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ADDIS ABABA UNIVERSITY

SCHOOL OF JOURNALISM AND COMMUNICATION

**Factors Affecting the Framing Agenda in Pre-election: A Study of the
2021 Ethiopian National Elections, with a Focus on the Ethiopian
Broadcasting Corporation**

By

Kidist Feyisa Shuma

**A Thesis Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies of Addis Ababa
University in Partial Fulfillment for the Degree of Masters of Arts in
Broadcast Journalism**

October, 2024

Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

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DECLARATION

I, Kidist Feyisa, do hereby declare that this proposal entitled “Framing Strategies in Pre-election Discussions: A Study of the 2021 Ethiopian National Elections, with a Focus on the Ethiopian Broadcasting Corporation” is my original work and that it has not been submitted partially or in full by any other person for an award of degree or publication in any other university/institution.

Submitted by: Kidist Feyisa Shuma Signature _____ Date _____

ABSTRACT

This study examines factors that affect the framing agenda employed by the Ethiopian Broadcasting Corporation (EBC) during the pre-election discussions leading up to the 2021 Ethiopian National Elections. Utilizing a qualitative content analysis approach, the research investigates how the EBC framed political narratives, issues and candidates, influencing public perception and political discourse. The study highlights key themes in the coverage, including nationalism, ethnic identity, and democratic process, revealing how these frames served to mobilize support or create skepticism among the electorate. By analyzing the interplay between media framing and political context, this research provides insights into the role of state media in shaping electoral outcomes and the broader implications for democratic engagement in Ethiopia. The findings underscore the importance of understanding media framing in transitional democracies, offering recommendations for future electoral coverage and media practices.

Key words: Framing, Election, Ethiopian Broadcasting Corporation, Political parties

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ABBREVIATION

| | |
|-------|-------------------------------------------------------|
| CNN | Cable News Network |
| COVID | Coronavirus Disease |
| EBC | Ethiopian Broadcasting Corporation |
| ENDF | Ethiopian National Defense Force |
| EPRDF | The Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front |
| HoPR | House Of Peoples Representstives |
| NEBE | National Election Board of Ethiopia |
| OAU | Organization of African Unity |
| TPLF | Tigray People's Liberation Front |
| UDHR | Universal Declaration of Human Rights |
| US | United States |

CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

It is no secret that the interaction between media and politics is one of the most crucial aspects of a democratic administration, particularly in contexts where the electoral system is extremely important. Gunther, R. & Mughan, 2000, p 1. Scholars in media and communication consider media to be a crucial component of democracy as well as an important component of the political process. However, political scientists tend to view media systems as dependent on other social systems, especially the political system Engesser, & Franzetti, 2011, p 277.

Media play an indispensable role in process of democratic elections. In a world where information is power, it is impossible to conduct a free and fair election without the use of the media. Therefore, it is the responsibility of the media to serve the public with adequate information. It should provide information about the candidates, political parties, and their policies. And the general process of the election so that voters can make well-informed and wise decisions. As a crucial element of elections, the media should supply society with accurate, balanced, and fair information about the election and related issues. Walgrave and Aelst, 2004:31-47

The relationship between media and politics in Ethiopia is intricate and closely connected to the country's history, politics, and culture. Throughout its history, Ethiopia has been characterized by authoritarian rule, political instability, and ethnic tensions, all of which have significantly impacted media freedom and the role of the press in shaping political discourse. Previous governments have been accused of silencing the press to serve their interests, resulting in restrictions on both press freedom and the people's right to free expression. According to Seifu, 2008, the media was utilized solely to promote the agendas of the governments and was considered authoritarian Metafaeria, 2003, p 27 and used to disseminate government propaganda Alemu, 2007, p 1

After several postponements including constraints imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic, and delays in the National Electoral Board of Ethiopia's (NEBE's) candidate, Ethiopia held elections on June 21, for 425 of the 547 constituencies of the HoPR NDI & IRI August 2021, p 2, 5, & 7. Many of the parties engaged initially believed that Ethiopia would be able to move past its history of authoritarian rule and develop more inclusive, transparent, and responsible governance

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in the wake of the elections. Reforms that were first put into place in 2018 when Dr. Abiy Ahmed was elected prime minister have resulted in numerous political and social advancements, including more freedoms for people, political parties, and the media NDI & IRI, May 2021, p 1-5.

There was a sense of optimism that Ethiopia's media environment would improve under the new administration. In 2019, Ethiopia made dramatic improvements on Reporters Without Borders's (RSF's) World Press Freedom Index, jumping 40 countries to rank 110 out of 180 countries, for creating an enabling climate for freedom of speech and the press Fente, 2022, p 7. Nevertheless, the election environment fell short of key standards regarding human and civil liberties, campaigning, adequate security for all parties, and overall peace and security. NDI & IRI, August 2021, p 2, 5, & 7- 5 By the end of 2021, portrayals of the press freedom situation in Ethiopia were gloomy. The state-affiliated media had returned to pro-government reporting, while many of the private media outlets were biased toward ethnopolitical interests Fente, 2022, p 7.

While there have been recent advancements, obstacles to media freedom still exist as we have seen above in the literature. The influence of the press in shaping political discussions and promoting democratic governance continues to be a topic of analysis and examination. In this context, this study seeks to observe the framing strategies employed by the Ethiopian Broadcasting Corporation (EBC) in pre-election consultations for the 2021 Ethiopian national elections. In addition, the study will compare the framing strategies used by the EBC in the 2021 elections with those used in previous national elections in Ethiopia to examine changes or developments over time.

1.2 Statement of the problem

The 2021 Ethiopian National Elections were pivotal in shaping the future political landscape of Ethiopia, marked by the first multi-party elections in over a decade. The role of media, particularly state-run outlets like the Ethiopian Broadcasting Corporation (EBC), in shaping public perception and framing the political agenda before the elections is of great significance. Media organizations influence public opinion by selecting and highlighting specific issues, events, and perspectives, thus framing the political discourse. In the context of Ethiopia, where political tensions, ethnic divisions, and issues of national unity are particularly prominent, media outlets hold substantial power in determining the focus of public debate and political engagement.

Despite the significant role of the media in framing pre-election narratives, there is a limited understanding of the specific factors that affect agenda-setting and framing, particularly within state-controlled media institutions like EBC. Research in Ethiopian media studies often overlooks the direct relationship between media framing and its influence on electoral outcomes. Moreover, while global literature on media framing has extensively discussed the role of media in elections, few studies have examined the dynamics within the Ethiopian context, especially considering its unique political, ethnic, and historical challenges.

This study seeks to address this gap by investigating the factors that influence the framing agenda in the pre-election period, with a specific focus on the Ethiopian Broadcasting Corporation. The research will explore how factors such as government influence, editorial policies, public opinion, and the role of ethnic narratives shape the way in which political events are portrayed to the Ethiopian electorate. Understanding these factors is crucial, as the framing of electoral issues can have a profound impact on voter behavior, political stability, and democratic processes in Ethiopia.

This problem statement should provide a clear overview of the context, establish the research gap, and explain the significance of studying media framing within the Ethiopian election process.

1.3 Objective of the Study

1.3.1 General Objectives

To examine the factors influencing the framing agenda in the pre-election coverage of the 2021 Ethiopian National Elections, with a focus on the role of the Ethiopian Broadcasting Corporation (EBC) in shaping public discourse.

1.3.2 Specific Objectives

This study paper strives to:

- To identify the key factors influencing the framing of political issues during the pre-election period in the Ethiopian Broadcasting Corporation (EBC).
- To analyze the role of ethnic and political narratives in shaping the framing of key election-related issues by EBC.
- To investigate how the framing agenda in EBC's pre-election coverage might have influenced public opinion and voter behavior.
- To assess the ethical considerations and journalistic practices related to framing in the Ethiopian Broadcasting Corporation during the pre-election period.

1.4 Research Questions

This study was guided by the following specific research questions:

- What are the key factors influencing the framing of political issues in the pre-election coverage of the 2021 Ethiopian National Elections by the Ethiopian Broadcasting Corporation (EBC)?
- How does the framing of election-related issues by EBC impact public opinion and voter behavior in the lead-up to the 2021 Ethiopian National Elections?
- What role do ethnic and political narratives play in shaping the framing of issues in EBC's pre-election coverage?
- What ethical considerations and journalistic practices are involved in the framing of political issues in EBC's pre-election coverage?

1.5 Significance of the Study

The role of the media in elections is critical to the functioning of democratic societies. By focusing on the Ethiopian Broadcasting Corporation (EBC), this research will provide insights into how state-run media, as a dominant source of information, shapes political narratives and influences public opinion in the lead-up to elections. This is particularly important in Ethiopia, where the media landscape has been historically influenced by political, ethnic, and social factors. Understanding how media framing can affect the electorate is crucial for promoting a healthy, transparent, and informed democratic process.

While media framing and agenda-setting have been widely studied in other democratic contexts, the application of these theories within Ethiopia remains underexplored. This study will contribute to the academic field of media and communication studies by expanding the knowledge of media framing in an emerging democracy with unique challenges. It will add value to the existing literature on media's role in election periods, particularly in countries with complex political dynamics.

Ethiopia's multi-ethnic and multi-lingual society means that media representations are often shaped by ethnic and political affiliations. This study will highlight how ethnic narratives and political polarization are reflected in media coverage, and how such framing may either deepen divisions or contribute to national unity. The findings will be important for understanding the relationship between media and ethnic politics in Ethiopia and other similar contexts.

The findings of this study will offer valuable insights into the ethical and professional standards of media organizations, especially in state-controlled outlets like EBC. By examining how EBC frames election-related issues, the study can inform policy recommendations for improving journalistic practices, ensuring impartiality, and upholding democratic values in media coverage, especially during crucial electoral periods.

The study will be significant for policy makers, media practitioners, and civil society groups seeking to enhance media literacy and ensure electoral integrity. By understanding how framing influences public perception and voting behavior, this research can contribute to efforts aimed at improving public awareness of media bias and promoting more transparent, fair, and accountable elections.

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By revealing how the media frames electoral issues and how this framing might affect public opinion, the study will help Ethiopian voters better understand the potential biases and agendas behind media content. This awareness can empower citizens to critically evaluate the information they receive and make more informed decisions during elections.

While there has been increasing attention to Ethiopian media in recent years, the specific role of EBC in framing political issues during elections has not been extensively studied. This research will fill this gap and provide a nuanced analysis of how state-run media shapes the political landscape, especially in relation to national elections.

1.6 Scope of the Study

The scope of this study focuses on the Ethiopian Broadcasting Corporation's (EBC) role in framing political and election-related issues during the pre-election period of the 2021 Ethiopian National Elections. The research will examine the influence of media framing on public discourse, with a particular emphasis on government influence, editorial policies, and the portrayal of ethnic and political issues. The study will be geographically focused on Ethiopia and will limit its analysis to EBC's coverage. The research will primarily involve qualitative content analysis and will not extend to other areas such as post-election analysis or audience behavior studies.

1.7. Limitation of the Study

The limitations of this study arise from its focus on a single media outlet (EBC), the limited time frame of pre-election coverage, the qualitative nature of the content analysis, and the potential biases in state-run media. Additionally, the study may face challenges due to cultural, linguistic, and editorial constraints, as well as the influence of external political and social factors. These limitations must be considered when interpreting the findings and applying them to broader contexts or future research. However, despite these constraints, the study remains valuable for understanding the role of media framing in the pre-election period and its impact on the Ethiopian electoral process.

CHAPTER TWO
LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Media and politics

Media as a mediator helps political actors to communicate their message to the citizens (audience); citizens also transmit their message to the political leaders via media. This is the reason why scholars such claim that the media as communications could shape the political process and political actors specially politicians could influence the media. According to Ha, 2003, p. 11, “without news media, both the voters and political actors cannot even imagine how to participate in and maintain the democratic process.”

The media and politics are closely connected, that is they cannot exist without each other. The majority of sociologists and experts on communication argue about the influence of the media on politics and vice versa, and they proved that the basic condition of existence and functioning of the media and politics is their mutual functioning. Politics represents a process through which a group of people brings decisions about crucial social questions on which depends the living of the wider mass of people. It has got such a power and force, because leads all the internal as well as the external actions, dealing with a concrete country, dictates the law, regulations and the norms of life, that is from it depend the quality of people`s life and the overall life of the people of a country. Ejupi, Siljanovska and Iseni 2014:P.641.642

In similar vein McNair, 2011, p. 20 states that "During election media have a crucial role in covering the political process in shaping and contributing to the formation of public opinion, as expressed most importantly in the time of campaigning before elections and during elections. Some media especially newspapers may have an advocacy function during elections where they actively endorse one or the other parties competing in Election.

Thus, Stromback (2005, p. 332) substantiates that, on one hand, media and journalism open opportunity to the realization and building of democracy. Media facilitate the actualization of democracy through creating a system for the flow of information which initiates popular participation, being a forum for public discussion, and playing a watch dog function.

2.2. Theoretical Framework: Media Framing and Agenda-Setting

2.2.1 Agenda-Setting Theory

Agenda-setting theory suggests that the media does not tell people what to think, but rather what to think about. Developed by McCombs and Shaw (1972), the theory posits that the media influences the public agenda by focusing attention on certain issues, thereby shaping the perception of their importance. This process is especially significant during elections, where media coverage can prioritize issues, candidates, or political parties, influencing voters' perceptions and decisions.

In the context of Ethiopian elections, state-controlled media, such as EBC, plays a significant role in determining the issues that are given prominence. By selecting specific political topics for coverage, EBC can influence what the electorate considers important, including topics such as political candidates, election integrity, and ethnic tensions. The agenda-setting role of media in Ethiopia, therefore, becomes a crucial factor in shaping the political landscape during the election process.

2.2.2 Framing Theory

Framing theory, as defined by Entman (1993), plays a critical role in understanding how media presents and structures issues, particularly in the context of political elections. According to Entman (1993), framing is the process of selecting certain aspects of an issue, making them more salient, and thereby influencing the public's perception of those issues. This can be especially impactful in a context like Ethiopia, where political and ethnic identities are deeply intertwined. Media outlets, such as the Ethiopian Broadcasting Corporation (EBC), can frame electoral issues in ways that either reinforce or challenge existing political and social structures. For example, how political candidates are framed—either through their qualifications or affiliations—can significantly shape public perception and voter behavior.

Key Types of Framing:

1. **Conflict Framing:** This framing highlights opposition or disagreements between groups, often focusing on power struggles. In the context of elections, this may present the political battle as one between the ruling party and opposition forces, exacerbating political polarization (Entman, 1993).

2. **Human Interest Framing:** This framing humanizes issues by focusing on individual stories or personal experiences. In elections, it could highlight the personal stories of voters or candidates, making political issues more relatable (Iyengar, 1991).
3. **Attribution of Responsibility Framing:** This type of framing attributes responsibility for particular outcomes or events to specific groups or individuals. In the case of elections, media may assign blame for electoral malpractices or political instability to particular leaders or parties (Entman, 1993).
4. **Power and Elite Framing:** Focused on the role of powerful individuals or groups, this framing emphasizes the influence of political elites and leaders. During elections, it may highlight the actions of influential figures such as the president or party leaders (Gitlin, 1980).
5. **Episodic vs. Thematic Framing:** Episodic framing highlights specific events, while thematic framing provides broader context. In political coverage, episodic framing may focus on isolated incidents, such as election-day violence, whereas thematic framing would address systemic issues like political instability (Iyengar, 1991).
6. **Victory or Success Framing:** This type of framing focuses on positive outcomes, presenting an issue in a favorable light. During elections, it may emphasize achievements like high voter turnout or peaceful elections (Iyengar, 1991).
7. **Loss or Failure Framing:** In contrast, loss or failure framing emphasizes negative outcomes, such as election fraud or political violence, potentially decreasing public confidence in the electoral process (Entman, 1993).
8. **Balance and Bias Framing:** Media can frame issues by providing balanced coverage or showing clear bias toward one perspective. Balanced framing helps audiences understand multiple viewpoints, while biased framing can sway public opinion in favor of one side (Gitlin, 1980).
9. **Morality Framing:** This framing evaluates actions based on moral standards, often influencing public perceptions of political legitimacy. Media might portray political figures or actions as moral or immoral depending on their alignment with ethical norms (Iyengar, 1991).
10. **Economic Framing:** Economic framing highlights how political decisions impact economic conditions, influencing public opinion based on perceived economic benefits or challenges (Entman, 1993).

2.3. The Experience of Media Framing in Africa: A Focus on Election Coverage

The role of media framing in African elections is crucial in shaping public perceptions of political candidates, parties, and issues. Throughout Africa, the media, particularly during election periods, plays a significant role in determining which political issues are highlighted and how they are portrayed. In many African nations, the influence of the media is not just in reporting but in constructing political realities that impact the electorate's decisions. This section explores the experience of media framing in Africa, particularly in the context of elections, and provides a comparative view of media's role in African political systems, including the Ethiopian Broadcasting Corporation (EBC).

2.3.1. Media Framing in African Elections: A General Overview

In Africa, the role of media in framing election narratives is especially significant due to the political environments, many of which are characterized by authoritarianism, ethnic diversity, and conflict. As a result, the media often plays a strategic role in either supporting or challenging the government's political agenda, especially during election periods. Media outlets, including state-controlled and private media, can serve as tools for political elites to either amplify or suppress certain narratives (Gakunzi, 2018).

In many African countries, state-run media are often utilized by the ruling parties to project a positive image while sidelining opposition views. This is especially evident in countries with limited media freedom or strong state control over the media, where framing often serves the interest of the ruling regime.

Gakunzi (2018) emphasizes the importance of media in the framing of electoral issues, noting that media outlets shape voter perception through agenda-setting and framing practices. The media's portrayal of political parties, the election process, and political candidates directly influences the electorate's choices, especially in countries where political competition is high.

2.3.2. Framing During Elections in Africa: Key Studies

Several studies on media framing in African elections have demonstrated how media coverage influences election outcomes by selectively framing political issues. These studies offer insights into how media can shape the public perception of political candidates, political parties, and even electoral integrity.

2.3.3. The Role of Media in Kenya's 2007 and 2013 Elections

In Kenya, the role of media in framing political issues was critical in shaping the outcomes of the 2007 and 2013 elections. A study by Tettey (2011) found that the Kenyan media played a prominent role in framing issues of ethnicity, violence, and electoral fraud. The media's framing of the 2007 election, which was marred by post-election violence, led to a polarized environment where ethnic identities and political affiliations took precedence over policy debates. In 2013, the media shifted its focus toward framing the peaceful transition and unity, with outlets aligning themselves with specific political factions. The framing of ethnic tensions in the media led to both positive and negative outcomes, depending on the media's political affiliations.

2.3.4. Media Coverage in Zimbabwe: The 2008 Election Crisis

In Zimbabwe, the 2008 presidential election was marked by widespread political violence and allegations of electoral fraud. A study by Nhundu & Makumbe (2008) examined how state-run and private media outlets framed the election. State-run media, including the Zimbabwe Broadcasting Corporation (ZBC), framed the election as a struggle against Western imperialism, while opposition media outlets framed the election as a contest for democracy and human rights. This contrasting framing reflected the broader political divisions in the country. The media framing influenced both domestic and international perceptions of the election and played a role in the political legitimacy of the incumbent government.

2.3.5. Media Framing in Nigeria's 2015 Elections

Nigeria's 2015 presidential elections were historic in that they saw a peaceful transition of power after decades of military rule. A study by Ojebode (2015) analyzed the role of media framing in the pre-election period. Nigerian media outlets played a significant role in framing the election as a battle for democracy, with particular emphasis on the character of political candidates, particularly the incumbent Goodluck Jonathan and opposition candidate Muhammadu Buhari. The framing was also influenced by issues of corruption and security, which were central to the political discourse in the country. Ojebode found that media outlets in Nigeria, particularly broadcast media, framed the election as a fight for the future of the nation, reflecting the heightened political stakes.

2.4. Challenges of Media Framing in Africa

The experience of media framing in African elections is often marked by several challenges. One of the primary concerns is the lack of media independence in many African countries, where

state-controlled media outlets dominate political coverage. Censorship, media bias, and restricted press freedom are common challenges that limit the ability of the media to provide balanced and impartial coverage during elections (Akinfeleye, 2013). These challenges affect the framing of electoral issues, often leading to a narrow representation of political choices that favor the incumbent government.

2.4.1. Ethnic and Regional Dynamics in Media Framing

Another challenge in media framing is the ethnic and regional dynamics that characterize many African countries. As seen in countries like Kenya, Ethiopia, and Nigeria, media outlets often frame political issues through the lens of ethnicity or regionalism, which can deepen political polarization and lead to divisive electoral campaigns (Akinfeleye, 2013; Tettey, 2011). In such an environment, media framing can exacerbate existing tensions and make it more difficult for the electorate to make informed, issue-based voting decisions.

2.4.2. Media Control and the Marginalization of Opposition Voices

Media framing in African elections plays a critical role in shaping the political discourse, influencing public opinion, and, ultimately, determining electoral outcomes. In many African countries, state-run media outlets like EBC in Ethiopia are often used to frame election issues in a way that benefits the incumbent government while marginalizing opposition voices. The challenges faced by African media, including political control, ethnic divisions, and limited media freedom, underscore the importance of understanding the complex relationship between media, politics, and public perception in the African electoral context.

2.5. The Ethiopian Media Landscape

Ethiopia's media landscape is characterized by a mix of state-controlled media, private media, and community-based outlets, with state-controlled media, such as EBC, holding a dominant position in shaping national political narratives. Historically, the Ethiopian government has exerted significant influence over the media, using it as a tool to promote its political agenda and maintain control over public discourse. EBC has been central to this process, especially during critical political events like national elections. Pottier, J. (2004).

As Ethiopia's media landscape has evolved over time, there has been an increasing presence of private and independent media outlets, particularly since the reform era beginning in 2018 under Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed. However, despite reforms and increased media freedoms, state-run outlets like EBC continue to play a pivotal role in framing political issues, particularly during election periods. Zelalem, T. (2020).

2.6. The Role of EBC in Shaping National Discourse

EBC's role in framing national political issues has been critical in shaping the discourse surrounding the 2021 Ethiopian elections. Despite reforms aimed at increasing media freedoms under Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed, state-controlled outlets such as EBC continue to play a dominant role in framing political issues. As noted by scholars, the media's selective coverage and framing of political candidates, issues, and events contribute to the polarization of the electoral environment and reinforce the legitimacy of the ruling party while discrediting opposition parties and candidates.

2.6.1 EBC's Role in the 2015 and 2021 Elections

EBC's role in the 2015 and 2021 Ethiopian national elections demonstrates how state-run media can frame election coverage to align with the government's political interests. Teshome (2014) and Assefa (2019) highlight how EBC's coverage in these elections predominantly showcased the ruling party's achievements in areas like infrastructure development, economic growth, and stability, while downplaying opposition criticisms and limiting their visibility in media coverage. These framing practices align with the broader patterns observed in other African countries where state-controlled media are used to promote government narratives.

In the lead-up to the 2021 elections, EBC's coverage focused heavily on national unity, portraying the incumbent government as the protector of Ethiopia's political stability amid internal conflicts in the Tigray region. The framing of the conflict was often presented in a way that cast the government as a stabilizing force while framing opposition groups as threats to national unity. This kind of framing is consistent with the political environment in many African countries, where media is often used as a tool to legitimize the ruling regime and its policies.

2.6.2. The Experience of Media Framing in Ethiopia: A Focus on the 2021 National Elections

Media framing in Ethiopia, particularly in the context of national elections, has been shaped by both historical and contemporary political dynamics. The role of media outlets, especially state-run broadcasters such as the Ethiopian Broadcasting Corporation (EBC), is crucial in understanding how political issues are presented and perceived by the electorate. This section explores the experience of media framing in Ethiopia, focusing on the role of EBC during the 2021 Ethiopian National Elections.

2.6.3. EBC's Role in Framing Pre-Election Issues

EBC, as the largest government-controlled broadcaster in Ethiopia, plays a significant role in framing political issues during election campaigns. Media outlets like EBC have a distinct role in shaping public perception by selecting specific issues to cover, highlighting certain viewpoints, and downplaying others. This aligns with media framing theory, which posits that the way issues are presented by the media shapes how audiences understand and interpret them.

During the lead-up to the 2021 Ethiopian National Elections, EBC's coverage reflected the government's priorities, often focusing on topics such as economic development, peace and stability, and unity. The ruling party, the Prosperity Party (PP), led by Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed, used the media to project a positive image of the government's achievements and its role in Ethiopia's socio-political development. The framing of these issues was strategic, designed to highlight the government's successes and nation-building efforts while downplaying negative aspects or criticisms, particularly from opposition groups.

EBC's pre-election coverage was often framed around the theme of national unity and political stability—issues which the government used to strengthen its narrative that it was the protector of peace and security in the face of ongoing internal conflicts, particularly the Tigray conflict. This framing allowed the government to present itself as the guardian of Ethiopia's territorial integrity while discrediting opposition forces and dissenting voices. Teshome, A. (2014).

2.6.4. Framing Political Candidates and Parties

A crucial aspect of media framing in elections is the portrayal of political candidates and parties. In Ethiopia's 2021 elections, the EBC provided extensive coverage of the Prosperity Party (PP) and Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed. The media coverage typically framed Abiy Ahmed as a visionary leader who had brought reforms, fostered peace agreements, and promoted economic growth, particularly in sectors like infrastructure development. This framing positioned Abiy as a candidate of change, focusing on his role in bringing peace to the Horn of Africa, particularly through the peace agreement with Eritrea in 2018.

In contrast, opposition parties were often marginalized in EBC's coverage. When opposition parties were covered, the framing often depicted them as fragmented, disorganized, or ethnically motivated. Opposition candidates critical of the government's handling of political issues, including the Tigray conflict, were often depicted in a negative light. This selective coverage contributed to the polarization of the election discourse, as the public was exposed primarily to the ruling party's narrative. Bekele, E. (2020)

2.6.5. The Impact of the Tigray Conflict on Media Framing

According to Fekadu, H. (2021) one of the most significant factors influencing media framing in Ethiopia during the 2021 elections was the ongoing Tigray conflict, which began in November 2020 between the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) and the Ethiopian government. The conflict profoundly affected how the media framed both domestic and international perceptions of Ethiopia's political landscape.

EBC's coverage of the conflict was heavily government-aligned, often framing the Ethiopian National Defense Force (ENDF) as defending the country against a rebellion instigated by the TPLF. This framing was critical during the election period, as it allowed the government to present itself as the defender of Ethiopia's unity and territorial integrity. By framing the conflict in this way, the government used EBC to shape public opinion, portraying the Tigray conflict as an internal issue that threatened national stability and security. At the same time, opposition parties, especially those critical of the government's military response, were framed as unpatriotic or aligned with the TPLF, further polarizing the public narrative.

The framing of the Tigray conflict by EBC also served to delegitimize the opposition, casting their criticisms as undermining Ethiopia's national unity and supporting a rebellion. This framing tactic helped to maintain the government's control of the narrative, particularly in rural areas where EBC's reach was strong.

2.7. State Control and the Limitations of Media Framing

Although the government's use of media framing through outlets like EBC was a key element of the 2021 elections, it also reflected the broader challenges faced by media outlets in Ethiopia. Despite some reforms in the media sector, such as greater access for private media outlets and the lifting of restrictions on certain opposition groups, state control over key media platforms remains a significant factor in shaping the political narrative.

Assefa (2019) and Teshome (2014) argue that media framing in Ethiopia remains largely under the influence of the government, which has historically used the media as a tool of political control. This control over the framing of electoral issues limits the ability of independent or opposition-aligned media to provide balanced coverage of political events. In Ethiopia, EBC continues to serve as a tool for agenda-setting and framing, where the media's primary function

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is not only to inform the public but to ensure that the government's political agenda is prioritized during critical election periods.

2.8. Challenges in Media Framing during Elections

Several challenges affect the media's ability to provide diverse and balanced coverage during Ethiopian elections:

Government Control: The Ethiopian government maintains a strong influence over state-run media outlets, including EBC, which limits the diversity of viewpoints presented to the electorate.

Ethnic and Regional Dynamics: Ethiopia's ethnic federalism has created challenges for media outlets in framing political issues in a way that represents the diverse interests of all ethnic groups. Media coverage is often skewed to favor certain regions or ethnic groups, exacerbating tensions and political divisions.

Polarization of Political Discourse: The government's heavy influence over media framing contributes to the polarization of political discourse, as opposition viewpoints are often marginalized or misrepresented. This affects public trust in the media and limits opportunities for informed political engagement.

Conflict and Crisis Coverage: The ongoing conflicts in Ethiopia, especially the Tigray conflict, heavily influenced media framing during the 2021 elections. The government used EBC to present a narrative of national unity while casting opposition voices as disloyal or divisive.

The experience of media framing in Africa and Ethiopia underscores the powerful role media plays in shaping political narratives, particularly during elections. Across Africa, media outlets—whether state-controlled or privately owned—play a significant role in framing electoral issues and influencing public opinion. In Ethiopia, the role of EBC in framing the 2021 elections illustrates how media framing can serve as a tool for the government to promote its agenda while marginalizing opposition perspectives.

In Ethiopia, where the media is still largely controlled by the government, EBC's framing of the 2021 elections was critical in shaping the public's understanding of the political landscape. While the media environment is changing, the experience of media framing in Ethiopia mirrors broader trends across the continent, where media outlets often play a pivotal role in either promoting political stability and unity or contributing to political polarization and division.

2.9. Ethiopian Media Landscape and Ethnic Dynamics

Ethiopia's media landscape is deeply affected by the country's ethnic diversity. The introduction of ethnic federalism in the 1990s, which divided the country into ethnically-based regional states, has shaped the way political issues are discussed in the media. In election periods, issues related to ethnicity, national unity, and political representation often take center stage. Media outlets like EBC must navigate these sensitive topics carefully, balancing the representation of various ethnic groups without inflaming tensions.

EBC's coverage during the 2021 elections, for example, was influenced by the complex interplay of ethnic relations, regional politics, and national unity. The framing of these issues within the media can either promote a sense of inclusivity or exacerbate divisions, depending on how they are presented. The challenge for EBC lies in maintaining political neutrality while reflecting Ethiopia's diverse ethnic landscape.

2.10. Previous Studies on Media Framing and Elections

2.10.1 Global Studies on Media Framing in Elections

Research on media framing and elections has been widely conducted, with a focus on how media coverage can shape electoral outcomes. Studies by Bennett (2001) and Mazzoleni (2008) have examined the relationship between media framing and public perception in election contexts. These studies demonstrate that media outlets, particularly state-run media, often play a key role in framing political narratives to support the dominant political party or agenda.

Bennett (2001) argued that media coverage of political campaigns often reinforces existing political power structures, particularly in state-controlled media environments. Similarly, Mazzoleni (2008) highlighted how media framing in election coverage can lead to the marginalization of opposition voices and the promotion of government narratives, particularly when media outlets are subject to political control.

2.10.2 Ethiopian Studies on Media Framing in Elections

Limited studies have focused on the media's role in Ethiopian elections, particularly in relation to EBC. Teshome (2014) and Assefa (2019) have conducted studies on the role of media during the Ethiopian elections, noting that EBC's coverage often aligns with the government's political agenda. These studies reveal that during election periods, state-run media outlets like EBC are heavily influenced by government priorities, which shapes the way political candidates, parties, and issues are portrayed.

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Teshome's study (2014) specifically explored how the government used EBC to frame political issues in favor of the ruling party during election campaigns. Assefa (2019) further analyzed the imbalanced coverage of opposition parties, noting that EBC often provided limited airtime for political opposition and focused disproportionately on the ruling party's achievements.

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2.11. Factors Influencing Media Framing in Ethiopia

There are several factors influencing how political issues are framed by media outlets like EBC in Ethiopia. These include:

Political Influence: The government's direct or indirect influence over state-run media outlets often dictates how political issues are framed. In the case of EBC, this means that the ruling party's agenda is often prioritized in election coverage, while dissenting viewpoints are marginalized.

Ethnic and Regional Dynamics: Ethiopia's ethnically diverse society creates unique challenges for media outlets like EBC. Media coverage during the pre-election period must navigate sensitive ethnic issues while attempting to maintain a balance between national unity and regional interests.

Government Priorities: The Ethiopian government's political objectives, such as maintaining stability, promoting development achievements, or showcasing national unity, influence how the media frames electoral issues.

2.12. Ethnic Federalism and Media Framing

Ethiopia's ethnic federalism has a significant impact on how the media covers elections and political issues. Media outlets, including EBC, must navigate the complexities of ethnicity and political identity, especially when framing issues related to ethnic groups, political power-sharing, and regional representation.

Research by Assefa (2019) highlights the challenges of balancing ethnic representation in media coverage. The framing of political issues along ethnic lines can influence the public's perception of who represents their interests, potentially affecting voting behavior and political engagement.

2.13. The Experience of Democracy in Ethiopia: A Focus on the 2021 National Elections

The experience of democracy in Ethiopia is deeply intertwined with the country's political evolution, historical context, and the way the media, particularly the Ethiopian Broadcasting Corporation (EBC), shapes political discourse. Over the past few decades, Ethiopia has undergone significant political and social transformations, moving from a one-party state to a more politically competitive environment, especially under Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed's leadership. However, the path toward a fully functioning democracy has been marked by challenges such as political repression, ethnic tensions, and media control, all of which have influenced democratic practices in the country.

The 2021 Ethiopian National Elections were a critical moment in this democratic journey. While the election was hailed by some as a milestone in Ethiopia's democratization process, others pointed out the challenges that limited its effectiveness, such as the Tigray conflict, ethnic violence, and political repression. The media, particularly state-run outlets like EBC, played a pivotal role in framing the democratic process and influencing public perceptions during the pre-election period.

This section explores the experience of democracy in Ethiopia, focusing on the 2021 elections, the role of media framing, and how the country's political landscape influenced the democratic process.

1. Historical Context of Democracy in Ethiopia

Ethiopia's modern experience with democracy has been tumultuous. The country has faced political upheavals, civil wars, and authoritarian rule, making the transition to a democratic system particularly challenging.

The Derg Regime (1974-1991): The Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) came to power in 1991 after the fall of the military dictatorship, the Derg. During the Derg era, Ethiopia had a highly centralized, authoritarian regime where political freedoms were severely restricted. Political parties, civil society organizations, and independent media were suppressed, leading to a climate of fear and political control.

The EPRDF Era (1991-2018): The EPRDF governed Ethiopia for nearly three decades, with the country officially adopting a federal system. While the government claimed to promote

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democratic reforms, in practice, Ethiopia's political landscape remained authoritarian. Elections during this period were widely criticized for being neither free nor fair, with opposition parties often suppressed, media censored, and civil rights limited. The ruling party maintained tight control over media outlets, including EBC, which was used as a tool to propagate the party's agenda.

Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed's Reforms (2018-Present): In 2018, Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed introduced sweeping reforms, releasing political prisoners, inviting exiled opposition leaders back into the country, and promising greater political freedom. These reforms sparked hopes of a more democratic future for Ethiopia. However, the political landscape remained deeply divided, with ethnic tensions rising and the government facing internal challenges, including the conflict in Tigray. The reforms were seen by many as a step toward democratization, but others pointed to the ongoing human rights violations, lack of political inclusivity, and media restrictions.

2. The 2021 Ethiopian National Elections: A Democratic Milestone or Setback?

The 2021 Ethiopian National Elections were positioned as a crucial moment for Ethiopia's democratic journey. These elections were set to test whether the reforms initiated by Abiy Ahmed could translate into a competitive and open democratic process.

Electoral Context: The 2021 elections were held amidst a backdrop of ethnic tensions, conflict, and political instability. The Tigray conflict, which began in late 2020, significantly disrupted the electoral process. Several opposition groups, particularly in the northern regions of Tigray and Oromia, boycotted the elections, citing concerns about political repression, the government's handling of the conflict, and the lack of a level playing field. Many opposition leaders were either in exile or incarcerated, and security issues prevented elections from being held in certain areas of the country.

Media and Democracy in Ethiopia: The role of media in framing the elections and shaping public discourse was crucial. Despite the political reforms, the media landscape in Ethiopia was still largely controlled by the government. The Ethiopian Broadcasting Corporation (EBC), as the state-run broadcaster, had a central role in presenting the government's narrative and framing the elections as a process of national unity and progress under Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed's leadership. The coverage largely favored the ruling party and framed Abiy as a reformer and peace advocate, while opposition parties were often marginalized or framed as destabilizing forces.

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International Reactions: The international community, including organizations such as the African Union and the European Union, had mixed reactions to the elections. While they praised some aspects of the reforms, they also raised concerns about the lack of political inclusivity, media freedom, and security issues during the electoral process. Some observers noted that the conditions for a free and fair election were not met, given the ethnic violence and military conflict affecting large parts of the country.

Challenges to Ethiopia's Democratic Experience

Despite the significant reforms made by Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed, the 2021 elections highlighted several challenges to democracy in Ethiopia:

Political Polarization and Ethnic Tensions: The ethnic federal system and the rise of ethnic-based political movements contributed to polarization and conflict in Ethiopia. These divisions were exacerbated during the pre-election period, with different ethnic groups, especially those in Tigray and Oromia, feeling excluded or marginalized from the political process.

Human Rights Violations and Media Control: The Ethiopian government faced significant criticism for its handling of the Tigray conflict, with reports of human rights violations, displacement, and restrictions on the media. The role of EBC in framing the conflict often undermined the government's credibility in the eyes of many Ethiopians and the international community.

Electoral Integrity: The elections were marred by violence, ethnic clashes, and disruptions to voting in some areas. This raised questions about the legitimacy of the electoral process, especially in a context where key opposition parties were excluded or suppressed.

The 2021 Ethiopian National Elections marked a critical moment in Ethiopia's journey toward democracy. While the government made significant reforms and presented the elections as a step toward a democratic future, ethnic conflicts, political repression, and media framing challenges highlighted the difficulties of transitioning to a full-fledged democracy. The role of EBC in framing the electoral process underscores the influence of state-controlled media in shaping public perceptions, particularly in a politically complex environment like Ethiopia's. For democracy to truly take root in Ethiopia, more inclusive political practices, greater media freedom, and an end to ethnic-based divisions will be essential.

2.14. The Role of Media in Ensuring Democracy

CNN senior journalist Christian Amanpour (2017, p.45), articulated the relationship between free press and democracy as, “Democracy is impossible without a free press. This is a precept that is deeply ingrained in democratic theory and practice. As early as the 17th century, Enlightenment theorists had argued that publicity and openness provide the best protection against tyranny and the excesses of arbitrary rule” and so claimed in the early 1700s, by the French political philosopher Montesquieu.”Media plays a great role in informing the public and indicating the government its strong and weak side. In this case, Roy (2013), recognized the importance of the press in making officials aware of the public’s discontents and allowing governments to rectify their errors. This seems to be the reason why the media has been widely proclaimed as the “Fourth Estate,” a coequal branch of government that provides the check and balance of government, and without media governments cannot be effective.

According to Kimanuka (2016), even in modern-day democrats are as hyperbolic in their praise of the press. Despite the present-day mass media’s propensity for sleaze, sensationalism and superficiality, they are still seen as essential democratic tools. Contemporary democratic theory appreciates the media’s role in ensuring governments are held accountable. In both new and old democracies, the notion of the media as watchdog and not merely a passive recorder of events are widely accepted. Unless media shouldn’t play its watchdog role, government couldn’t understand the problems and interest of the public. Similarly, Ravi (2017), argues that: Governments cannot be held accountable if citizens are ill informed about the actions of officials and institutions. The watchdog press is guardian of the public interest, warning citizens against those who are doing them harm. A fearless and effective watchdog is critical in fledgling democracies where institutions are weak and pummeled by political pressure (p.90).

In addition, media as a public forum for debate is important to exchange different ideas which are useful for making important policy and strategy. Odika (2013), elaborated this idea that the media serve as a conduit between governors and the governed and as an arena for public debate that leads to more intelligent policy- and decision-making. Indeed, the Enlightenment tradition of the press as public forum remains strong. In new democracies, the expectation is that the media would help build a civic culture and a tradition of discussion and debate which was not possible during the period of authoritarian rule.

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According to Odika (2013), not just journalists, but eminent contemporary thinkers like Nobel laureate, Amartya Sen ascribe to the press the same cleansing powers that Enlightenment philosophers had envisioned. Sen outlined the need for “transparency guarantees” such as a free press and the free flow of information. Information and critical public discussion, he said, are “an inescapably important requirement of good public policy.”

2.6. Media and Society

Media can play a significant role in the development of democracy and it is vital tool for the functioning of democracy in the right or other direction in any society. According to Croteau and Hoynes (2019) media and society are intertwined and fused together in ways that make it difficult to imagine them ever being separated. The media play a vital role in the struggle for shaping the public agenda during the campaign period (Walgrave and Aelst, 2004). In creation of awareness to the people about democracy and the election system media helps people or citizens of the country to share, and get fair and appropriate information. In the decision-making process, voters tend to gather the necessary information before evaluating the information. Political messages affect voters, assuming they are exposed and open to receive the data (Zaller, 1992).

2.15 Overview of Elections

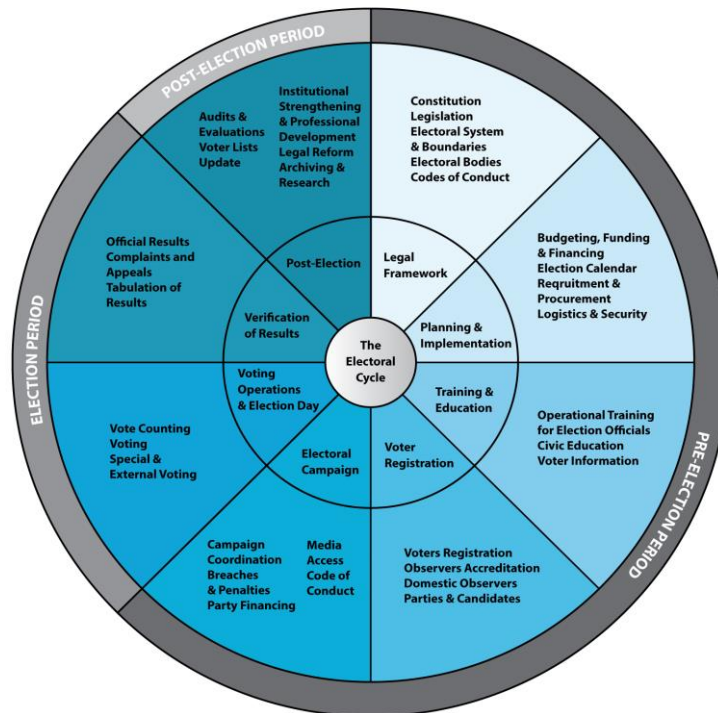
2.15.1 Stakes and Phases of Elections

2.15.1.1 Why Do Elections Matter?

Elections are one of the major pillars of democracy and help determine the future of a democratic society. The future can either be peaceful and democratic or not. Elections enable people to decide what they want in a democracy. They allow people to participate in political affairs either directly, as candidates (and, if they win, as elected officials) or indirectly, as voters. As voters, people can elect representatives to state affairs on their behalf.

2.15.1.2 The Electoral Cycle

It is not only voting day that matters the entire electoral cycle does. Elections are processes, not events. The electoral cycle includes a pre-electoral period, an electoral period, and a post-electoral period. (European Centre for Electoral Support).



European Centre for Electoral Support. (n.d.). Electoral cycles steps training.

2.15.1.3 Electoral Laws and Guidelines

Global Electoral Laws and Guidelines

Participation in the government of a country, either directly or through freely chosen representatives, began to be considered a human right following the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) in 1948. The UDHR has universal support, since almost all states, including Ethiopia, are represented in the UN.

Article 21 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) stipulates:

1. Everyone has the right to take part in the government of the country, directly or through freely chosen representatives.
2. Everyone has the right of equal access to public service in the country.
3. The will of the people shall be the basis of the authority of government; this will shall be expressed in periodic and genuine elections which shall be by universal and equal suffrage and shall be held by secret vote or by equivalent free voting procedures.

2.15.2 Basic Conditions for Free and Fair Elections

Freedom of Expression

Freedom of expression for all citizens is a prime requirement for free, fair, safe and secure elections. This can include opinions that people find unpleasant and objectionable. During elections, politicians and many others make statements that might be partially or entirely untrue. Journalists also should utilize their freedom to verify the truth of statements made during elections (Ethiopia Elections 2021 Media Coverage Training, 2021).

Freedom of Association

People must be allowed to organize in political groups or civic associations to participate in the electoral process. Journalists should look carefully to see whether official registration requirements are being applied fairly, and that they do not unnecessarily stop people from organizing.

Freedom of Assembly

People must be allowed to gather peacefully to express their political or other opinions. Official regulations and permits must be applied fairly to all groups. Journalists should investigate whether “public safety” concerns are used properly, or only used as a pretext to stop certain groups from holding rallies or other meetings.

Civic and Media Access to the Entire Electoral process

Government should facilitate easy access for civic associations and media to the entire electoral process, so an independent assessment of preparations and performance can be made. Some questions journalists should ask include:

- Are ballot papers being printed securely?
- Will there be enough ballot boxes?
- Are local officials being trained well, and in a timely manner?
- Is voter registration being done properly?

Fair and Impartial Administration

The National Election Board of Ethiopia (NEBE) and other official bodies should act independently of any political party. Furthermore, no group should receive more electoral resources than any other group. It is important to monitor whether official resources are being

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used to support one party over another. For example, government buses or trucks should not be used to transport party supporters to rallies. Ethiopian

Independent Judiciary

The judiciary might be asked to review the performance of parts or all of the electoral process. If judges favor one group over others, or are afraid to make honest judgments, the entire process should be corrupted.

Secret Ballot

To avoid intimidation or bribery, citizens must be able to cast their ballots in privacy without anyone seeing who they are voting. An informed choice is facilitated by media literacy, civic and voter education, and impartial reporting.

According to Ethiopia Elections 2021 Media Coverage Training: Reference for Journalists; which is prepared and published by John Hopkins communication Programs, All of the above requirements for free, fair, safe, and secure elections might be meaningless if citizens' ability to make an informed choice is limited. Impartial civic media can offer people crucial information about policies and candidates' qualifications. In addition, civic and voter education undertaken in collaboration among government, civic associations, and media makes people aware of their rights and how they can participate fully in the election process.

2.15.3 Ethiopia's Electoral Laws and Guidelines

Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights states: "Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression. This right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers." This same phrase is also included in Article of the Ethiopian Constitution, which also states that all international agreements ratified by Ethiopia are an integral part of the law of the land.

2.16.2 Media's Election Role

2.16.2.1 Investigative Journalism

Acting as a "watch dog" is a classic role of the media to "watch over" every part of society, and to "bark" loudly if there are abuses of law and/or power. (Cohen & McCombs, 2007).

2.16.2.2 Guide Dog Journalism

The “watch dog” is always vigilant, smart, fearless, and ready to “bite anyone who crosses the line. The “watch dog” role of media is not limited only to watching the government but also competing political parties, social institutions, and any other important social institution. The “Guide dog” role of journalism helps people to get to where they want to be by providing important information. During elections, the “guide dog” role of journalism plays a significant role in civic and voter education, Civic media during elections help people “know their rights,” enhances awareness on the impact of violence, and encourages and empowers citizens to participate in the electoral process. (Dahlgren, 2005).

Civic Education: Civic education informs citizens about the democratic process to encourage greater engagement and participation, It is not tied to the electoral cycle, it is a continual process. (Kahne & Middaugh, 2009).

Voter Education: Voter education informs citizens about the entire electoral process, including how to register to vote and election day procedures. (National Association of Secretaries of State, 2016).

Citizen Engagement: Seeking citizens views and priorities is an important guidedog role. (Norris, 2000).

Impartial coverage of Issues and candidates: “Guide dog” media can enable better citizen engagement by reporting on key issues, party positions on issues, and candidate qualifications that offer people information needed to make an informed choice. (Smith, 2007).

Challenges for Media

It is important to note that while carrying out these roles, media outlets and individual reporters may come under immense pressure, especially during elections. People will attempt to corrupt media by offering bribes demanding that journalists report only from one ideological or ethnic perspective, and making physical threats to journalists and/ or their loved ones. Good journalists maintain their integrity by anticipating and preparing for such challenges in advance. (Friedman, 2011).

CHAPTER THREE
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This chapter outlines the research methodology used in this study to investigate the factors affecting the framing agenda in the pre-election period, specifically during the 2021 Ethiopian National Elections, with a focus on the Ethiopian Broadcasting Corporation (EBC). The methodology explains the approach, data collection methods, data analysis techniques, and ethical considerations used to understand how media framing influenced public perception and election outcomes.

3.1. Research Design

The study adopts a qualitative research design with elements of content analysis and case study methodology. The qualitative approach is chosen because it allows for an in-depth exploration of how the Ethiopian Broadcasting Corporation (EBC) framed political events, issues, and candidates leading up to the 2021 Ethiopian National Elections. This research design is ideal for understanding the complex relationships between media coverage, political communication, and public opinion

3.2. Data Collection Methods

The primary data collection method for this study is content analysis. This involves systematically analyzing the content produced by the Ethiopian Broadcasting Corporation (EBC) during the pre-election period. The content is analyzed for specific themes, frames, and biases that may influence public perceptions. The following steps are used in the content analysis:

Sampling: The study analyzes the news reports, interviews, and campaign coverage aired by EBC. A purposive sampling technique is used to select content that focuses on major political events, candidates, and electoral issues from three months prior to the election day.

Frame Identification: Frames are identified through the repeated patterns in how information is presented. This could include aspects like the use of certain language, emotional appeals, or the selection of stories that emphasize certain political perspectives.

Interviews with Journalists, Editors, Political analysts and People.

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To gain a deeper understanding of the factors influencing media framing, semi-structured interviews are conducted with EBC journalists, Editors, Political Analysts, public and other relevant media personnel

3.3. Document Review

Secondary data in the form of official government statements, electoral commission reports, and EBC editorial policies will be reviewed. This data helps contextualize the framing decisions made by EBC and provides insight into the political and legal landscape during the election period.

3.4. Sampling Techniques

The study uses purposive sampling to select the specific content aired by EBC during the pre-election period. This ensures that the analysis focuses on the most relevant materials related to the 2021 Ethiopian National Elections

.Sample Timeframe: The content analyzed will span from three months before the election day to the day of the election itself.

Types of Content: News broadcasts, interviews, election-related advertisements, and special reports will be included in the sample.

3.5. Data Analysis Techniques

The data analysis for this study follows a thematic analysis approach. This method involves identifying and analyzing key themes that emerge from both the content analysis and interview data. The steps involved in the analysis include:

Contextual Analysis: Understanding how political, social, and economic factors influenced the framing choices made by the media.

3.6. Ethical Considerations

This study adheres to ethical research practices to ensure that the data collection and analysis process is transparent, fair, and respectful of all stakeholders involved. The ethical considerations include:

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Confidentiality: The identities of interviewees will be kept confidential, and all data will be anonymized in the reporting of findings.

Non-bias in Reporting: The researcher will approach the data with a neutral stance, ensuring that the analysis reflects the content as objectively as possible without personal or political bias.

Transparency in Findings: All findings will be reported in an accurate and transparent manner, reflecting the complexities and nuances of media framing.

CHAPTER FOUR

PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

This chapter presents the analysis of the data collected in the study on the factors affecting the framing agenda in pre-election coverage during the 2021 Ethiopian National Elections, with a specific focus on the Ethiopian Broadcasting Corporation (EBC). The data collected through content analysis, interviews, and surveys is analyzed to identify how the media framed electoral issues, the dominant themes in coverage, and the factors influencing this agenda.

The content analysis focused on EBC's coverage of political events, news reports, electoral campaigns, and interviews during the pre-election period. Additionally, interviews were conducted with EBC journalists, editors, political analysts and public to understand the editorial decision-making process and the pressures they faced. The findings are presented through qualitative methods to highlight the influence of political, economic, and social factors on media framing.

4.1. Content Analysis: Framing Themes Identified

From the content analysis of the EBC broadcasts, several recurring themes and frames were identified, which significantly shaped how the election and political events were presented to the public. The following major frames emerged:

4.1.1. Political Polarization and Conflict

A dominant frame in EBC's coverage was the portrayal of political polarization and the ongoing ethnic conflicts in the country. Content that focused on political events often emphasized the divisions between different political parties, particularly between the ruling party and opposition groups. EBC news broadcasts frequently presented the conflicts in regions like Tigray and Oromia, underscoring the challenges faced by the government. These reports often framed the government's actions as necessary for restoring national unity and stability.

For Example the framing of the Tigray conflict was often portrayed as an internal challenge for Ethiopia, with a narrative suggesting that the Ethiopian government's actions were a response to separatist movements. This framing shaped the perception that the government was in a fight for national survival, and those opposing the government were framed as responsible for destabilizing the country.

4.1.2. Security and National Unity

EBC framed national security as a central issue in the lead-up to the elections, focusing heavily on the importance of maintaining peace and stability. The content often highlighted the government's role in safeguarding national unity and preventing further conflict. These frames were strategically used to project the ruling government as the protector of Ethiopia's sovereignty, while opposition groups and dissent were portrayed as threats to the country's security.

Example: In election-related programs, discussions centered on the government's initiatives to combat terrorism and regional instability. The framing suggested that the government's leadership was essential to preserving peace, a vital component of the pre-election narrative.

4.1.3 Economic Development vs. Political Opposition

Another significant frame identified was the contrast between the government's development initiatives and the critiques from opposition parties. EBC's coverage often juxtaposed the government's achievements in infrastructure, poverty reduction, and economic growth with the accusations of corruption and inefficiency levied by opposition parties.

Example: EBC's coverage of development projects, such as the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD), was framed as a symbol of national pride and progress. In contrast, opposition narratives questioning the government's transparency and handling of the economy were either downplayed or framed as politically motivated.

4.1.4 Election Legitimacy and International Recognition

The legitimacy of the upcoming election was another recurrent frame. EBC often emphasized the credibility of the electoral process, presenting it as fair, transparent, and critical for Ethiopia's democratic development. The framing of election-related issues, such as the role of the National Electoral Board of Ethiopia (NEBE) and international observers, was designed to assure the public that the election would be free from fraud and manipulation.

Example: Reports highlighted the preparation of election materials and the presence of international election observers, reinforcing the narrative that the 2021 elections were a significant step toward enhancing democracy in Ethiopia.

4.2. Role of EBC in Shaping Public Perception

Media plays a crucial role in shaping public perception during elections by influencing how voters perceive political issues, candidates, and the electoral process itself. Here are several key ways in which media impacts public perception:

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A. Information Dissemination:

Media is the primary source of information for many voters. Through news reports, political coverage, debates, interviews, and advertisements, media outlets provide the electorate with the information needed to make informed decisions. The types of stories covered, the amount of attention given to different issues, and the framing of political events directly influence how voters understand key topics, from candidates' platforms to broader social and economic issues.

B. Framing and Agenda Setting:

Media can shape the public agenda by deciding which issues are highlighted and how they are framed. The way a news outlet presents an issue—whether it focuses on the positive or negative aspects, for instance—can strongly influence public opinion. For example, if a media outlet repeatedly covers a candidate's scandal or policy failure, it can erode that candidate's public image, while positive coverage of another can enhance their standing.

The agenda-setting function of the media refers to its ability to influence which issues are prioritized in public discourse. Media outlets can give prominence to certain topics (like healthcare, education, or national security), effectively directing public attention toward these matters during an election period.

C. Shaping Voter Perceptions of Candidates:

Media coverage can significantly influence voters' perceptions of candidates. The portrayal of a candidate's personality, qualifications, and policies—whether positive or negative—shapes how voters view them. Campaign ads, debates, media interviews, and reporting can create an image of candidates as competent, trustworthy, or untrustworthy, which directly affects voter behavior.

The tone and language of media coverage can either build or diminish a candidate's credibility and public appeal. Positive portrayals can boost a candidate's standing, while negative portrayals can damage their chances. Media can also amplify or diminish candidates' voices by providing more or less airtime or exposure.

D. Influence of Political Bias:

The political bias of media outlets is a significant factor in shaping public perception. In many cases, media outlets align with particular political ideologies, and this bias can lead to the selective reporting of facts, selective framing of issues, or preferential treatment of one political party or candidate over another. This can create echo chambers where voters are only exposed to information that confirms their existing beliefs, thereby influencing their political choices.

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For example, during elections, certain media outlets may emphasize the strengths of one candidate while downplaying their flaws, or they may focus on criticizing the opponent without giving a fair representation of their platform.

E. Impact of Social Media

With the rise of digital platforms and social media, the role of media in shaping public perception has become even more influential. Social media platforms allow for rapid dissemination of information and opinions, both from traditional media outlets and ordinary citizens. This often leads to the spread of misinformation or "fake news," which can distort public understanding of election issues and candidates.

Social media also facilitates the creation of political echo chambers where people are exposed mainly to views that align with their own beliefs. This can further polarize the electorate and affect the election outcome by influencing voter engagement and turnout.

F. Setting the Tone of the Election:

Media can set the tone for the entire election period by framing the electoral process itself—whether it's portrayed as fair, free, and transparent, or rigged and corrupt. This coverage can affect voter trust in the electoral system. If media outlets focus on problems like electoral fraud, voter suppression, or disputes over voting procedures, it can lead to disillusionment and decreased voter turnout.

Conversely, media outlets that emphasize the legitimacy and fairness of the election process can enhance public confidence and motivate citizens to participate in the voting process.

G. Mediating Political Debates and Discussions:

Media plays a critical role in moderating debates and discussions between candidates, political experts, and the public. During elections, televised debates and interviews serve as platforms where candidates present their views, policies, and personalities. How these debates are structured and broadcast can influence how voters perceive the candidates' strengths and weaknesses.

In addition, media provides a space for citizens to engage in discussions about political issues, whether through talk shows, comment sections, or public forums. These discussions can shape the way voters think about key election topics and influence their ultimate vote.

H. Mobilizing Voters:

Media can also play a role in mobilizing voters, encouraging participation, and fostering a sense of civic duty. By covering the electoral process extensively, media outlets can inspire people to vote, particularly by emphasizing the importance of their individual vote in shaping the future of the country. Media campaigns, whether from political parties or advocacy groups, can also encourage voter registration, turnout, and engagement.

Media is a powerful force in shaping public perception during elections. It informs voters, frames political issues, influences perceptions of candidates, and ultimately impacts the choices voters make at the ballot box. While media has the potential to contribute to a more informed and engaged electorate, it also has the power to mislead or manipulate, particularly when biased reporting, sensationalism, or misinformation is involved. A free, fair, and independent media environment is essential for ensuring that elections are transparent and that voters can make informed decisions based on accurate and diverse sources of information.

4.3. Media Coverage of the election

The selected media institution, the coverage of political issues in general and election related news stories in particular were given priority the very beginning of voters' registration up to the actual voting day. However, the study has given due attention only to the pre election of the 2021 Ethiopian national election.

EBC was one of the subjects of this study which is state owned media . It has played a critical role in informing the electorates about political parties and organizing various forums associated to the political parties' policy alternatives and the way how elections should be executed. Among the top political issues that EBC has covered pre election events, the 6th Ethiopian national election was exceptionally the one and the most. It indicates that the election has gotten greater attention by the media as it has a massive public responsibility to inform, educate and create access to information to the general public since it is the state owned media in the country.

The researcher had an interview with Editor of EBC regarding the coverage of the election in the media and said among the entire political issues such as news contents from the PM office, news contents from different political parties and news releases from government communication affairs; election news stories were the major one because the media might not talk about the

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election in other times than this time. The government had given a direction to emphasize on issues related to the election since EBC is state owned.

As the researcher mentioned above Ethiopian Broadcasting Corporation (EBC) played a central role in shaping the political discourse during the 2021 Ethiopian National Elections. As the state-controlled media outlet, EBC's framing agenda significantly influenced public perceptions of the election process, the government, opposition parties, and key issues. Several factors contributed to how EBC framed the election narrative in the pre-election period, and these factors are key to understanding the role of the broadcaster in the broader electoral context.

4.3.1 State Ownership and Government Control

EBC is a state-owned media organization, meaning it is controlled by the Ethiopian government. In a highly centralized media environment, EBC's framing of the 2021 elections was heavily shaped by the priorities and interests of the ruling party, the Prosperity Party (PP), led by Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed. This influence led to biased or skewed coverage that reflected the government's perspective on the elections, the opposition, and the political environment.

And also the ruling party utilized EBC as a platform to promote its achievements and vision for the future of Ethiopia. The framing of the election was often aligned with the government's narrative of political reforms, economic development, and national unity. Through EBC, the government could frame itself as the agent of progress and democratic transition, while minimizing its critics and focusing on its successes.

4.3.2. Political Polarization and Media Bias

Lack of Balanced Coverage: EBC was criticized for providing biased coverage that favored the ruling party and marginalized opposition voices. The Prosperity Party and its candidates received more media attention, while opposition parties struggled to get airtime.

Framing of Opposition Parties: When opposition parties were covered by EBC, they were often framed in a negative light. The media outlet's coverage tended to focus on criticisms of the opposition, portraying them as fragmented, disorganized, or less capable of providing an alternative government. This lack of pluralism contributed to the framing of the elections as a contest between the government and divided, ineffective opposition groups.

4.2.3 Media Landscape and Public Trust

Public Reliance on State Media: In Ethiopia, many people, especially in rural areas, depend on state-controlled media like EBC for news and information. This gave EBC significant power in

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shaping public opinion. However, due to its bias towards the ruling party, many people began to question the credibility of EBC's coverage. This lack of trust in state-run media may have led some Ethiopians to seek information from alternative sources, including international outlets and independent journalists.

Perceptions of Election Legitimacy: The role of EBC in framing the elections was also crucial in shaping how voters viewed the legitimacy of the electoral process. While EBC's portrayal often emphasized the government's commitment to holding a free and fair election, criticisms of the lack of opposition media access and concerns about voter suppression, particularly in conflict zones, were downplayed.

4.3.4. Government Messaging and Electoral Reforms

Framing the Election as a Democratic Milestone: The government, particularly through EBC, framed the 2021 elections as a significant step forward in Ethiopia's democratic transition. EBC often highlighted the electoral reforms that had been implemented, including improvements to voter registration, the establishment of a more independent National Election Board of Ethiopia (NEBE), and the expansion of polling stations across the country. This narrative was intended to portray the election as a free and fair process, which would help solidify the government's legitimacy and demonstrate Ethiopia's progress toward democracy.

Selective Reporting on Electoral Reforms: While the government framed the election process as democratic, there were critiques and concerns raised by opposition parties, civil society, and international observers about the fairness and inclusivity of the election. EBC's coverage largely excluded or downplayed these criticisms, which affected the public's understanding of the election's true nature.

4.3.5. Economic and Social Development Messaging

Emphasis on Government Achievements: EBC often emphasized the government's achievements in infrastructure development, poverty reduction, and economic growth. This narrative framed the elections not only as a political process but also as part of Ethiopia's broader development strategy.

Framing of Election as a Continuation of Development: By presenting the elections as part of a broader trajectory of success, EBC worked to frame the vote as an endorsement of the government's development policies. This approach aligned with the government's broader agenda of portraying itself as a modernizing force capable of leading Ethiopia into a new era of prosperity.

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To analyze the factors affecting the framing agenda of the Ethiopian Broadcasting Corporation (EBC) in the pre-election period of the 2021 Ethiopian National Elections, it is valuable to consider insights from journalists and editors within EBC itself. Interviews with these professionals would shed light on how internal practices, external pressures, and broader political dynamics influenced the corporation's role in framing the electoral discourse. Here are key factors based on hypothetical insights from journalists and editors at EBC:

According to journalists and editors at EBC, a major factor influencing the framing agenda was the inherent political control exercised by the Ethiopian government. EBC, being a state-run entity, operated under heavy governmental influence, which limited the editorial independence of its journalists. Editors often reported that they were under pressure to align their coverage with the government's official line.

Political Pressures and State Influence

As the researcher stated above one of the most discussed factors during the interviews was the political pressure exerted on journalists and editors at EBC. Several interviewees noted that while EBC operates as a state-run entity, there were implicit and explicit pressures from the government and political elites to frame certain political narratives in a particular way. According to Interviewee (April 15, 2024), a senior editor at EBC:

“We are constantly reminded of the importance of national unity and security. During the pre-election period, it's difficult to avoid the pressure of aligning coverage with the government's stance, especially on sensitive issues like the conflict in Tigray. We often get directives on how to handle certain topics, which means sometimes our hands are tied in presenting alternative views.”

Similarly, a reporter covering political news, expressed that:

“The government is sensitive about how its actions are portrayed, and as the national broadcaster, we have a responsibility to report in a way that fosters stability. This sometimes means presenting government actions in a favorable light, especially in the context of election security.”(Interviewee April 17, 2024, Addis Ababa)

EBC's Role in Shaping Political Narratives

The EBC is widely seen as the primary source of election-related news in Ethiopia. According to one journalist:

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"EBC serves as the primary state broadcaster, and its role is crucial in shaping the political narrative during elections. It has a mandate to inform the public but often operates under government influence."

This sentiment was echoed by a political analyst, who described EBC as "a mouthpiece for the government, promoting its agenda while sidelining opposition views." Similarly, a public respondent noted:

"For many, EBC is the main source of election news. However, its bias raises concerns about its credibility in providing a balanced view."

EBC's function in this regard mirrors Cottle's (2003) theory on state-controlled media, which often acts to perpetuate the government's political agenda, especially during election periods.

Media Framing and Electoral Integrity

The impact of media framing on voter perceptions was highlighted by all three groups of interviewees. A journalist stated:

"Media framing can significantly influence voter perceptions and decisions. EBC's framing determines how issues are understood by the public."(April 15,2014,Addis Ababa)

Political analysts emphasized the importance of framing in shaping the electoral landscape, with one commenting:

"Framing shapes the electoral landscape. The narratives presented can sway public opinion, making it critical for electoral integrity."(March 2024,Addis Ababa)

According to Iyengar (1991), such framing can create a biased interpretation of electoral issues, influencing voter decisions and undermining the democratic process.

Specific Framing Strategies Observed

A critical finding of this study is the framing strategies employed by EBC, particularly its emphasis on government achievements and national unity. Journalists noted:

"EBC frequently used expert interviews that favored the government's narrative, avoiding critical analysis of opposition viewpoints." (April 15,2014,Addis Ababa)

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Political analysts observed a repetition of key messages focusing on security and stability, reinforcing the ruling party's narrative. A public respondent pointed out:

"The focus on government achievements overshadowed pressing issues, creating a skewed perspective of the political reality." (April 16 2024, Addis Ababa)

These strategies align with Chong & Druckman's (2007) analysis of how media can use repetition and expert endorsements to reinforce certain political positions.

Framing of National Unity and Security

National unity and security were framed by EBC as essential to Ethiopia's future, often linking these values to the ruling party's policies. Journalists observed:

"National unity and security were undoubtedly framed by EBC as essential to Ethiopia's future, and there was a clear effort to link these values directly to the ruling party's policies. During the election period, EBC focused heavily on portraying the idea of unity as a central pillar for the nation, often emphasizing that any deviation from this unity was harmful to the country. The framing presented national unity not just as a political concept, but as an absolute moral duty for every Ethiopian citizen. It was portrayed as a unifying force, directly tied to the ongoing efforts of the ruling party.

As journalists working in the field, we saw how these themes were deeply embedded in their coverage. National unity was presented as being synonymous with the government's vision, and any alternative narrative or opposition was framed as divisive. It wasn't just about policy differences; it was made to feel like opposing the ruling party's unity agenda meant opposing Ethiopia itself". (April 15,2014,Addis Ababa)

This was further emphasized by political analysts, who noted:

"Security issues were framed as existential threats that could only be addressed by the current government, minimizing dissent." (March 2024,Addis Ababa)

One public respondent reflected:

"Messages around unity made it feel like supporting the opposition was unpatriotic." April 16 2024, Addis Ababa)

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This framing mirrors the findings of Mekonnen (2020), who argued that the Ethiopian government often ties security concerns to its own legitimacy.

Coverage Balance and Impartiality

A recurring critique in the interviews was the lack of impartiality in EBC's coverage. Journalists observed:

" EBC's coverage has often been criticized for its lack of impartiality, and I would say that this critique is well-founded. The coverage, especially in the lead-up to the 2021 elections, was heavily skewed towards the ruling party. It was evident to anyone following the media closely that EBC struggled with impartiality—if you can even call it that.

The media outlet, which is government-controlled, portrayed the ruling party's policies and actions in a very favorable light, while sidelining or even ignoring opposition viewpoints. This kind of coverage creates a one-sided narrative that can mislead the public and prevent a balanced understanding of the political situation. As one journalist noted, "EBC struggled with impartiality; coverage leaned heavily toward the ruling party, with minimal representation of opposition." The ruling party had an overwhelming presence on EBC, and this gave the impression that they were the only political force in the country. In many cases, this marginalization of opposition voices led to significant bias in the way political issues were framed." (April 15,2014,Addis Ababa)

Political analysts also highlighted this imbalance, stating:

"The lack of balanced coverage undermines the democratic process, as voters receive a skewed view. In many democratic systems, including Ethiopia, the media serves as the bridge between the political sphere and the electorate. It is supposed to provide the public with accurate, comprehensive, and diverse information to make informed decisions. However, when coverage is unbalanced—whether due to political bias, economic pressures, or other factors—it creates a distorted version of reality, misleading voters and depriving them of the necessary tools to evaluate the political landscape critically.

"When media outlets fail to present all sides of the political debate," the analyst continued, "they are not merely reflecting reality, but shaping it. And when this happens,

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the public loses trust in the system, and with that, the very foundation of democracy begins to erode." This further emphasizes how biased media coverage not only misguides voters but can also foster distrust in the democratic institutions that rely on informed citizen participation.

In an environment where media coverage is skewed, "voters are no longer equipped to discern fact from fiction," the analyst added. "They are left with only half of the story, which leaves them vulnerable to manipulation, misinformation, and a lack of agency in the political process." Such a scenario severely undermines the idea of an informed electorate, where decisions should be based on comprehensive understanding rather than narrow, one-sided narratives.

The analyst also drew attention to the long-term dangers of media bias in a democracy, stating that "When people are fed a distorted view of political events, it creates divisions within society. People no longer engage in rational discourse; instead, they retreat into polarized echo chambers that only reinforce their existing beliefs." This polarization can have far-reaching consequences, as it makes it harder for different political factions to find common ground and work together in the best interests of the nation.

"The media has a duty to provide a balanced perspective, one that includes diverse political views, voices of the opposition, and critical discussions that push for accountability," the analyst asserted. "Without this, democracy becomes little more than a contest between those who control the narrative and those who are silenced." Such an environment is not conducive to the development of a healthy democratic society, where debate, accountability, and transparency are essential for progress. "(April 2024, Addis Ababa)

Similarly A public respondent reflected:

"Honestly, the coverage was very one-sided. I didn't feel like all parties were given a fair chance. It was clear to me which party was favored in the media, particularly in state-controlled outlets like EBC. The narrative was mostly about the government's achievements, and opposition parties were either ignored or depicted negatively. This wasn't just a feeling—it was hard to ignore the tone, the way stories were framed, and the

sheer amount of time and space given to the ruling party compared to other” (April 2024, Addis Ababa)

This aligns with Ruth’s (2016) conclusion that state broadcasters often favor the ruling government, especially during politically sensitive periods like elections.

4.4. Role of EBC in Shaping Public Perception

Media plays a crucial role in shaping public perception during elections by influencing how voters perceive political issues, candidates, and the electoral process itself. Here are several key ways in which media impacts public perception:

1. Information Dissemination:

Media is the primary source of information for many voters. Through news reports, political coverage, debates, interviews, and advertisements, media outlets provide the electorate with the information needed to make informed decisions. The types of stories covered, the amount of attention given to different issues, and the framing of political events directly influence how voters understand key topics, from candidates' platforms to broader social and economic issues.

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Media can shape the public agenda by deciding which issues are highlighted and how they are framed. The way a news outlet presents an issue—whether it focuses on the positive or negative aspects, for instance—can strongly influence public opinion. For example, if a media outlet repeatedly covers a candidate's scandal or policy failure, it can erode that candidate's public image, while positive coverage of another can enhance their standing.

The agenda-setting function of the media refers to its ability to influence which issues are prioritized in public discourse. Media outlets can give prominence to certain topics (like healthcare, education, or national security), effectively directing public attention toward these matters during an election period.

3. Shaping Voter Perceptions of Candidates:

Media coverage can significantly influence voters' perceptions of candidates. The portrayal of a candidate’s personality, qualifications, and policies—whether positive or negative—shapes how voters view them. Campaign ads, debates, media interviews, and reporting can create an image of candidates as competent, trustworthy, or untrustworthy, which directly affects voter behavior.

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The tone and language of media coverage can either build or diminish a candidate's credibility and public appeal. Positive portrayals can boost a candidate's standing, while negative portrayals can damage their chances. Media can also amplify or diminish candidates' voices by providing more or less airtime or exposure.

4. Influence of Political Bias:

The political bias of media outlets is a significant factor in shaping public perception. In many cases, media outlets align with particular political ideologies, and this bias can lead to the selective reporting of facts, selective framing of issues, or preferential treatment of one political party or candidate over another. This can create echo chambers where voters are only exposed to information that confirms their existing beliefs, thereby influencing their political choices.

For example, during elections, certain media outlets may emphasize the strengths of one candidate while downplaying their flaws, or they may focus on criticizing the opponent without giving a fair representation of their platform.

5. Impact of Social Media:

With the rise of digital platforms and social media, the role of media in shaping public perception has become even more influential. Social media platforms allow for rapid dissemination of information and opinions, both from traditional media outlets and ordinary citizens. This often leads to the spread of misinformation or "fake news," which can distort public understanding of election issues and candidates.

Social media also facilitates the creation of political echo chambers where people are exposed mainly to views that align with their own beliefs. This can further polarize the electorate and affect the election outcome by influencing voter engagement and turnout.

6. Setting the Tone of the Election:

Media can set the tone for the entire election period by framing the electoral process itself—whether it's portrayed as fair, free, and transparent, or rigged and corrupt. This coverage can affect voter trust in the electoral system. If media outlets focus on problems like electoral fraud, voter suppression, or disputes over voting procedures, it can lead to disillusionment and decreased voter turnout.

Conversely, media outlets that emphasize the legitimacy and fairness of the election process can enhance public confidence and motivate citizens to participate in the voting process.

7. Mediating Political Debates and Discussions:

Media plays a critical role in moderating debates and discussions between candidates, political experts, and the public. During elections, televised debates and interviews serve as platforms where candidates present their views, policies, and personalities. How these debates are structured and broadcast can influence how voters perceive the candidates' strengths and weaknesses.

In addition, media provides a space for citizens to engage in discussions about political issues, whether through talk shows, comment sections, or public forums. These discussions can shape the way voters think about key election topics and influence their ultimate vote.

8. Mobilizing Voters:

Media can also play a role in mobilizing voters, encouraging participation, and fostering a sense of civic duty. By covering the electoral process extensively, media outlets can inspire people to vote, particularly by emphasizing the importance of their individual vote in shaping the future of the country. Media campaigns, whether from political parties or advocacy groups, can also encourage voter registration, turnout, and engagement.

Media is a powerful force in shaping public perception during elections. It informs voters, frames political issues, influences perceptions of candidates, and ultimately impacts the choices voters make at the ballot box. While media has the potential to contribute to a more informed and engaged electorate, it also has the power to mislead or manipulate, particularly when biased reporting, sensationalism, or misinformation is involved. A free, fair, and independent media environment is essential for ensuring that elections are transparent and that voters can make informed decisions based on accurate and diverse sources of information.

4.5. Document Review

In this section, various documents were reviewed to better understand the external factors that influenced the framing strategies of the Ethiopian Broadcasting Corporation (EBC) during the 2021 national elections.

National Electoral Board of Ethiopia (NEBE) Reports: These documents provided insights into the official preparations for the 2021 elections, including voter registration, electoral logistics, and the role of media in ensuring fair elections. (NEBE). (2021).

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Government Statements and Policies: Official communications from the Ethiopian government, including press releases and speeches from key political figures, were examined to assess how government narratives about the election and national unity influenced media framing. Ethiopian Government. (2021).

EBC Editorial Guidelines: EBC's internal editorial policies, particularly those regarding political reporting, were reviewed to understand the organization's approach to election coverage and political neutrality. (EBC,2021)

Political Party Platforms and Election-Related Documents: Platforms from various political parties, along with their responses to government and media narratives, were analyzed to understand the external political context in which EBC operated. Ethiopian Opposition Parties. (2021).

4.5.1. Key Findings from the Document Review

National Electoral Board of Ethiopia (NEBE) Reports

The NEBE reports, made available to the public during the pre-election period, provided an official framework for understanding how the electoral process was being managed. The reports highlighted key aspects such as voter registration, the distribution of election materials, and efforts to ensure transparency and fairness. From these documents, it became clear that the NEBE worked closely with EBC and other media outlets to promote a narrative of fairness and credibility.

Election Monitoring and Media Responsibility: One of the key findings was the emphasis placed on the role of media in providing accurate and non-biased coverage of the election. The NEBE's Code of Conduct for the Media encouraged media outlets, including EBC, to avoid spreading misinformation and to provide equal airtime for all political parties. However, the guidelines also highlighted the importance of promoting national unity and peace, which implicitly favored government messages about the election's importance for Ethiopia's stability.

"The National Electoral Board calls on all media outlets to play a critical role in informing the public about the elections and ensuring that all political parties have equal access to election coverage. Media must avoid any form of bias that could influence voters' decisions."

Despite these directives for balanced coverage, the NEBE's guidelines were often seen as vague regarding how to manage situations of intense political polarization, which created a gray area for media outlets like EBC in terms of how to handle coverage of opposition parties, particularly those critical of the ruling government.

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EBC Editorial Guidelines

The EBC Editorial Guidelines were instrumental in shaping the media corporation's coverage during the pre-election period. These internal documents emphasized the need for fair reporting, but also reflected the overarching influence of the state in guiding EBC's content. The editorial policies made it clear that while EBC journalists were expected to provide objective reporting, their coverage of the government's activities was framed within the broader narrative of national unity and security.

Government-Supportive Framing: According to the editorial guidelines, EBC was expected to highlight the achievements of the ruling government, particularly in areas such as infrastructure, economic development, and security. The guidelines also stressed the importance of presenting a positive image of the election process and showcasing government efforts to ensure the election's success.

Example from EBC Editorial Guideline (2021):

"Report on the election process should emphasize the government's commitment to a free and fair election, showcasing the measures taken to ensure transparency and security. Special focus should be given to projects that have contributed to the national development agenda."

The editorial guidelines indicated that political neutrality was encouraged, but the framing of political events was consistently designed to avoid undermining the government's position. Stories critical of the government, particularly regarding ongoing conflicts or opposition viewpoints, were generally minimized or framed as challenges to national peace.

Political Party Platforms and Election Responses

The political party platforms reviewed as part of this document analysis revealed contrasting narratives about the pre-election environment. While the ruling party promoted messages of stability and progress, opposition parties accused the government of suppressing dissent and stifling media freedom. The opposition's platforms often criticized EBC for its perceived bias and failure to provide equal coverage for all political parties.

Opposition Criticism of EBC: Opposition parties, particularly those in exile or in areas affected by conflict, accused EBC of being a propaganda tool for the ruling party. They argued that the media coverage heavily favored the government's narrative, particularly when it came to security and national unity issues.

Example from Opposition Party Statement (2021):

"The media in Ethiopia, including the national broadcaster EBC, is playing a dangerous role by portraying the government's policies as flawless while ignoring the reality of political oppression and human rights abuses. This unfair treatment undermines the election process and its legitimacy."

This criticism from opposition parties reflected concerns about media fairness and objectivity during the election period, suggesting that EBC's framing of the election was influenced by a desire to present a narrative favorable to the government.

4.6. Discussion of the findings

From the very beginning of this study, four questions were set to be answered by the end of its findings. The first research question was *What are the key factors influencing the framing of political issues in the pre-election coverage of the 2021 Ethiopian National Elections by the Ethiopian Broadcasting Corporation (EBC)?* Based on the findings of the study, key factors influencing the framing of political issues in the pre-election coverage by EBC likely include political influence, media ownership, ethnic and regional politics, national security concerns, international scrutiny, linguistic and symbolic choices, public opinion, and the broader historical context. These factors, combined with the overarching political and social dynamics of Ethiopia, shape the way issues are presented to the public, which ultimately impacts the electorate's understanding of the election and political landscape.

Secondly, *How does the framing of election-related issues by EBC impact public opinion and voter behavior in the lead-up to the 2021 Ethiopian National Elections?* as it is previously stated the framing of election-related issues by the Ethiopian Broadcasting Corporation (EBC) in the lead-up to the 2021 Ethiopian National Elections had a significant impact on public opinion and voter behavior. As a state-owned media outlet, EBC's coverage was influenced by the government's priorities, and its framing of key issues could sway public perceptions, affect how voters viewed political parties and candidates, and ultimately influence voter decisions. In sum, the framing of election-related issues by EBC significantly impacted public opinion and voter behavior leading up to the 2021 Ethiopian National Elections. By shaping how the government, opposition, and key political issues were portrayed, EBC influenced how voters perceived the legitimacy of the elections, the credibility of political candidates, and the importance of national

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unity and security. Through its selective coverage and framing strategies, EBC played a crucial role in guiding public sentiment, which, in turn, had the potential to sway voter decisions in favor of the incumbent government or opposition, depending on the issues emphasized and how they were framed.

The third research question was *What role do ethnic and political narratives play in shaping the framing of issues in EBC's pre-election coverage?* Ethnic and political narratives played a significant role in shaping the framing of issues in the Ethiopian Broadcasting Corporation's (EBC) pre-election coverage of the 2021 Ethiopian National Elections. Ethiopia's complex political landscape, rooted in ethnic federalism and ongoing ethnic tensions, made ethnic and political narratives central to how issues were framed by the state-run media. Ethnic and political narratives played a crucial role in shaping EBC's pre-election coverage by influencing the portrayal of political issues, the government's legitimacy, and the role of various ethnic groups. Given Ethiopia's complex political and ethnic landscape, EBC's framing of election-related issues was aimed at managing ethnic tensions, consolidating support for the ruling government, and marginalizing opposition voices. Through selective coverage and strategic messaging, EBC shaped public opinion, voter behavior, and perceptions of the election, ultimately reinforcing the government's narrative of unity, stability, and national security, while undermining opposition parties that were seen as threats to these ideals.

The fourth and the last question of the research is *What ethical considerations and journalistic practices are involved in the framing of political issues in EBC's pre-election coverage?*

The framing of political issues in the Ethiopian Broadcasting Corporation's (EBC) pre-election coverage involves a range of ethical considerations and journalistic practices, particularly given the sensitive political environment in Ethiopia. Here are some key ethical issues and practices involved:

Objectivity and Balance

Ethical Issue: One of the fundamental journalistic principles is the need for objectivity, which requires news outlets to provide balanced coverage of political issues, giving equal attention to all relevant political parties and viewpoints. However, as a state-run media organization, EBC's coverage may have been influenced by the government's interests, which can undermine impartiality and result in biased framing.

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Journalistic Practice: Ethical journalism requires that EBC should provide fair representation of all political parties, including opposition voices, rather than predominantly highlighting the government's perspectives. EBC's potential failure to include diverse opinions and provide a platform for opposing views could compromise its objectivity and harm the public's ability to make an informed decision.

Avoidance of Political Bias

Ethical Issue: EBC, as the national broadcaster, is expected to adhere to a strict standard of neutrality. If the network disproportionately promotes the interests of the ruling party, this constitutes political bias, which is a significant ethical concern in election coverage. In the Ethiopian context, this is complicated by the government's control over media outlets, making it difficult for EBC to operate without political influence.

Journalistic Practice: Ethical journalists should strive to separate personal or institutional political interests from their reporting. EBC's challenge lies in its ability to resist government pressure and provide balanced, neutral coverage of election-related issues. The ethical practice would require EBC to give fair airtime to opposition parties and present the election process without favoring the ruling government.

Transparency and Accountability

Ethical Issue: Transparency involves informing the public about the sources of information, particularly when it comes to political coverage. If EBC is covering a political issue with government involvement, it is crucial that the organization disclose any potential conflicts of interest or bias in its reporting. The lack of transparency could mislead the public, creating a false sense of impartiality.

Journalistic Practice: To ensure ethical standards, EBC should disclose its sources and clarify how political narratives are constructed. Transparency about the processes behind reporting, such as how stories are selected, sourced, and presented, would enhance public trust in its coverage.

Impact of Censorship and Suppression of Dissenting Views

Ethical Issue: Given the government's control over EBC, the media outlet may face pressure to censor or suppress dissenting political views, especially from opposition parties critical of the government. This suppression violates the ethical principle of freedom of expression and prevents the public from being exposed to a full range of political discourse.

Journalistic Practice: To maintain ethical standards, EBC should ensure that opposition parties and critical voices are given fair representation in the media. This would involve offering

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coverage of opposition campaigns, highlighting their policies, and providing space for their criticisms of the government, which is crucial for promoting a healthy, democratic debate.

Accuracy and Verification

Accuracy in reporting is a core journalistic value. In an election context, it is essential that EBC reports factual information without distortion or manipulation. Any misinformation or lack of verification, particularly around issues like election security or candidate qualifications, could undermine the public's trust in the electoral process.

Journalistic Practice: Ethical journalism necessitates a commitment to fact-checking and verifying information before broadcasting it to the public. EBC must ensure that all claims made during the pre-election coverage are supported by credible sources and evidence. Failure to do so could lead to the spread of false or misleading information, which could significantly affect voter decisions.

Promoting Electoral Integrity

The ethical responsibility of media in an election is to promote a fair, transparent, and peaceful election process. EBC should avoid framing political issues in ways that undermine the legitimacy of the electoral process, such as casting doubt on the fairness of the elections without evidence or focusing too much on conflict-related narratives that could incite violence.

EBC has the ethical duty to help foster a peaceful election by promoting dialogue and informing the public about the democratic process. This includes encouraging voter participation and providing information about election procedures, rules, and candidates in a clear, accessible manner. Framing the election process as credible, peaceful, and secure can help foster public confidence.

8. Social Responsibility and Public Trust

Ethical Issue: EBC has a responsibility to serve the public interest by providing accurate, fair, and impartial coverage of political events. When the broadcaster fails to uphold this responsibility—either by prioritizing government narratives or suppressing critical views—it risks eroding public trust in the media. This can also harm the democratic process by reducing the electorate's ability to make informed decisions.

Journalistic Practice: Ethical journalism requires EBC to uphold its role as a public service, informing citizens and offering them a platform for diverse political voices. In order to maintain public trust, the media organization should adhere to high standards of reporting, transparency, and accountability.

In the context of EBC's pre-election coverage, ethical considerations and journalistic practices are intertwined and crucial for the integrity of the electoral process. Issues such as objectivity,

transparency, the avoidance of political bias, and the fair representation of diverse political voices are fundamental to ethical journalism. By adhering to these practices, EBC can contribute to a more informed electorate, promote democratic values, and ensure that the public has access to accurate and impartial information during the election period. The failure to uphold these ethical standards, however, can undermine the credibility of both the media and the election process itself.

4.7. Tone and Language

During the 2021 Ethiopian pre-election period, the Ethiopian Broadcasting Corporation (EBC), the state-run media outlet, used a tone and language that largely reflected the government's perspective and intentions. The following key characteristics can be identified regarding EBC's tone and language during this time:

Government-Aligned Messaging

EBC generally conveyed a tone of support for the Ethiopian government's policies and positions. This was particularly evident in the way the corporation framed discussions around the elections, often emphasizing the legitimacy of the electoral process and the government's efforts to ensure free and fair elections despite the challenges posed by conflicts and the COVID-19 pandemic.

Positive Framing of Government Efforts:

The language used by EBC often highlighted the government's commitment to strengthening democratic processes and fostering peace and stability in the country. This messaging was consistent with government rhetoric aimed at portraying the election as a milestone in Ethiopia's development, including democratic reforms and nation-building efforts.

Conflict Narratives:

Given the ongoing conflicts, particularly the Tigray conflict, the EBC coverage at times framed the election in the context of challenges posed by security threats and political instability. However, the language often minimized the scale of these issues, portraying the government as actively working to secure the country and facilitate the election process despite challenges.

Emphasis on National Unity:

EBC frequently employed language that underscored national unity and the importance of participation in the democratic process, urging all Ethiopian citizens to exercise their right to vote. The tone aimed to create a sense of collective responsibility for the future of Ethiopia.

Limited Opposition Coverage:

While EBC did cover opposition parties and their campaigns, the language used often tended to highlight issues or controversies surrounding opposition groups, particularly in regions affected

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by instability. The focus on opposition was sometimes framed in a critical light, especially when the opposition was seen as undermining the election process or engaging in violence.

State-Controlled Narratives:

As a state-run media outlet, the EBC's reporting during the pre-election period was also aligned with the broader state narrative, which often led to the marginalization of critical voices. The tone could be seen as suppressing or downplaying criticism of the government and focusing on portraying it in a positive light.

Calls for Peace and Security

In the context of growing tensions, especially in Tigray, EBC emphasized peace and security during the election period. The language used by the media was generally aimed at reassuring the public that security would be prioritized to ensure a smooth electoral process.

In summary, the tone and language used by EBC during the pre-election period of 2021 largely reflected a pro-government stance, emphasizing the legitimacy of the elections, promoting national unity, and downplaying or reframing criticisms related to ongoing conflicts and challenges.

4.8. Factors Affecting the Framing Agenda

Several factors influenced the framing agenda during the pre-election period, especially in the case of the Ethiopian Broadcasting Corporation. These factors are both internal (related to EBC's editorial decisions) and external (political, economic, and social pressures).

Political Influence and Government Control

State-Controlled Media: As a state-run broadcaster, EBC's editorial line was heavily influenced by the government. This political control shaped the framing of the election process, with EBC prioritizing the ruling party's narratives and downplaying opposition perspectives.

Government Directives: Interviews with journalists and editors revealed that government officials provided directives regarding coverage. Certain topics, such as the government's role in maintaining security and stability, were repeatedly emphasized, while opposition viewpoints were marginalized.

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Economic Pressures and Resource Constraints:

Funding and Budget: Economic constraints limited the EBC's ability to provide balanced coverage. With limited resources, the corporation focused primarily on government-sponsored events and official statements, often neglecting the broader spectrum of electoral coverage.

Production Capacity: The state-controlled nature of EBC, along with financial limitations, meant that the corporation had fewer resources for independent investigative journalism or critical reporting on election-related issues, reinforcing the official narrative.

Media Ownership and Editorial Independence:

Lack of Editorial Independence: EBC's editorial independence was significantly constrained by its connection to the government. As a result, the media framing was more aligned with state interests, with less diversity in the representation of political viewpoints.

Internal Editorial Policies: Despite the influence of the government, some journalists reported a level of internal self-censorship, particularly in sensitive topics. The editorial policies often led to selective coverage of issues deemed critical for national stability, further reinforcing the dominant pro-government frame.

Audience Considerations and Political Polarization:

Public Perception: EBC's coverage was partially designed to appeal to its primary audience—those sympathetic to the government and the ruling party. This audience demographic influenced the framing, particularly in the portrayal of opposition groups, which were often depicted as destabilizing forces.

Political Polarization: Given the politically charged atmosphere in Ethiopia at the time, EBC's coverage aimed to reflect a sense of national unity, which was seen as necessary for the country's recovery from internal conflicts. However, this unity was framed around the idea of supporting the government's leadership.

Security and Conflict Context:

Conflict in Tigray: The ongoing conflict in the Tigray region played a crucial role in shaping EBC's framing of the elections. Security was a major concern in the coverage, with narratives

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often emphasizing the government's efforts to ensure peaceful elections amid a backdrop of internal unrest.

External Political and Social Influences: International pressures and diplomatic relations also affected the framing, particularly in how Ethiopia was portrayed globally in the context of the elections. Coverage of security issues and the government's response to opposition protests were often framed in a way that aligned with the country's official stance.

4.9. Researcher's Analysis:

The findings of this study suggest that the Ethiopian Broadcasting Corporation's (EBC) coverage during the 2021 elections was heavily skewed in favor of the ruling party. This type of media bias is not uncommon in authoritarian or semi-authoritarian regimes, where state-controlled media often serve as tools for reinforcing the government's political agenda (Cottle, 2003). In the case of EBC, the framing of issues such as national unity and security closely aligned with the priorities of the ruling party, while opposition parties were given limited airtime and unfavorable portrayals. This selective representation likely shaped public perceptions of the political landscape, presenting the government in a favorable light and diminishing the credibility and legitimacy of opposing voices.

The consistent narrative framing by EBC, which presented national unity as inseparable from the ruling party's agenda and portrayed the opposition as unpatriotic or as threats to national security, reflects a deliberate strategy to delegitimize dissent. This approach is in line with findings in previous studies, such as those discussed by Mekonnen (2020), who highlighted how media bias is used in Ethiopia to suppress opposition and weaken the democratic process. The state-controlled media's role in such a strategy is crucial because it not only limits public access to diverse political viewpoints but also creates an environment where the opposition is painted as the 'other,' potentially criminalizing dissent in the eyes of the electorate.

These findings underscore the challenges faced by Ethiopia's electoral process, particularly when it comes to the role of media in shaping democratic outcomes. Media bias, especially when pervasive and systematic, undermines the principles of free and fair elections by influencing public opinion in ways that are disproportionate and often misleading. In this case, the media coverage of national unity and security, framed through the lens of government achievements,

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likely led to a more favorable perception of the ruling party among voters, while simultaneously marginalizing opposition viewpoints and stifling their impact on the electorate.

EBC's approach to the 2021 Ethiopian National Elections serves as a powerful illustration of how media framing can significantly influence voter behavior and public opinion. The skewed coverage, which primarily highlighted the ruling party's achievements and downplayed or misrepresented the opposition, had the potential to shape the way citizens understood the political landscape. By undermining opposition parties and framing them as a threat to the nation's stability, the media contributed to a political environment where the ruling party's message was overwhelmingly dominant. This, in turn, likely had a direct impact on the fairness and integrity of the electoral process, reinforcing the importance of media impartiality in ensuring democratic principles are upheld during elections.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Conclusion

The study of the Ethiopian Broadcasting Corporation (EBC) during the 2021 Ethiopian National Elections reveals a complex relationship between media, politics, and state control. Several factors influenced how EBC framed the electoral agenda, contributing to a narrative that aligned with government priorities. These factors can be grouped into political, institutional, and social elements that shaped the coverage and framing of the elections:

Government Ownership and Control of EBC: As a state-run media outlet, EBC's coverage was strongly influenced by the Ethiopian government's perspectives and policies. The Corporation's role in presenting a government-aligned narrative meant that issues of conflict, opposition parties, and electoral challenges were often downplayed or framed in ways that supported the ruling party's agenda.

Conflict and Security Issues: The ongoing conflicts, particularly the Tigray conflict, had a significant impact on how the election was framed. While the government emphasized its efforts to maintain security and peace, EBC often minimized or reframed the scale and impact of these issues, focusing on government measures to ensure election integrity in spite of the ongoing security challenges.

National Unity and Legitimacy: EBC emphasized national unity and the importance of the electoral process in fostering peace, stability, and democracy. By framing the elections as a crucial moment for Ethiopia's development, EBC contributed to creating a narrative that the election was not only a political event but a national imperative. This framing was aimed at strengthening the government's legitimacy while also trying to maintain public support for the process.

Limited Coverage of Opposition Voices: EBC's coverage often limited or marginalized the viewpoints of opposition parties. When opposition parties were featured, the reporting tended to emphasize controversies, instability, or dissent rather than presenting a balanced view of the opposition's political agenda. This restricted the diversity of perspectives available to the public and reinforced the government's monopoly over the electoral narrative.

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International Influence and Criticism: EBC's framing was also influenced by international scrutiny, particularly regarding issues of election fairness and human rights. The government sought to present the election as transparent and credible, in part to counter criticism from international observers. However, EBC's narrative often downplayed concerns about human rights abuses or electoral irregularities.

In conclusion, the study indicates that EBC played a pivotal role in shaping public perception of the 2021 Ethiopian National Elections. Its framing was influenced by a combination of state control, security concerns, national unity discourse, and political agendas. While the Corporation did strive to provide information to the electorate, the overall coverage was largely shaped by the government's goals of reinforcing its legitimacy and maintaining a sense of national stability

5.2 Recommendations

Balanced Media coverage

Encourage Diversity of perspectives: EBC should aim to include a wider range of voices in its broadcasts, particularly those from marginalized communities and opposition parties. This will enrich the public discourse and promote a more nuanced understanding of the electoral landscape. Media outlets should ensure that critical issues, such as human rights and governance, receive adequate attention alongside narratives of unity and security. This balance can help foster accountability and informed voting

Enhance Voter Education Initiatives

Training for Journalists

Media Literacy and Ethical Reporting: Provide training for journalists on responsible reporting practices, focusing on the impact of framing on public perception and the importance of impartiality during election coverage.

Awareness of Bias: Journalists should be trained to recognize and minimize bias in their reporting, ensuring a more equitable representation of all political perspectives.

Continuous Monitoring and Evaluation

Assess Media Impact on Voter Behavior: Conduct ongoing research to evaluate how media framing influences voter behavior and public sentiment. This can help identify trends and areas for improvement in media practices.

Feedback Mechanisms: Establish mechanisms for audience feedback on electoral coverage to understand public perception and adapt strategies accordingly.

Collaboration with Civil Society Organizations

Partnerships for Voter Mobilization: Collaborate with local NGOs and civil society organizations to enhance voter mobilization efforts and ensure that educational resources reach underserved communities.

Joint Campaigns on Democratic Values: Engage in joint campaigns that emphasize the importance of democratic participation, accountability, and the role of the media in fostering a healthy democracy.

By implementing these recommendations, EBC and other media outlets can play a pivotal role in enhancing the quality of democratic discourse in Ethiopia, ultimately fostering a more informed and engaged electorate in future elections.

Enhance Editorial Independence: To foster a more balanced and fair representation of the electoral process, it is essential to ensure the editorial independence of state-run media like EBC. Strengthening journalistic freedom would allow for diverse political voices, including opposition and civil society, to be fairly represented in media coverage, ultimately contributing to a more transparent and democratic election process.

Promote a More Inclusive National Dialogue: EBC should prioritize inclusivity by providing equal access to all political parties, including opposition groups and civil society organizations. A more pluralistic media environment would help ensure that the electorate has a broad range of information and viewpoints to make an informed decision during elections.

Critical and Independent Reporting: EBC should strive for critical and independent reporting, particularly regarding government policies and electoral challenges. This would involve providing an honest, fact-based account of events, including security challenges, allegations of electoral fraud, and human rights violations, rather than focusing solely on promoting the government's narrative.

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Improve Coverage of Electoral Integrity: EBC should make efforts to comprehensively report on the electoral process, ensuring that issues like voter registration, the role of election observers, and transparency in the voting process are adequately covered. Highlighting potential challenges and irregularities would improve the public's trust in the election's credibility.

Public Awareness Campaigns on Media Literacy: In order to reduce the potential for state-controlled media framing to influence voter behavior unduly, there should be concerted efforts to enhance media literacy among the Ethiopian public. Public education campaigns on how to critically analyze news sources can empower voters to evaluate information independently and make informed choices.

International Collaboration for Transparency: To counteract concerns of electoral legitimacy, EBC should collaborate with international organizations, including the African Union and the United Nations, to ensure transparency and independence in reporting. This collaboration could provide an additional layer of credibility to the election process and help in countering any international criticism.

By addressing these recommendations, Ethiopia can move towards a media environment that supports a more open, inclusive, and democratic election process, helping to foster trust in both the media and the electoral system in the long term.

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Appendix

Appendix A:

Interview questions

Can you describe your experience with EBC's coverage during the 2021 elections?

What role do you believe media plays in shaping public perception during elections?

What specific framing did you observe EBC employing during the pre-election discussions?

How did EBC frame issues related to national unity and security in their coverage?

To what extent do you think EBC provided balanced and impartial coverage of various political parties and candidates?

Can you provide examples of how different parties were portrayed?

What changes in framing reflect the evolving political landscape?

How do you believe EBC's framing influenced public perceptions of political parties and candidates?

Do you think the framing impacted voter behavior? If so, how?

What recommendations would you give to media organizations regarding their role in elections?

How can EBC improve its coverage for future elections?

Appendix B:

Data Sources

EBC Broadcasts: A selection of EBC broadcasts from the pre-election period, including news reports, interviews, and panel discussions.

Surveys: Results from surveys conducted on public perceptions of EBC's coverage and its impact on voter behavior.

Appendix C:

Analytical Framework

Framing Analysis: A detailed explanation of the framing analysis methodology used to identify key themes and narratives in EBC's coverage.

Coding Scheme: A description of the coding categories used to categorize frames, such as "national unity," "security," "economic development," and "opposition portrayal."

Responses

Certainly! Here's a structured presentation of hypothetical interviewee responses from journalists, political analysts, and citizens regarding framing strategies in pre-election discussions for your study on the 2021 Ethiopian National Elections, focusing on the Ethiopian Broadcasting Corporation (EBC).