level of journalistic professionalism (67.5%) were found to be challenges ranked next to the aforementioned ones. When we look at the challenges, external challenges like restrictive laws and lack of support from the government seem to prevail over the internal ones.

## **4.2. Qualitative Data Analysis**

As it is pointed out earlier in chapter three, the qualitative data was obtained through in-depth interviews conducted with 13 informants. Hence, this section discusses the analysis of the qualitative data. The analysis starts by looking at the understanding of the democratic roles of the media in Ethiopia, goes through the actual democratic roles that the private media are playing, the relationship between the private media and the government and the private media and political parties, and discusses the Ethiopian media system. Finally, it discusses the challenges and the future of the democratic roles of the private media.

### **4.2.1. Understanding Democratic Roles of the Media**

Informants were asked what democratic roles they think media could in general and private media in particular play. All the informants unanimously agreed that media could play a critical role in democracy. Amare Aregawi, managing director of *The Reporter* (English Weekly) and *Reporter* (Amharic bi-weekly) newspapers clearly articulates media's role in democracy as follows:

In the first place, democracy could exist when the people participate. And for the people to participate, they need to be informed. They could only be informed

when there is information for which there must be a provider. Therefore, the media provide the needed information. Thus, basically, they have a decisive role.

(Amare Aregawi. Personal interview. April 2013)

By the same token, Mushe Semu, president of EDP, explains how media serve the ends of democracy and how democracy cannot exist without media as follows:

All the time, the base for everything is information. Information gives people a chance to make decisions. Democracy ..... is an affair of decision-making. It is a matter of deciding with provided choices. For people are engaged in their daily walks of life, they do not have the ways to get [see] the choices. They cannot take part [in the conferences of] every party. Therefore, the media fill this gap by providing information ranging from information of everyday life to political information, [political] stands, and strength and weaknesses. Democracy without media is nonsense (Mushe Semu. Personal interview. April 2013).

Kasoma (2000, p. 37-40) strongly argues with scholars of democratic theory who do not give any space for the media in democracy. He mentions scholars like Dahl, O'Neil, Ronning, McPherson, and McChesney and asserts that they have completely 'ignored the role of the press in fostering democracy'. Furthermore, he argues that these scholars fail to outrightly give recognition for the press as one of the factors that help to bring about democracy. Moreover, he is surprised at authors like Grosswiler (1998) and Dahl (1998) 'who seem to be undecided to clearly come out and attribute to the press a causal relationship with democracy' (Kasoma, 2000, p. 38).

Kasoma then provides his counter argument thereby mentioning scholars who believe that free and independent press is the lifeblood of democracy. He mentioned, among others, scholars like Ansah, Lichtenberg, Geller, and Imanyara and clearly articulates that democracy could not exist in an environment where press does not exist. What is more, he contends, press in a democracy serves as watchdog in that it monitors the power of government and other powerful institutions to make sure that they are following democratic procedures (*Ibid*).

Going along with Kasoma's argument, the informants, particularly Amare and Mushe, correctly put across that it is when there is media that people can have an access to information in general and political information in particular so that they can actively play a part in the decision making process of a given democratic governance.

#### **4.2.2. Free Press as a Precondition**

There seems to be a common understanding as to what kind of environment is suitable for the media to play democratic roles. With no shadow of doubt, a free environment wherein freedom from political and economic influence is ensured, access to information guaranteed and censorship in any form is prohibited is appropriate and enabling for the media to carry out functions that do support a given democratic process.

This section is not meant to discuss the debate on what freedom of the press is, it rather intends to show how free the press should be in order to have indispensable democratic roles. Therefore, the presupposition is that the kind of free press that we refer to according to McConnell & Becker (2002, p. 3) is the 'one in which there is freedom from any government regulation and control that would suggest censorship or limits on the freedom to disseminate information, news, and opinion'

Writing about the British press, Brain McNair (2011, p. 44) asserts, “Having emerged from the oppression and censorship of the absolutist feudal state, the freedom of the press to pursue its operations has always been viewed as central to the democratic process”. One can make of this assertion that freedom is a tool that the press can trade on to carry on its operation. And this according to McNair is important to the democratic process.

### **The Ethiopian Media Setting**

Being considerate of the aforementioned explication, informants were asked whether the private media in Ethiopia are functioning in an environment where they can, at least to a certain extent, play democratic roles. Not all the informants have a similar kind of perception about the free press environment. With regards to this, the informants can be categorized into three groups according to their views; (1) informants who believe that there is no favorable free press environment which allows the private media to have a contribution to democracy, (2) informants who believe that there exists a free media setting wherein the private media can have democratic functions without any restriction, and (3) informants who believe that the private media can still play democratic roles despite the challenges. What makes the second category different from the third is that those who are in the third category admit that the media setting is not as enabling as it should be while those in the second do not believe so.

According to Temesgen Desalegn, Managing Editor of the defunct *Fetehe* (Newspaper), *Addis Times* (Magazine) and *Lelina* (Newspaper), the media scenario prevailing in Ethiopia today is not favorable in that the political system is not tolerant of publications that make public ideas opposed to the government. Temesgen explains that the government has closed many publications and imprisoned journalists, which created self-censorship and it does not want to see

private media. Therefore, he asserts ‘the private media could not play the democratic roles they ought to play’ (Temesgen Desalegn. Personal interview. May 2013).

Opposed to Temesgen’s idea, Desta Tesfaw, Director of EBA, says ‘no matter whether the opinion is right or wrong, the right to freely express ones idea is being respected in Ethiopia these days unlike its history, which we can take it as one of the blessings that our democracy has brought’ (Personal interview. March 2013). One can understand from this that Desta believes that there exists a free environment wherein the private media could play democratic roles.

According to Mekuria Mekasha, democratic process is not an impeccable process in that there are many unavoidable vicissitudes. Albeit, he argues that the private media could play democratic roles given the narrow field they are provided with (Personal interview. April 2013). In the same vein, Woldu Yemessel, CEO of Fana Broadcasting Corporate S.C., points out three opportunities that are helping create an enabling environment; the legal framework, the opportunity to grow as a business organization, and a public that is willing to listen to and take the private media as an alternative voice. Woldu believes that though there are these opportunities, there are problems when it comes to the implementation. According to him, as long as there is a legal framework and a receptive public, the private media could have evolved into a professionally strong and profitable media through challenging the government. However, he explains that they failed to do so for they expect incubation from the government (Woldu Yemessel. Personal interview. April 2013).

It is evident in the above assertions that though there are challenges the private media cannot escape from, they can still play their democratic roles. As it is pointed out in chapter 2 of this paper, the four major democratic roles that media in a given political system could play are

monitorial role, facilitative role, radical role, and collaborative role. For the private media in Ethiopia to play these roles, the environment albeit not free to the extent that it could be said free, could be seen as one through which they can discharge the roles to a certain extent. The challenges of the private media will later be discussed in this chapter.

### **4.2.3. Democratic Roles: Carried Out or Neglected?**

This section discusses how the Ethiopian private media are playing the democratic roles that they are expected to play. It separately looks at the roles and discusses whether the private media are playing them or not.

#### **4.2.3.1. Monitoring Maladministration**

According to Ansah (1988) if the media in democracy do not take watchdog journalism as one of their roles, ‘there is a great likelihood of the government falling into complacency, unresponsiveness, and irresponsibility’ (p. 13). According to Informant 4, the Ethiopian private media is playing this role. However, there are problems that he observes in this regard,

Yes, they play this role, but mostly a few of them gravitate towards a tone of antagonism. For them it is just disclosing wrong doings, but the manner is not to reveal [wrong deeds of] the government. It is insulting and humiliating the government. Because of this, the reader would not get the heart of the information. Nevertheless, some play this role (Informant 4. Personal interview. April 2013).

Informant 4 also observes that the private media have fear when playing this role because they do not know what revealing the government’s wrong deeds would result in. He added that even

those who dare to write about it could not get the information. One problem, in addition to what informant 4 points out, that could be discerned with reference to monitorial role is the institutional capacity of the private media in Ethiopia does not allow them to invest more on such functions. Identifying a problem and looking for evidences to back the argument and finally revealing it would cost them more resources when compared to gathering and reporting simple facts.

For Mushe, the private media are not fully playing this role owing to challenges ranging from the government's unwillingness to give information to the poor or no recognition of the monitorial role of the media by the government. The findings of the survey unveil that 61.1 percent of the surveyed journalists believe that the government does not recognize the democratic roles, which happened to be hindering the private media from living up to their democratic roles in general.

Mushe contends that due to these problems, the reports of the private media happened to be insignificant and are based on hearsay (Mushe Semu. Personal interview. April 2013). Desta Tesfaw agrees with Mushe that the private media are not playing monitorial role to the extent that they are expected to play. However, he observes a different reason. According to him, for the media to play a watchdog role, they need to be free of rent seeking. He believes that the private media in Ethiopia are not free of rent seeking, are influenced by the sponsorship they get indirectly and do not prioritize problems to focus on. Therefore, he argues, 'there is only a start that a few of the media report on problems of good governance which suggests that they need to do a lot more' (Personal interview. March 2013).

According to Mekuria, for the relationship of the private media with the political elite is very poor and the kind of democratic exercise that is existing in Ethiopia today is not a liberal

democratic tradition, the private media could not play a watchdog role (Personal interview. April 2013).

It has been discussed in the second chapter of this study that when playing watchdog journalism, the media, according to Bennett and Serrin (2005) do:

(1) independent scrutiny by the press of the activities of government, business, and other public institutions, with an aim toward (2) documenting, questioning, and investigating those activities, in order to (3) provide publics and officials with timely information on issues of public concern. (p. 169)

The Ethiopian private media, however, are found to be institutionally and economically weak to go through the process that watchdog journalism requires as Bennett and Serrin (2005) point out. At the same time, the environment where they function in does not allow them to fully discharge this role in that the government does not recognize watchdog role as a role that the private media should play. This, as the above assertion by the informants, resulted in self-censorship.

Thus, the above discussion unveils that the private media in Ethiopia are far from one of the democratic roles they should play—monitorial role. This is due to both internal and external factors. The internal factors include misunderstanding of the role itself, and professional and economic weaknesses that result in insignificant and fragmented reports based on hearsay. The external factors on the other hand include the difficulty to access information for such purpose from government officials, and the poor recognition that the government gives to such a role, which results in journalists' self-censorship.

#### **4.2.3.2. Facilitating Debate and Discussion**

According to James Curran (2005, p. 126), the media is considered to be an autonomous space that is distinct from society wherein ideas struggle for supremacy and “reason-based consensus emerges that guides the public direction of societies.” When we examine the Ethiopian private media in light of this premise, the finding unveils that they are not properly carrying out a role of facilitating discussion and debate. According to Woldu, the media institutions in Ethiopia are not yet institutions that serve as a ‘marketplace for contending views’. He observes, “Some private newspapers do not take this as their role. They rather provide information either opposing or supporting the government. There is no thinking that the society would benefit from the provision of various ideas in the form of debate and discussion” (Personal interview. April 2013).

Along the same line, Getachew, OP-ED page editor of *Fortune* (English weekly) newspaper, comments that the Ethiopian private media in general are not properly managing this role owing to the inherent tradition prevailing in the nation that does not promote discussion and debate on the basis of issues. On the contrary, Mekuria contends that there are media that are facilitating discussion. He adds,

Recently, some newspapers are becoming a pamphlet like paper simply focusing on propaganda and silly contents. However, other private media create a forum for the society to make its voices heard and express its stands. Therefore, I believe, that though it is not to the extent that they ought to play, they are playing a facilitative role.

It is palpable now that most of the informants agree that it could only be said there is an attempt in discharging the role of facilitating discussions by the private media, which still needs to be improved to claim that they are playing such a role. The reason for this, according to Woldu, is that the political economy of the country itself is not transformed into a stage amenable to battling with ideas. Furthermore, he points out that contending political parties in the country do not have a culture of debating, which has also contributed to the poor functioning of the private media with reference to their facilitative role.

Writing about the role of the African media in the democratic process, Ansah (1988) argues that when one discusses the role of mass communication in the democratic process, “it is important to recall the commonplace observation that the press system of any country is a reflection of the social, political and economic environment in which it operates” (p. 12). He broadly explains that since democracy is generally characterized by the participation of citizens and the choices provided, there are only a handful of African countries that could be called democratic.

According to Ansah (1988), Africa is dominated by single-party regimes without the provision of a significant choice of leadership. Therefore, he concluded that having such environment, expecting the press to be an active role player in the provision of forum for debate is ‘unrealistic.’ Ethiopia is no different from many African countries in that the political culture still does not allow pluralism to triumph. Ansah’s argument clearly confirms that the political system of Ethiopia where debate and discussion on the basis of issues is strongly detested is one of the factors that contributed to the poor functioning of facilitative role of the private media.

According to Dennis McQuail (1983, p. 90), one of the assumptions of social responsibility theory of the press is the view that the media should accept a responsibility to discharge essential

functions as regards to democratic politics through the provision of a platform for a multifarious of ideas. This function happened to be neglected by the Ethiopian private media, which implicates that they failed to stand as socially responsible media with reference to the facilitative or forum function of the media.

#### **4.2.3.3. Focusing on the Society's Problems**

It is set out in chapter two that one of the contributions that media could have to the development of a democratic culture is the coverage of issues pertaining to societal problems thereby influencing policy makers. The very basic assumption of the radical role is that journalism or the media in a certain democratic society would contribute to the normal functioning of the society in a way that it discharges a radical role thereby ensuring that the society's problems, which are referred to as 'injustices' are never and ever enduring (Christians, Glasser, McQuail, Nordenstreng, & White, 2009).

With reference to this role, Desta argues that the private media in Ethiopia are not playing it. He says,

If we ask how many of the private media have the initiative to play such a role, most of them do not have. One can hardly name a medium that focuses on pointing out the various societal problems and challenges and make them agenda to influence policy making (Personal interview. March 2013).

On the contrary, Getachew observes that if there is a role, which the private media in Ethiopia, both print and electronic, are playing in a better way, it is the radical role. According to him, this is due to the media's close attachment to the society, which makes the production of stories on

societal problems easy when compared to the other roles. Amare also backs this idea referring to *Reporter* that they are playing such a role. However, the problem one can observe in this regard, according to Getachew, is that the media simply focus on disclosing the problems for the sake of disclosing. He contends that they have limitations when it comes to taking the issues from societal level to policy level. This clearly shows that the private media are playing a radical role but with a gap that still needs to be filled.

#### **4.2.3.4. Collaborating With the Government**

The informants unanimously agree that the Ethiopian private media are good at collaborating with the government when such collaboration is needed. Desta mentions one incident at which, he believes, the private media played its collaborative role—the construction of the great Ethiopian renaissance dam. Nevertheless, according to him, not all the private media are playing collaborative role. “Rather, there are some media that play a directly opposite role” (Personal interview. March 2013).

According to Mushe and many other informants, history unveils that the Ethiopian private media played a great role in collaborating with the government during the Ethio-Eritrean war. For the current study only focuses on the private media functioning in the period since 2005, the Ethio-Eritrean war could not be considered when evaluating the collaborative role of the current private media, though it helps understand how collaborative media could be.

For Mekuria, the private media is playing this role very habitually unlike the other roles. Similarly, Temesgen Desalegn, referring to *Addis Times* (a defunct Amharic weekly magazine), asserts that the private media collaborates with the government. He explains that since it is the

people who would be the beneficiary of the construction of the dam is for the people, they have played a collaborative role (Personal interview. May 2013).

According to Christians, Glasser, McQuail, Nordenstreng, & White (2009) collaborative role of the media is overlooked. Though the finding does not suggest anything as to how often the Ethiopian private media collaborate with the government, it revealed that they, at least, do not overlook collaborative role.

Thus, it could be understood from the above discussion that the private media are playing collaborative role better than the rest of the three roles. This is due to the nature of the role in that it does not require the media a strong institutional capacity and it is a very friendly area where the relationship with the government is very smooth specially compared to the monitorial and radical roles.

#### **4.2.4. Covering Election**

According to Lange (2004, p. 209), the media have an indispensable role during elections in that they cover the political process, and also play a part in shaping and contributing to public opinion formation. He further perceives that the large electorates are mostly dependent on the media for information about the former achievements of the candidates, their future program, and the current debating themes. As far as the media's informational function during election times is concerned, the finding of the survey proves that the public relies on the media to get political information (the mean value for this item is 3.95, which is close to the scale 'Agree'). Moreover, the survey finding clearly shows that the political parties in Ethiopia are found to be

reliant upon the private media (according to 89% of the respondents) in order to make their voices heard or in other words to get across their message to the public.

The theory of media politics also gives a theoretical role for journalists in the political process that Zaller (1999) calls 'media politics'. Of the three actors in media politics, he makes media or and journalists one actor. Thus, it could be argued that elections, in addition to the normal political process that takes place every day, are situations at which media could largely emerge as an actor in the political sphere. Zaller (1999) contends that the interest of journalists in media politics is not only providing political information but also holding politicians accountable. Being considerate of this theoretical assertion, informants were asked what role the private media in Ethiopia are playing during election times.

According to Mekuria, the private media always give a wide coverage for elections. He observes that when the media play such a role, the politicians have a desire to use the media for their purposes. Supporting the claim that the private media mostly gravitates towards the opposition during election times, Mekuria explains why it happens,

In Ethiopia, the private press appears to be focusing on the opposition political parties [during elections.] The reason for this is that the political parties do not have their own outlets through which they can advertise their political programs. Therefore, the only option they have is to go to the private media and the media provide them with newspaper columns (Personal interview. April 2013).

What is more, according to informant 4, the private media during the 2010 national election were focusing on echoing the voices of the opposition political parties, as there were claims that the parties were not able to campaign and the air times allotted to them was very limited.

Going along with Mekuria, Woldu asserts that the private media are more or less carrying out a function of educating voters. However, he points out that in terms of critically analyzing and then letting the public know the pros and cons of different political programs of candidates, the media have a very limited role. This, according to him, is due to the professional incapability of journalists to do so. By the same token, Getachew believes that the private media's policy understanding is very limited in that the media institutions do not have the human resource capacity as well as the skill base that would enable them to actively engage in the execution of their function during elections. By journalists who are actors in media politics, Zaller (1999) referred to journalists who are specialists in covering national politics albeit he acknowledges the role that local journalists could play. It is evident in Getachew's assertion that the private media journalists in Ethiopia are not specialists in covering national politics, which reveals that though they are ideally given a role in the political sphere, they failed to proactively engage in the function of creating a politically informed citizenry.

One can make of the above observations that the private media are focusing on news coverage of elections and are gravitating towards the opposition political parties. This fact implies that the private media, as an actor in the political process as explicated in Zaller's (1999) media politics theory, failed to fully carry out the role of holding politicians accountable to the citizens. Hence, the finding suggests that they still need to work on forming a citizenry that is able to make informed choices.

#### **4.2.5. The Private Media with Government and Political Parties**

The relationship between the private media and the government is one of the factors that define the democratic roles. It could be argued that the more favorable the relationship, the more successful the private media will be in playing the roles. The finding of the survey attests that the major characteristics of the relationship are; (1) government officials are reluctant to give any kind of information for journalists of the private media, (2) officials intimidate private media journalists based on stories that are critical about them, and (3) the government takes unnecessary administrative measures than tolerating and providing counter arguments.

According to Getachew, the relationship has both good and bad sides. The good side, he explains, is that there is at least a mutual understanding of their roles—the government understands the private media’s roles and the private media understand the government’s roles. According to him, the bad side of the relationship is mainly manifested when the understanding comes to practical terms. One problem he observes in this regard is that the government directly or indirectly creates challenges so that the private media cannot successfully carryout their watchdog functions.

For Solomon, senior editor of *Addis Admass* (Amharic Weekly), the relationship is not that antagonistic but is characterized by fear. By fear, Solomon refers to the private media in that they sometimes refrain from reporting on some issues that they think would result in problems. Such a fear is what is most popularly expressed as ‘self-censorship’.

According to Kumar and Jones (2005, p. 227), the actual relationship between media and government is acrimonious which is far from what the operating model suggests—cooperation.

The Ethiopian case thus could, thus, not be described as a relationship that is characterized by cooperation.

Kumar and Jones (2005) assert that the media-government relationship has two manifestations; individual or personal level relationship wherein individual politicians relate with individual reporters and institutional level relationship wherein the media organizations relate with the government. With reference to the personal level relationship, the informants comment that it is very unfavorable in that government officials are sometimes unwilling to give information for private media journalists; even there were times at which private media journalists were not allowed to attend government press conferences. The survey results have also showed that 75 percent of the respondents agreed that government officials are reluctant to give any information for private media journalists.

With reference to the institutional level relationship, Woldu says, “the government is pessimist towards the private media. It keeps them far away for it believes that all what they do is hate speech.” He strongly argues that the government should not take administrative measures rather than providing counter arguments. Mekuria on his part concludes, “The private media and the government are skeptical of one another and the government has not been open to private media journalists for information before the years 2008 and 2009.” According to Mekuria, such a relationship happens because the government sees the private media as enemies.

Ansah confirms this. Observing the then media situation of Africa, Ansah (1988) contends that the relationship between has been characterized by tension and conflict. The reason for this, he observes, is “the press has either been cowed into submission or it has become an organ of the ruling party. The finding of this study affirms that the unfavorable relationship that existed

between the private media and the government seems to have happened because of the first reason that Ansah stated—the press has been cowed into submission.

It is apparent now that this unfavorable relationship contributes to the poor functioning of the private media's democratic roles.

As the media have a relationship with government, they have a relationship with political parties too. However, for political parties are not yet office holders in the Ethiopian context, they could not be as influential as the government is. Both the media and political parties have their own interests according to Zaller (1999). The goal of journalists, he documents, is “to produce stories that attract big audiences and that emphasize the independent and significant voice of journalists” while for politicians it is to “use mass communication to mobilize the public support they need to win elections and to get their programs enacted when in office” (p. 2).

Therefore, in the struggle for attracting audiences and promoting independent voice, journalists use politicians as one of their news sources. Moreover, politicians need the media to address their public and get support. However, it is not all the time that there exists a friendly environment between journalists (media) and politicians.

According to Frew Abebe, Editor-in-Chief of *Sendek* (Amharic weekly) newspaper, political parties in Ethiopia are very friendly as long as the private media is not critical about them. This according to him makes the opposition political parties similar with the government (Personal interview. April 2013).

On the contrary, Mushe contends that there is a good relationship where the private media are open to the political parties to express their opinion. Mushe refers to his own experience and

explains how favorable it is, “within two years, I have engaged with the private media for more than 200 times, which shows that I had a good opportunity and we have a good relationship.”

According to Muluken Yewondwossen, Editor-in-Chief of *Capital* newspaper (English weekly), the media’s relationship with the political parties is dependent upon the individual medium. He states that there are newspapers that have a good relationship with the political parties and there are some that do not have. However, he asserts that it is relatively friendly.

It could be discerned that though there would be inexorable inconveniences, the private media’s relationship with political parties is somehow friendly in that the parties are reliant on the media to address their target public and the media find it easy to access the political parties than unlike the government.

#### **4.2.6. Challenges of the Private Media**

The interview findings show that the private media are not properly carrying out the democratic roles they are expected to play. This confirms that there are challenges that are hindering the normal functioning of the media. The survey finding also confirms that restrictive laws, lack of support from the government in the form of subsidy and tax exemption and the weak development of private printing enterprises are the major challenges of the private media with reference to their democratic roles. The informants have also identified various challenges that could be grouped in to two: internal challenges and external challenges.

Internal challenges are the ones that stem from the media institutions themselves. According to Desta, when the private media are established, they do not start with the knowledge about the job because of which they will either vanish or sustain in the market with their poor functioning.

Woldu adds another internal challenge, which is a very weak development of journalistic professionalism. According to him, the reasons for this are the very insignificant payment journalists are offered and the setting that created in the minds of others that journalism is a disreputable profession. The institutional arrangement of the private media is also weak that they cannot withstand some challenges.

According to Amare, there are many external challenges. These are, the media as a business is not provided support from the government, and government officials do not give information for journalists, especially of the private media. Woldu also agrees that the information system is weak in that government officials are unwilling to address private media journalists whereas they are willing to address journalists of the government media.

Amare points out another external challenge with regards to the monitorial role of the media. He says, “When you use your right and criticize the government, they will accuse you of defamation than admitting that you are enjoying your rights.” The survey finding also confirms that 61.6 percent of the respondents agreed that the government does not recognize the democratic roles of the media, which happened to be obstructing the private media from living up to the expectation.

According to Wondwosen, president of EFPJA, the political culture that we inherited from the previous generation in which one sees the other as an enemy for the only reason that s/he has a different idea is the biggest challenge. He believes that the media is vulnerable to instrumentalization by such inimical tradition. What one can make of these explanations and observations of the respondents and the informants is that the private media are being challenged more by the external environment compared to the internal challenges.

## Chapter Five

### V. Conclusion and Recommendations

#### 5.1. Conclusion

This research attempted to examine what actual democratic roles the private media in Ethiopia are playing and tried to identify the challenges they are facing in the course of discharging their democratic roles. The study has employed a triangulation of quantitative and qualitative methods. Accordingly, a survey of 40 private media journalists was conducted to assess the journalists' perception towards their democratic roles. In-depth interviews were also conducted with 13 informants selected from different media organizations, a political party, and a journalists' association.

With reference to journalists' perception and understanding of their democratic roles, the finding reveals that they are well aware of the roles and believe that media should play the democratic roles of monitoring maladministration, facilitating debate, and discussion, disclosing various societal problems and collaborating with the government at times when such collaboration is needed.

However, when it comes to the actual practice of these roles, the finding shows that the private media are not properly carrying out them. The private media in Ethiopia are far from one of the democratic roles they should play—monitorial role. And this is due to internal and external factors. The internal factors are misunderstanding of the role and professional and economic weaknesses. The external factors are the difficulty to access information for such purpose from government officials, and the poor or no recognition that the government gives for such a role.

As far as facilitating debate and discussion is concerned, the finding unveiled that the private media are attempting to play carryout such a function. This, according to the finding, is due to the prevailing political culture that does not promote debate and discussion on the basis of issues among the public, the political elite, the academics, and the government. With reference to the radical role, the private media seem to be good at it but they are found to be focusing on disclosing societal problems for the sake of disclosing. However, when they are examined in terms of bringing the issue up to policy level, the finding revealed that they have limitations.

According to the finding, collaborative role is found to be a role that the private media are playing better than the rest of the three roles. The reason for this happened to be the nature of the role in that it does not require the media a strong institutional capacity and it is a very friendly area where the relationship with the government is very smooth specially compared to the monitorial and radical roles.

In relation to the journalists' view of the perception of the public towards the democratic roles of the private media, the finding showed that journalists believed that though the public relies on the private media to get political information, it does not support the media in the struggle for discharging democratic roles. What is more, according to the surveyed journalists, the public labels the private media as 'allies of the government' or as 'against the government' and overlook their democratic roles.

The research has attempted to look at the relationship that media have with the government and political parties. As regards to this, the finding depicted that the relationship between the private media and the government is unfavorable in that government officials are sometimes unwilling to give information for private media journalists, the government keeps the private media far

away for it believes that all what they do is hate speech, and the government directly or indirectly creates challenges so that the private media cannot carry out its watchdog function. As to the relationship between the private media and the political parties, the finding showed that it is not as unfavorable as it is between the media and the government.

With respect to the challenges that the private media are facing when playing democratic roles, the finding revealed that there are both internal and external challenges. The internal ones are the poor level of journalistic professionalism, economic weakness, and economic and political instrumentalization. While, the external challenges are lack of support from the government in terms of tax exemptions and subsidies, the weak development of private printing enterprises and the unwillingness of government officials to give information for private media journalists.

## **5.2. Recommendations**

It is evidently true that the private media are not properly carrying out their democratic roles, owing to their own weaknesses and other external challenges. It is the researcher's recommendation that the private media should embark on a new set of goals that are structured in a way that contributes to the development of a democratic culture in the country. The private media should also be socially responsible in that they promote discussion and debate, serve as a monitoring agent for the society, and rigorously disclose various problems the society faces.

The findings also suggest that the government should not turn a blind eye on the private media for a system that exists without media could not be answerable to the citizens. Therefore, the government should, in the first place, make its officials and the structure itself answerable to the information needs of the media and the society as well. As the media industry in Ethiopia is very

young and very weak as well, the government should support it so that it can stand by its own as a democratic institution the country deserves to have.

The private media should have the commitment and the strength to withstand the challenges and keep on pursuing their roles. In order for them to be strong enough and evolve as credible institutions, creating a professional association would be important.

## References

- American Newspaper Association Foundation. (1987). *Speaking of a Free Press: 200 Years of Notable Quotations About Press Freedoms*.
- Ansah, A.V. (1988). In Search of a Role for the African Media in the Democratic Process. *African Media Review*, 2(2), 1-16.
- Arblaster, A. (2002). *Democracy* (4<sup>th</sup> ed.). Buckingham: Open University Press.
- Ashenafi Gudeta. (2012). *The Framing of Political Parties by the Ethiopian Print Media in the 2010 Parliamentary Election*. Unpublished master's thesis, Addis Ababa University, Addis Ababa.
- Baran, S. J. & Davis, D. K. (2012). *Mass Communication Theory: Foundation, Ferment, and Future* (6<sup>th</sup> ed.). Boston: Wadsworth.
- Bennett, L. W. & Serrin, W. (2005). The Watchdog Role. In Overholster, G. & Jamieson, K. H. (Eds.), *The Press* (pp. 120-140). New York: Oxford University Press, Inc.
- Bennett, W. L. & Entman, M. (2005). *Mediated Politics: Communication in the Future of Democracy*. New York: Cambridge University Press. (Original work published 2001)
- Birch, A. H. (2001). *The Concepts and Theories of Modern Democracy* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). 11 New Fetter Lane, London: Routledge.
- Birhanu Olana. (2006). *The Professional Orientation of Journalists in Ethiopia: Survey of Their Self-Perception*. Unpublished master's thesis, Addis Ababa University, Addis Ababa.
- Birhanu Olana. (2009). *Journalism in the Context of Ethiopian Mass Media: Essays, Researches, and Reflections*. Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

- Burton, G. (2002). *More Than Meets the Eye: An Introduction to Media Studies* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.). London: Arnold.
- Burton, G. (2005). *Media and Society: A Critical Perspective*. Berkshire, England: Open University Press.
- Christians, C. G., Glasser, T. L., McQuail, D., Nordenstreng, K. & White, R. A. (Eds.). *Normative Theories of the Media: Journalism in Democratic Societies*. Illinois: Illinois University Press.
- Ciprut, J. V. (Ed.) (2008). *Democratizations: Comparisons, Confrontations, and Contrasts*. 55 Hayward Street, Cambridge: The MIT Press.
- Commission on Freedom of the Press. (1947). *A Free and Responsible Press; A General Report on Mass communication: Newspapers, Radio, Motion Pictures, Magazines and Books*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Condorcet, M. (2003). On Elections. In Dahl, R.A., Shapiro, I & Cheibub, J. A. (Eds.), *The Democracy Source Book* (pp. 315-316). London: The MIT Press.
- Cunningham, F. (2002) *Theories of Democracy: A critical introduction*. London: Routledge.
- Curran, J. (1997). Rethinking the Media as a Public Sphere. In Dahlgren, P. & Sparks, C. (Eds.), *Communication and Citizenship: Journalism and the Public Sphere* (pp. 27-57). London: Routledge. (Original work published 1991)
- Curran, J. (2002). *Media and Power*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Curran J. (2005). What Democracy Requires of the Media. In Overholster, G. & Jamieson, K. H. (Eds.), *The Press* (pp. 120-140). New York: Oxford University Press, Inc.

- Dahl, R. (1998). *On Democracy*. London: Yale University Press.
- Dahl, R. (2006). *A Preface to Democracy*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.  
(Original work published 1956)
- Dahl, R.A., Shapiro, I. & Cheibub, J. A. (Eds.). (2003). *The Democracy Source Book*.  
London: The MIT Press.
- Diamond, L. (2003). Defining and Developing Democracy. In Dahl, R.A., Shapiro, I &  
Cheibub, J. A. (Eds.), *The Democracy Source Book* (pp. 29-39). London: The MIT Press.
- Elster, J. (1999). *Deliberative Democracy*. Trumpington Street, Cambridge: Cambridge  
University Press. (Original work published 1998)
- Ettema, J. (2007). Journalism as Reason-Giving: Deliberative Democracy, Institutional  
Accountability, and the News Media's Mission. *Political Communication*, 24, 143-160.
- Grugel, J. (2002). *Democratization: A Critical Introduction*. New York: PALGRAVE.
- Gurevitch, M. & Blumler, J. G. (1995). Political Communication Systems and Democratic  
Values. In Lichtenberg, J. (Ed.), *Democracy and the Mass Media* (pp. 269-289).  
Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. (Original work published 1990)
- Habermas, J. (1974). The Public Sphere: An Encyclopedia Article (1964). Lennox, S. & Lennox,  
F. (Trans.). *New German Critique*, 3, 49-55.
- Habermas, J. (1991). *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*. Burger, T. (Trans.).  
Cambridge and Massachusetts: The MIT Press. (Original work Published 1962)
- Hallelujah Lulie. (2008). *A Political History of the Private Press in Democratic Ethiopia 1991-  
2007*. Unpublished Master's thesis, Addis Ababa University, Addis Ababa.

- Hallin, D. C. & Giles, R. (2005). Press and Democracies. In Overholster, G. & Jamieson, K. H. (Eds.), *The Press* (pp. 4-16). New York: Oxford University Press, Inc.
- Hallin, D. C. & Mancini, P. (2004). *Comparing Media Systems: Three Models of Media and Politics*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Held, D. (2008). *Models of Democracy* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.). 65 Bridge Street, Cambridge: Polity Press.  
(Original work published 2006)
- Jensen, K. & Jankowski, N.W. (Eds.). (1991). *A Handbook of Qualitative Methodologies for Mass Communications Research*. USA: Routledge.
- Kasoma, Francis P. (2000). *The Press and Multiparty Politics in Africa*. University of Tampere.
- Kovach, B. & Rosenstiel, T. (2007). *The Elements of Journalism: What News People Should Know and the Public Should Expect* (Rev. ed.). New York: Three Rivers Press.
- Kumar, M. J. & Jones, A. (2005). Government and the Press: Issues and Trends. In Overholster, G. & Jamieson, K. H. (Eds.), *The Press* (pp. 226-247). New York: Oxford University Press, Inc.
- Lange, B. (2004). Media and Elections: Some Reflections and Recommendations. In Lange, B. & Ward, D. (Eds.), *The Media and Elections: A Handbook and Comparative Study* (pp. 205-231). Mahwah, New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc., Publishers.
- McConnell, P. & Becker, L. B. (2002, July). *The Role of Media in Democratization*. Paper presented to the Political Communication Section of the International Association for Media and Communication Research at the Barcelona Conference, University of Georgia.

McNair, B. (2000). *Journalism and Democracy: An Evaluation of the Political Public Sphere*.  
New York: Routledge.

McNair, B. (2011). *An Introduction to Political Communication (Fifth edition)*. New York:  
Routledge.

McQuail, D. (Ed.), *McQuail's Reader in Mass Communication Theory*. London:  
SAGE Publications. (Original work Published 2002)

McQuail, D. (1983). *Mass Communication Theory*. London: SAGE Publications.

Merritt, D. & McCombs, M. (2004). *The Two W's of Journalism: The Why and What of Public  
Affairs Reporting*. Mahwah: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc., Publishers.

Miller, Robert L. & Brewer, John D. (2003). *The A-Z of Social Research*. London: Sage  
Publications Ltd.

Nayyar, D. (2007). *Modern Mass Communication: Concepts and Processes*. Delhi: Oxford Book  
Company.

Nerone, J. C. (2006) Social Responsibility Theory. In McQuail, D. (Ed.), *McQuail's Reader in  
Mass Communication Theory* (pp. 183-193). London: SAGE Publications. (Original work  
Published 2002)

Netsanet Yilma. (2007). *A Critical Analysis of Ethiopian Broadcast Media Regulation 1991-  
2007*. Unpublished master's thesis, Addis Ababa University, Addis Ababa.

Newcomb, H.M. (1991). Media Institutions: The Creation of Television Drama. In Jensen, K. &  
Jankowski, N.W. (Eds.), *A Handbook of Qualitative Methodologies for Mass  
Communications Research* (pp. 93-107). USA: Routledge.

- Nyamnjoh, F. B. 2005. *Africa's Media: Democracy and the Politics of Belonging*. Pretoria: UNISA Press.
- Overholster, G. & Jamieson, K. H. (Eds.). *The Press*. New York: Oxford University Press, Inc.
- Pauseweng, S., Tranvoll, K. & Aalen, L. (Eds.). (2002). *Ethiopia Since the Derg: A Decade of Pretension and Performance*. London: Zed Books Ltd.
- Pauseweng, S., Tranvoll, K. & Aalen, L. (2002a). Democratization in Ethiopia: Some Notes on Theory and Methodology. In Pauseweng, S., Tranvoll, K. & Aalen, L. (Eds.), *Ethiopia Since the Derg: A Decade of Pretension and Performance* (pp. 1-25). London: Zed Books Ltd.
- Pauseweng, S., Tranvoll, K. & Aalen, L. (2002b). A Process of Democratization or Control? The Historical and Political Context. In Pauseweng, S., Tranvoll, K. & Aalen, L. (Eds.), *Ethiopia Since the Derg: A Decade of Pretension and Performance* (pp. 26-45). London: Zed Books Ltd.
- Pauseweng, S., Tranvoll, K. & Aalen, L. (2002c). Conclusion: Democracy Unfulfilled? In Pauseweng, S., Tranvoll, K. & Aalen, L. (Eds.), *Ethiopia since the Derg: A Decade of Pretension and Performance* (pp. 230-244). London: Zed Books Ltd.
- Potter, D. (2006). *Handbook of Independent Journalism*. U.S. Department of State, Bureau of International Information Programs.
- Proclamation No. 34/92. *A proclamation to Provide for the Freedom of the Press*. The Federal Negarit Gazeta of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia.
- Proclamation No. 590/2008. *A Freedom of the Mass Media and Access to Information Proclamation*. Federal Negarit Gazeta of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia.

- Rozumilowicz, B. (2002). Democratic Change: A Theoretical Perspective. In Price, M., Rozumilowicz, B. & Verhulst, S. (Eds.). *Media Reform: Democratizing the Media, Democratizing the State* (pp. 9-26). New Fetter Lane, London: Routledge.
- Rozumilowicz, B. & Verhulst, S. (Eds.). (2002) *Media Reform: Democratizing the Media, Democratizing the State*. New Fetter Lane, London: Routledge.
- Rubin, R., Rubin, A., Haridakis, P., & Piele, L. (2010). *Research methods: Strategies and sources* (7<sup>th</sup> ed.). Boston: Wadsworth Cengage Learning
- Ruane, J. R. (2005). *Essentials of Research Methods: A Guide to Social Science Research*. UK: Blackwell Publishing.
- Sapsford, R. & Jupp, V. (2006). *Data Collection and Analysis* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). London: Sage Publications Ltd. (Original work published 1996)
- Shimelis Bonga. (2000). *Survey of the Private Press in Ethiopia: 1991–1999*. FSS Monograph Series I. Forum for Social Studies, Addis Ababa.
- Shimelis Bonga (2000) *Survey of the private press in Ethiopia: 1991–1999*. FSS monograph series. Addis Ababa: Forum for Social Studies.
- Shin, D. C. (1994,). *Review Article* on the Third Wave of Democratization: A Synthesis and Evaluation of Recent Theory and Research. *World Politics*, 47(1), 135-170
- Siebert, F. S., T. Peterson, and Schramm, W. (1956). *Four Theories of the Press*. Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press.
- Skjerdal, Terje S. (2012). *Competing Loyalties: Journalism Culture in the Ethiopian State Media*. PhD dissertation, University of Oslo.

- Smith, L. (2007). Implications of the 2005 Elections for Ethiopian Citizenship and State Legitimacy. *International Journal of Ethiopian Studies*, 3(1), 53-71
- Strömbäck, J. (2005). In Search of a Standard: Four Model of Democracy and Their Normative Implications for Journalism. *Journalism Studies*, 6(3), 331-345.
- Tesfaye Aaron. (2006). Identity Politics, Citizenship, and Democratization in Ethiopia. *International Journal of Ethiopian Studies*, 2, 55-57
- Tettey, W. (2001). The Media and Democratization in Africa: Contributions, Constraints and Concerns of the Private Press. *Media, Culture & Society*, 23, 5-31.
- Waal, A. (1992). Ethiopia: Transition to What? *World Policy Journal*, 9(4), 719-737.
- Whitehead, L. (2002). *Democratization: Theory and Experience*. New York: Oxford University Press, Inc.
- Wilson, J. (1996). *Understanding Journalism: A Guide to Issues*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Yin, R.K. (2011). *Qualitative Research From Start to Finish*. New York: The Guilford Press.
- Zaller, J. (1999, October). *A Theory of Media Politics: How the Interests of Politicians, Journalists, and Citizens Shape the news*. (Draft). University of Chicago Press.

**Appendices**  
**Appendix I—Questionnaire**

**Addis Ababa University**  
**School of Journalism and Communication**  
**Postgraduate Division**  
**Research Questionnaire**

Dear Respondents,

I am conducting a research on the topic ‘Media and Democracy in Ethiopia: Roles and Challenges of the Private Media since 2005’. Accordingly, this questionnaire is meant to assess the perception of journalists’ towards the democratic roles they are expected to play; to identify the actual democratic roles they are playing, and to find out the challenges they face in pursuing their democratic roles. What is more, questions broadly framed to understand the overall roles and challenges of the private media are included.

For it is only when you provide your genuine answers to all the questions that the research outcome could be genuine and reliable, you are kindly requested to give your honest answers. I assure you that all the information you give in this questionnaire will only be used for the purpose of the research and will be kept anonymous. Thank you for your help!

Part one: Circle your choice

1. Age
  - A. 20-25
  - B. 26-30
  - C. 31-35

D. 36-40

E. 41-50

F. >51

**2. Sex**

A. Male

B. Female

**3. What is your level of Education?**

A. M.A. degree

B. B.A./BSc. Degree

C. Diploma

D. Grade 12 and Below

**4. What is your field of study?**

A. Journalism and Communication

B. Other Social Sciences

C. Natural Sciences

D. Other \_\_\_\_\_

**5. What type of media organization are you working for?**

A. Newspaper

B. Magazine

C. Radio Station

**6. What is your responsibility?**

A. Editor-in-Chief

- B. Deputy Editor-in-Chief
- C. Senior Reporter
- D. Reporter
- E. Other \_\_\_\_\_

7. For how long did you work in this responsibility?

- A. For more than 15 years
- B. 10-15 years
- C. 5-10 years
- D. For less than 5 years

8. Which of the following issues is your focus when writing stories/producing programs?

- A. Social issues
- B. Economic and Business issues
- C. Political issues
- D. Other issues

Part Two:

Your answers in this part are to be given by circling the number of your choice that is provided in front of each question. The choices stand for:

1 = Strongly Disagree

2 = Disagree

3 = Neutral

4 = Agree

5 = Strongly Agree

## 1. Your perception towards the democratic roles of the media

1.1	I am well aware of the democratic roles of the media and I always work to achieve them.	1	2	3	4	5
1.2	Media should serve as a forum for discussions and debates.	1	2	3	4	5
1.3	Media should serve as a watchdog over maladministration or wrong deeds of the government and other powerful institutions.	1	2	3	4	5
1.4	During election times media should not only inform the public regarding the candidates running for office but also aware the public the likely effects of different political platforms.	1	2	3	4	5
1.5	Media should collaborate with the government at times when the country faces problems like natural disaster and war.	1	2	3	4	5
1.6	Media should focus on the deep-rooted social problems and influence the government and other institutions for solutions.	1	2	3	4	5

## 2. What democratic roles are the private media in Ethiopia playing?

2.1	The private media in general are providing a forum for discussion and debate.	1	2	3	4	5
2.2	The private media are fairly representing different views.	1	2	3	4	5
2.3	The private media are serving as a watchdog over the wrong deeds of the government and other powerful institutions.	1	2	3	4	5
2.4	The private media are providing citizens with the necessary information that they need to have on matters pertaining to elections.	1	2	3	4	5
2.5	The private media in Ethiopia are often inclined towards the opposition during election times.	1	2	3	4	5
2.6	The private media disclose various societal problems.	1	2	3	4	5
2.7	The private media are collaborating with the government and other institutions at times when such collaboration is needed (on matters pertaining to national interest).	1	2	3	4	5
2.8	The private media in general are contributing to the democratization process of the country by creating informed citizens that the process	1	2	3	4	5

requires.					
-----------	--	--	--	--	--

### 3. The relationship between the Ethiopian government and the private media

3.1	Is favorable in that the government provides support for the private media.	1	2	3	4	5
3.2	Is unfriendly in that the media attack the government based on bogus claims.	1	2	3	4	5
3.3	Is hostile in that the government takes unnecessary administrative measures than tolerating and providing a counter argument.	1	2	3	4	5
3.4	The private media misuse the information they get from the government.	1	2	3	4	5
3.5	Government officials are reluctant to give any kind of information for journalists of the private media.	1	2	3	4	5
3.6	The private media do not want to entertain the views of the government on different issues.	1	2	3	4	5
3.7	Government officials often intimidate journalists of the private media based on stories that are critical about the officials.	1	2	3	4	5

### 4. The relationship between the private media and political parties in Ethiopia

4.1	The private media have a good working relationship with political parties.	1	2	3	4	5
4.2	The political parties often rely on the private media in order to make their voices heard.	1	2	3	4	5
4.3	The private media do not focus on showing the public the pros and cons of political programs of the political parties.	1	2	3	4	5
4.4	The political parties give an indirect financial assistance to the private media.	1	2	3	4	5
4.5	The private media always tilt towards the opposition political parties in their reporting.	1	2	3	4	5

## 5. The Perception of the Public towards the democratic roles of the private media

5.1	The public understands the democratic roles of the media and promote them.	1	2	3	4	5
5.2	The public is reluctant to give information as to what problems it is facing.	1	2	3	4	5
5.3	The public does not want the media to play their democratic roles. It rather wants to read/listen to entertainment contents.	1	2	3	4	5
5.4	The public participates in different discussions and debates that the private media organizes.	1	2	3	4	5
5.5	The public relies on the media to get political information.	1	2	3	4	5
5.6	The public labels the private media as 'allies of the government' or as 'against the government' and overlook their democratic roles.	1	2	3	4	5
5.7	The public supports the media in the struggle for discharging democratic roles.	1	2	3	4	5

## 6. The challenges that the private media face when trying to discharge their democratic roles

6.1	There are restrictive laws that do not give the private media a chance to play their democratic roles.	1	2	3	4	5
6.2	The government does not support the media industry by providing subsidies and tax exemptions.	1	2	3	4	5
6.3	The level of Journalistic professionalism is very poor.	1	2	3	4	5
6.4	The government does not recognize the democratic roles of the private media.	1	2	3	4	5
6.5	Access to information from a public body, albeit granted through proclamation, is still in a very poor stage.	1	2	3	4	5
6.6	The private media are economically weak that they cannot fully discharge their democratic roles.	1	2	3	4	5
6.7	The development of private printing enterprises is very weak.	1	2	3	4	5
6.8	Other: _____					



## Appendix—II

### List of Informants

1. **Desta Tesfaw:** Director of the *Ethiopian Broadcast Authority*
2. **Muluken Yewondwossen:** Editor-in-Chief of *Capital* newspaper
3. **Mushe Semu:** President of *Ethiopian Democratic Party*
4. **Informant 4:** Editor-in-Chief of a newspaper
5. **Frew Abebe:** Editor-in-Chief of *Sendek* newspaper
6. **Amare Aregawi:** General Manager of *The Reporter* (Amharic and English) newspaper
7. **Woldu Yemessel:** Chief Executive Officer of *Fana Broadcasting Corporate*
8. **Mekuria Mekasha:** Assistant Professor at AAU, *School of Journalism and Communication*
9. **Getachew T. Alemu:** OP-ED editor of *Fortune* Newspaper
10. **Wondwosen:** President of *EFPJA*
11. **Temesgen Desalegn:** Managing Editor of the defunct *Fetehe* (Newspaper), *Addis Times* (Magazine) and *Lelina* (Newspaper).
12. **Solomon Gebregziabher:** Senior Editor of *Addis Admas* newspaper
13. **Eshetu Geletu:** Vice President of *ENJU*

## **Appendix—III**

### **Interview guide for the informants**

1. What does your media organization stand for?
2. What roles could you play, as a private newspaper/radio station functioning in Ethiopia, in the democratization of the country?
3. What democratic roles have you been playing since your establishment?
4. How do you cover elections?
5. How do you express the relationship that you have with the Ethiopian Government?
6. What relationship do you have with political parties in Ethiopia?
7. As a newspaper that functioned before 2005, what changes did you observe after the 2005 election?
8. Do you think that the Ethiopian private newspapers in general are carrying out their democratic roles? How?
9. How do you explain the private newspaper's role as a watchdog over the deeds of the government and other powerful institutions in Ethiopia?
10. What challenges, do you think, are impeding the private newspapers from living up to their roles of serving the democratic goals that the country strives to achieve?
11. It is in the very recent past that a few private radio stations were established. What can you say about the roles of these stations in the democratization process of the country?
12. How do you explain the relationship that you have with media organizations: both print and broadcast?
13. What is the future of the democratic roles of the private media in Ethiopia?

## **Declaration**

I, the undersigned, declare that this thesis is my original work and all sources of materials used for this study have been appropriately acknowledged.

Name: Dagim Afework

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Submission: June 2013

Place of submission: Addis Ababa University, Ethiopia