

**Press and Election in Ethiopia:  
An Analysis of the Extent and Bias  
of the Press on the Coverage of  
the 2005 Ethiopian Election**

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## Table of Contents

List of Tables .....	i
List of Figures.....	ii
Abstract.....	iii
<b>Chapter 1: Introduction .....</b>	<b>1</b>
1.1 Background of the Study.....	1
1.2 Statement of the Problem.....	2
1.3 Rationale of the Study.....	4
1.4 Objectives of the Study.....	5
1.5 Research Questions.....	5
1.6 Significance of the Study.....	6
1.7 Limitation of the Study.....	7
1.8 Organization of the Paper.....	7
1.9 Definition of Terms .....	8
<b>Chapter 2: Methods .....</b>	<b>9</b>
2.1 Literature Review .....	9
2.2 Content Analysis .....	9
2.3 Unit of Analysis .....	12
2.3.1 List of Categories.....	16
<b>Chapter 3: Literature Review and Theoretical Frameworks.....</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>Chapter 4: Press and Election in Ethiopia.....</b>	<b>28</b>
4.1 Historical Background.....	28
4.1.1 Development of Press in Ethiopia .....	28

4.1.2 Press since 1991.....	30
4.2 The Role of the Press in Election .....	34
4.2.1 Background.....	34
4.2.2 Press and Election Law .....	36
<b>Chapter 5: The Press Investigated: Monitoring the Press.....</b>	<b>39</b>
5.1 Presentation of Data and Interpretation of Findings.....	42
5.1.1 Space, reports and graphic material.....	43
5.1.2 Election Reviews and statements.....	48
5.1.3 Editorials.....	56
5.1.4 Techniques employed in editorials.....	57
5.1.5 Cartoons.....	60
5.1.6 Headlines .....	61
5.1.7 The agenda.....	63
5.1.8 Election reviews: defense and attack .....	67
5.1.9 Order of appearance.....	67
5.1.10 Party Political Figures.....	68
5.1.11 Others.....	71
5.2 Summary.....	72
<b>Chapter 6: Conclusion and Recommendations.....</b>	<b>73</b>
6.1 Conclusion.....	73
6.2 Recommendations.....	76
<b>Bibliography and Sources .....</b>	<b>82</b>
<b>List of Tables</b>	

Table 1: Press sector circulation of main titles.....	13
Table 2: Main political parties involved in the May election.....	15
Table 3: Coverage of Election.....	42
Table 4: Page Categories of Election related coverage .....	43
Table 5: Political parties covered in the newspapers.....	50
Table 6: Agenda.....	63
Table 7: Type of events coverage.....	65
Table 8: How often politicians were mentioned in the context of the election.....	70

### List of figures

Figure 1: Share and number of times each party appeared on Addis Admas.....	45
Figure 2: Share and number of times each party appeared on Addis Zemen.....	45
Figure 3: Share and number of times each party appeared on Addis Zena.....	45
Figure 4: Share and number of times each party appeared on Ethiop.....	45
Figure 5: Share and number of times each party appeared on Menilik.....	46
Figure 6: Share and number of times each party appeared on Reporter.....	46
Figure 7: Share and number of times each party appeared on Tobia.....	46
Figure 8: Tone of coverage on Addis Admas.....	52
Figure 9: Tone of coverage on Addis Zemen.....	52
Figure 10 Tone of coverage on Addis Zena.....	53
Figure 11: Tone of coverage on Ethiop.....	54
Figure 12: Tone of coverage on Menilik.....	54
Figure 13: Tone of coverage on Tobia.....	54

Figure 14: Tone of coverage on Reporter.....  
.....55

Figure 15: Share of Free Access by public press.....56

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## **Abstract**

One of the most basic expressions of democracy is election. The place of multi-party elections is practically meaningless without free press. The role of mass media and its active role in opening up the democratization process is indeed highly important matter. Fair and competitive elections require freedom of expressions and/or freedom of the press. Freedom of the press requires the availability of alternative sources of information or vibrant media, as part and parcel of democratization process.

Mass media offer the public a choice among various political parties, candidates, and even polices as a platform for discussion. The press empowers their reader by making them aware of the civil and political rights and explaining how and why these rights should be exercised. Yet, in a modern, largely less developed country, where the mass media exercise relative freedom, they will always devote considerable, and often partisan, coverage to the general election.

The relationship between the press and election is an intricate business. Indeed the consensus in international election research and observation is that electoral process cannot be evaluated and understood without free press. To explore the wider political climate in which the press operates; and to deepen and accelerate democratization, the role of press in general and newspapers published during election time in particular should be investigated.

Therefore, this thesis attempts to examine the press's coverage of the election in order to determine the extent and nature of, and bias in the coverage of the May 2005 Ethiopian election. The thesis also measures how these forces promote, spread and even manipulate the press in the time of election. It calls attention to how different forces use and misuse the press.

Then, the following questions attempted to be covered: what are roles of the press play in the democratization process in Ethiopia? Who and what spread the bias? How much? Which determining factors contribute to the bias in coverage?

Both qualitative and quantitative methods of data collections are used in this study. Literature related with the topic of the research is reviewed. The primary data is gathered and analyzed from seven selected Amharic newspapers published in the final four weeks of election campaign in the country; and, to this effect 796 titles by way of content analysis are employed to cover events and circumstances on the electoral processes at specific times of the election. Many variables and unit of analysis are used to substantiate the analysis of the extent and nature of bias in the May 2005 Ethiopian Election. As the period from 12 April to 12 May 2005, a period of intensive election campaign, the data was examined and as the sampling was broad and representative on the whole, the results are considered to be accurate, typical and relevant.

It is hoped that this study will contribute to the scholarship of media in Ethiopia; and also to serve as a seminal study in the relationship between the press and election, as well as to the democratization process in Ethiopia.

## DECLARATION

I declare that, “Press and Election in Ethiopia: An Analysis of the Extent and Bias of the Press on the Coverage of the 2005 Ethiopian Election,” is my own work, that it has not been submitted before for any degree or examination in any other university, and that all the sources I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged as complete references.

Yosef Girmay

Signed: .....

December 2005

## **Chapter 1: Introduction**

### **1.1 Background of the Study**

In any electoral politics, one of the most fundamental concerns of focus would be the political environment within which the mass media operate. An enlightened, prepared, and committed local media can turn on democratization process. Well-informed and responsible news reporting can help to create and consolidate public opinion. In democracies, the government is supposed to serve its people and is expected to carry out what is the common good for citizens. Preparation for the level ground is expected from the government while the opposition should know the 'rules of the game'. Both the ruling party and the opposition are expected to be ready to effectively discharge their responsibilities for meaningfully competitive elections.

Democratization, yet, involves much more than the regular ritual of multiparty elections. Media actually have the role of monitoring democracy. In fact, consensus in monitoring and observation of elections is that the electoral process cannot be evaluated and understood without analyzing the mass media coverage of the election process. Thus, coverage of elections by the press is considered to be a major development of the democratization process; has become a vital element in the relation between the press and elections.

Among media policy analysts, T E Paterson (quoted from "The South African Report on Mass Media and Election," 1982: 7) said that election news results come "from a series of decisions made by organizations about what to observe, what to report, and what emphasis to place on various parts of the [election] coverage."

The Commission on Freedom of the Press has understood the rather difficult position of the press in carrying the responsibility to “determine which persons, which facts, which versions of these facts, shall reach the public.”

Multiparty elections can not be thought without free press, and Abbink (2000:65) aptly asserts that "Media do not only follow the process through, they are also an intrinsic part of it; the watchdog doubles as an actor."

The focus of this thesis is to investigate the extent and bias of the press coverage of the May 2005 Ethiopian Election. Therefore, this study attempts to investigate the role of the press in Ethiopia since multiparty elections has become an important landmark in the country. On the other hand, it is to investigate whether the present political environment contributes to the free press on the democratization process or the press plays the watchdog role in the democratization process in the country. This will contribute to the free press as well as the democratization process in the country. However nascent the free press is, the development of the free press in the country will have a positive impact on the subsequent state of affairs that may lead to the emergence of a pluralistic and genuinely competitive political system in Ethiopia. Moreover, the thesis aims to answer the problem that arises from the relationship between the press and the third general election in Ethiopia during the election campaign period.

## **1.2 Statement of the Problem**

Elections allow citizens to participate in the governance of their country; therefore, the integrity of the media and the election system must be monitored. Election monitoring is a crucial aspect of measuring the democratization process of the country in to transition to democracy. It is, however, an essential undertaking to scrutinize and guarantee free-ness and

fair-ness of such elections and as a result makes sure that the democratic rights of citizens are respected.

Monitoring media also helps to enhance the citizens' participation in elections by ensuring the verification of the watchdog role of the press and by redressing any irregularities when they arise. Yet, there are many ways elections can be influenced from crude intimidation or control of voters to subtle restriction of access to media. Most of the monitoring operations appeared no longer are the focus limited to observing activities on Election Day or during the tabulation process. Rather, effective election monitoring embraces a broader mandate that begins from writing the statutes that establish the election framework to monitoring the major media outlets. The whole purpose of monitoring the media is to assess and analyze the media coverage given and accesses availed to competing political parties and to arrive at conclusions on aspects requiring the general relationship of the media and public participation in the country.

It appeared that the increased attention directed towards fair election processes has affected the scope of monitoring operations everywhere. However, the press in Ethiopia seems that it would like to focus on praising or condemning of the democratization process of the government rather than contributing as watchdog "by deepening and accelerating political communication" in general and election campaigns in particular. Consequently, the press in Ethiopia rarely has understood its role in opening up the democratization process. To achieve this objective, the media monitoring undertaking, one of key aspects of the multidimensional process of election monitoring and perhaps the toughest job on the sector, it has to been analyzed the extent and bias of the press coverage of the May 2005 Ethiopian Election.

### **1.3 Rationale of the Study**

#### A. Relevance of the study:

Mass media is an essential instrument in shaping public opinion. As related to elections access and fair distribution of mass media coverage largely impacts the outcome of election. Where there is less access and unfair balance in distribution of coverage of mass media the public will be deprived of the opportunity to evaluate political options and to elect its representatives with full knowledge and confidence. The final four weeks of election campaign time is a very good time to detect hidden motives of the press, if there are any. Therefore it is essential to monitor this crucial aspect of election for free-ness and fair-ness of the election.

#### B. Perceived needs and constraints:

Such needs were mainly uncovered as a result of concerns raised by academia and civil societies about the role of media in the democratization process in the country. A specific example of such kind is the absence of literature related to media monitoring and the coverage of election in Ethiopia.

#### C. Reasons for the selection and relevance of the action:

The very essence of the right to equal and balanced opportunity for free and fair elections is parallel to the rights of citizens to fully participate in the governance of their country by essentially getting sufficient access to the political options available to the country. If and whenever the public is not presented with all options equally and fairly it is tantamount to deprivation of options in the first place. Therefore a general structural assessment of the press in a multi dimensional perspective is an essential measure to access the freeness and fairness of the overall electoral context currently existing in the country. This particular thesis

is relevant because it aims to basically come up with findings with respect to the above-mentioned issues and contribute the possible reform initiatives in the media as well as electoral system when and if they are deemed to be necessary.

## **1.4 Objectives of the Study**

### **General Objectives**

The general objective of the thesis is to embark upon a systematic and comprehensive monitoring of the press and identify the structural deficiencies and strengths of the press coverage of May 2005 Ethiopian Election. Therefore, it is mainly to look for the place of multi-party elections in democracy, and then to investigate how the media play the role of sensitization in the democratization process in the country.

### **Specific Objectives**

These include:

- ▶ To provide understanding of the role of the press in democratization process.
- ▶ To provide monitoring of the frequency in print coverage of election.
- ▶ To investigate citizens' access to relevant, accurate information on election.
- ▶ To analyze the extent and bias in covering elections the May 2005 Ethiopian Election.

## **1.5 Research Questions**

This thesis is based on the following research questions:

- Whether political parties and candidates gained fair access to the media?
- Whether political parties and candidates were covered in an unbiased and equitable manner?

- Whether the media and the authorities abided by the rules and regulations covering their conduct during the campaign – both in terms of national legislation and international standards?

## **1.6 Significance of the Study**

There have been some researches on elections in Ethiopia; yet, the role of press on election coverage is still virtually non-existent in the country. A comprehensive study that includes the role of press in the democratization process has definite practical as well as academic significance in documenting the political history of a country. It would be relevant for the scholarship of media and press in the country too.

Since this area is not yet exhaustively explored, this study should serve as a preliminary research for others. It would be helpful in assessing certain breakthroughs and trends in the role of the press in the Ethiopian election. Thus, academicians, policy makers and other persons who is interested on media research on Ethiopia will benefit from this research, as this study is a seminal academic undertaking for the scholarship of media studies in the country.

The significance of this study is, moreover, to the Ethiopian public and more generally to the voters. Most specifically all media outlets are expected to benefit from the study especially from the findings of the assessment, which is expected to generate ideas for policy recommendations towards national media reform for free and fair media policy. It is also highly expected to lesser the wide gap and serves as a practical problem-solving mechanism that has paramount importance in building democratization process in the country.

## **1.7 Limitation of the Study**

The media monitoring study of this paper is limited to the seven major Amharic newspapers published between April 12 and May 12, 2005 and circulated on almost the same area.

The methods of this study is limited to some universally accepted parameters: news emphasis (content), frequency, prominence, size, reports, and percentile of the total pages, space, photos, graphic materials and the likes. The analysis is mainly based on the availability of free and fair access as well as the fairness and balance of space allotted to different political parties for publicizing their agenda to the electorate. This study, naturally, does not include the Somali Regional State general election that took place in August the same year.

## **1.8 Organization of the Paper**

The thesis is an analysis of the extent and bias of the press coverage of May 2005 Ethiopian Election, and the role of the press and how the press is involved in the democratization process in general and the election in particular. The first chapter gives introduction to the study and related issues with the paper. The second chapter deals with the methods used in the study. The third chapter reviews the core literature and the theoretical frameworks that are directly related with the issue. And the fourth chapter briefly looks at description of the subject: press and election in Ethiopia. The fifth chapter is presentation of data, and analysis of the extent and biases of the coverage of the third general election by way of monitoring some selected newspapers in a specific period of the May 2005 election in Ethiopia. The final chapter will be the conclusion and recommendations related with the press coverage of election in Ethiopia.

## **1.9 Definition of Terms**

### **Press**

The term *press* is used in this text to refer to all newspapers originating within the country or territory in which elections are being held. Terms such as ‘mass media,’ ‘press,’ ‘tabloid,’ and ‘newspaper’ are commonly used interchangeably in the election monitoring context.

### **Partisan**

The term *Partisan* is used throughout this paper to refer to people or movements having a direct interest, stated or otherwise, in the specific outcome of the elections (e.g., political parties, candidates and political party activists). It may be describe activities that demonstrate a preference for certain election contestants. The term *partisan* is not intended to suggest any connection with particular historical movements or forces.

### **Anomaly/bias**

An *anomaly* is a deviation or departure from the normal order, form or rule. Anomalies could be found by comparing election coverage of space, volume, or their results (e.g., rates of negative tones, etc.) from the current election results with election data from the other newspapers. It could also be analyzed the results in light of information from other sources, including a monitoring results, or political party lists or preferences, and experiences.

### **Qualitative assessment**

A *qualitative assessment* results from an analysis that uses both subjective and relative considerations, (e.g., editorial techniques used in the newspapers).

## **Chapter 2: Methods**

### **2.1 Literature Review**

There are a number books dealing with election and media. However, there is brevity of literature related with the relationship between press and elections in general and the role of the press in Ethiopian elections in particular. This limits the scope of the literature consulted for the purpose of the Ethiopian Election. Yet, the qualitative assessment is part and parcel of this thesis; and it has immense benefit to justify the research questions posed aforementioned.

### **2.2 Content Analysis**

This research is an analysis of the extent and bias of the press coverage of the third Ethiopian general election on some selected newspapers. Among many methods, one commonly used measure to claim objectivity and emphasis on the 'manifest' evidence is content analysis. Content analysis is, thus, the method, which is going to be employed for this study to examine the media's coverage of election, and analyzed in a standard criterion that can reflect bias in election reporting.

Content analysis is a research tool used to determine the presence of certain words or concepts within texts or sets of texts. According to Rubin et. al. (1986: 63), the purpose of content analysis is to learn something about the content, those who produced the messages and/or the effects of the content might have on receivers. Speeches, news reports and television programs are often subjected to content analysis to learn about underlying attitudes, biases, or repeating themes. Due to the fact that it can be applied to examine any piece of writing or occurrence of recorded communication, content analysis is currently used in a variety of fields, ranging from media and marketing studies to literature and

rhetoric, ethnography and cultural studies, gender and age issues, sociology and political science, psychology and cognitive science, and many other fields of inquiry.

Content analysis is well suited for analyzing and mapping key characteristics of large bodies of text, and it lends itself well to the systematic charting of long-term changes and trends in media coverage. On the book, “Mass Communication Research Methods,” (1998) six key steps in doing content analysis are outlined: 1) Definition of the research problem; 2) Selection of media and sample; 3) Defining of analytical categories; 4) Constructing a coding schedule; 5) Piloting the coding schedule and checking reliability and 6) Data preparation and analysis.

Based on the above procedures to carry out a content analysis study, the population of my specific research is defined. Since the Ethiopian newspapers are already the population the next step will be getting the sample frame—a complete list of newspapers that have columns devoted to May 2005 general election in Ethiopia. The time framework is the election period: from 12 April to 12 May 2005 included in the study of the content. Seven newspapers are selected due to their circulation, and to be analyzed election-related stories during the election campaign for 30 days. The samples are manageable and representative number of newspapers; they would be taken the whole that, I believe, will help me obtain a representative and unbiased sample for this case.

As a research methodology widely used in media studies, content analysis has its own limitation and/or advantages and disadvantages. Among its strength or advantages: (a) it enables researchers to shift through large volumes of data with relative ease, (b) it is used in both quantitative and qualitative research approaches, (c) it is systematic and follows clearly defined set of steps, (d) it can provide valuable historical/ cultural insights overtime

through analysis of texts, and finally (e) it can be applied to a variety of streams in the social and human science fields.

While its limitations are: (a) it can be extremely time-consuming, (b) it rarely tells what dimensions (categories) of content to analyze, or how to interpret the wider social significance or meaning of the quantitative indicators generated by analysis of content, (c) it is subject to increased error, particularly when it is used to attain a higher level of interpretation, (d) it is inherently reductive, particularly when dealing with complex texts, and finally, (e) often disregards the context that produced the text as well as the state of things after the text is produced.

However, this method has been chosen because it can objectively measure the extent to which bias exists in the press by counting of content categories or individual words and making conclusions purely based on the frequency the content examined. It is a systematic, replicable technique for compressing many words of text into fewer content categories based on explicit rules of coding.

Though content analysis and discourse analysis are two different fields of study, they are not mutually exclusive. One basic requirement for both types of analysis is that they need a text (written or spoken) to operate. While content analysis focuses on the face value of a given text, discourse analysis goes behind the text and attempts to determine how something was said or written the way it appeared. So, as they both analyze texts to make meaning out of them, this makes them complementary. Moreover, both methods can reach similar conclusions in analyzing texts especially when content analysis examines an entire story or article for thematic analysis. In such a case, content analysis operates beyond the level of a sentence; it considers the whole text, which is what discourse analysis often does.

In this study I used discourse analysis, to an extent, aims at revealing the motivation and politics involved in the arguing for or against a specific issue, statement or value, in the thesis, on editorials. The concrete result will be the awareness to the qualities and shortcomings of each and the inception of an informed debate and assert the qualitative assessments of this thesis.

### **2.3 Unit of Analysis**

Defining a research population provides a base for deciding upon an adequate and appropriate sampling strategy taking into consideration the validity of research questions. The unit of analysis is the smallest element that is actually counted in a content analysis. It can be a single word or symbol, a theme, or an entire article or story, while characters, acts, or entire program can be a unit of analysis for TV and film analysis to tell what the whole story wants to emphasize. For this particular study, the unit of analysis is focused on analyzing the stories by their themes or the central ideas of the stories. Then the next step will be the coding process where the need to categorize the unit of analysis into groups, and making sure that the concepts in each group are as similar as possible to each other and as different as possible from concepts in every other group.

After checking the coding for reliability, then the data preparation will be preceded and analyzed at this stage- counting of the stories that fall on each category. To insure accuracy in the coding and categorizing the unit of analysis, the selected newspapers are interpreted in accordance with certain parameters: space, frequency, volume of reports and graphic materials for the period.

In the conclusion, by understanding what the image intends to depict, the thesis could tell how elections-related issues are viewed in the larger society, as newspapers are reflections

and products of the outlook prevailing in the society. Finally, the interpretation of the findings regarding which thematic area has received greatest attention in the newspapers' reporting on elections and which was under reported, which newspaper is biased or partisan will be discussed.

**Table 1: Press sector circulation of main titles**

Title	Ownership	Circulation per print run	Frequency
Addis Admas	Private	30,500	Weekly
Addis Zemen	Public	17,740	Daily
Addis Zena	Private	Unlisted	Weekly
Ethiop	Private	12,500	Weekly
Menilik	Private	10,500	Weekly
Reporter	Private	12633	Twice weekly
Tobia	Private	12500	Weekly

Note: All the newspapers are Amharic newspapers and published in Addis Ababa. The Reporter has two copies per week of its Amharic language version. Circulation is the combined amount of the two editions. Since October 2005, due to the post-election scenario, except Reporter and Addis Admas, the rest have ceased printing. These newspapers cover more than 2/3 of newspaper circulations.

Source: Ministry of Information, 2005; Mekuria Mekasha, 2005.

There is no independent monitoring service of the media market that provides accurate circulation figures and other important information about the press. It is, rather, difficult to obtain reliable data on the press circulation. Yet, according to the MoI a total of more than 879 licenses have been issued since the October 21, 1992- out of the 638

newspapers circulated in the early 90s- now there are only 85 newspapers that cover a wide range of issues from news to sports; and in one month, 1,575,768 copies of newspapers with a daily average of 52,525 copies were in circulation mostly limited in urban areas and usually do not exceeded 5,000 on average.

Among the newspapers, Addis Zemen is the only daily and broadsheet newspaper published by EPA, the government agency. The rest are private weeklies issued on different dates in Amharic language, and tabloid in size. The most prominent titles are: Reporter and Addis Admas. The Amharic language Reporter is the only newspaper published twice a week, on Wednesday and Sunday while the English one is on Saturday. It was decided to retain the Amharic ones, as almost all election campaigns were mostly in the Amharic language, and, it (taking only one languages) gives an indication of the degree of bias in the coverage of May 2005 Ethiopian election. There are also party papers that are linked to both the ruling and the opposition parties.

In the measuring or counting of items, results for each issue of each newspaper, the average was taken. Differences between newspapers in average column widths were not considered significant and were not taken into account; hence, the bias revealed is totally a reflection of the stance and style of those newspapers. However, when the established column width of any newspaper changed (as in the editorial), allowance was made for such a discrepancy– depending on size.

Content wise, hard news was examined. The format of the news coverage was also categorized based on: election special, article, editorial comment, photos, paid advertisements and cartoons. The quantitative analysis for the newspaper coverage was

categorized into the following pages: election specials, front page, news, politics, and international affairs, government duties, paid advertisement in the case of election.

For the purpose of this study, the space allocated to political actors, parties and candidates are measured. Only OFDM is a single party analyzed in this study. The media unit also measured the tone of media coverage according to a three level scale (positive, negative and neutral) in order to assess the overall tone of the media outlets towards contestants and the different political parties.

Table 2: Main political parties involved in the election

<i>1. EPRDF (Ethiopian Peoples' Democratic Revolutionary Front)</i>	
TPLF	Tigray Peoples Liberation Front
OPDO	Oromo Peoples Democratic Organisation
ANDM	Amhara National Democratic Movement
SEPM	Southern Ethiopian Peoples' Movement

<i>2. UEDF (The Opposition Alliance United Ethiopian Democratic Forces)</i>	
ONC	Oromo National Congress
CAFPDE	Coalition of Alternative Forces for Peace and Democracy in Ethiopia
SEPDC	Southern Ethiopia Peoples Democratic Coalition
AAPO	All Amhara Peoples Organisation
UEDP	Ethiopian Democratic Unity Party

<i>3. CUD (Coalition for Unity and Democracy)</i>	
EDL	Ethiopian Democratic League
AEUP	All Ethiopian Unity Party
UEDP/MEDHIN	Ethiopian Democratic Unity Party/ Medhin
ERMDJ	Rainbow Ethiopia: Movement for Democracy and Social Justice

### **2.3.1 List of Categories**

The following categories or units of analysis were determined, measured and/or counted:

1. Space, Numbers, and Graphic Materials:

- A. Total column centimeters on 'page 1' dealing with the election,
- B. Overall total column centimeters of hard news dealing with the election
- C. Photographs, drawings and graphs related to the election.

2. Election Reports, Reviews and Statements:

- A. Total election reports dealing with the election.
- B. The number of, and space devoted to election meetings, classified under each party. The number of positive and negative statements (defense of own policy or attack on other parties) occurring in election news or statements.

3. Editorials:

The total number/space of editorials having a bearing upon the election appeared in a positive, negative or neutral light. Each occurrence of categories was counted. It must be stressed a qualitative assessment exposes the bias of the newspapers in their editorials

4. Cartoons:

The total number of cartoons having a bearing up on the election, classified in the same way as the editorials

5. Election Specials:

The number and space of 'election specials' given by the newspapers coverage of the election in which the different parties appeared in a positive, negative or neutral light.

6. Free Access:

The number and space of free access allowed to the parties in the public newspaper.

7. The Agenda:

The agenda covered by the parties. Different themes were considered to have occurred in the election campaign.

8. Party and Political figures:

The attention and order of appearance in which the different political parties, and party political figures classified under Coalition for Unity and Democracy (CUD), Ethiopian Peoples Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF), Oromo Federalist Democratic Movement (OFDM), United Ethiopian Democratic Front (UEDF), Independent candidates and Others.

These are monitoring unit of analysis observed on the press coverage of the May 2005 Ethiopian elections. Exceptions were noted in the appropriate places.

The method of analysis of this research will be automated by SPSS program.

### **Chapter 3: Literature Review**

A number of books deal with election and media. There are two theoretical frameworks used in this thesis: one within the realm of the press, and the other is the place of multiparty elections in democracy. There are also many reflections or rather schools of thought on the role of the press in the democratization process.

In this regard, Samuel Huntington (1991) formulated the procedural approach to democracy: equating democracy with multi-party elections. Of course multi-party elections are seen as a necessary and sufficient condition for democracy, yet, still, this assumption is too simplistic to farther the democratization process. Many have criticized this approach as a minimal approach or rather reductionism. Nevertheless, the procedural approach requires: political and civic rights, including freedom of expression and the presence of pluralistic media which are in effect not so minimal at all.

The second approach places multi-party elections *in* participatory democracy. Unlike the elitist approach it advocates direct form of democracy like referenda in the classics. Thus the meaning of democracy extends to values like socio-economic equality. This is in a way a minimalist approach and exerts its considerable influence on one-party states and even in the 'no-party system' in Uganda.

The third is substantive or material approach to democracy. The advocates of this argument sites one further condition listed on the procedural approach: the presence of institutions through which government's policy is dependent on votes and other means of voting preferences. Among political scientists, Robert Dahl "On Democracy" (2000, 44-61) argues that the actual functioning of political parties is as linkage mechanisms between state and civil society.

It is because political parties are totally dependent on their societal context, thus, their presence as a linkage mechanism of communication is a paramount significance. After all, without the mechanism of communication we hardly synthesize the public opinion.

The fourth approach emphasizes institutions and institutional forms, especially in governing heterogeneous political communities, to place multi-party elections in democracy. It looks for accommodation of differences in order to minimize the counter-productive effects of highly centralized models of governance in Africa, including in Ethiopia. Yet, the virtual non-existence of civic society and articulated political party in Africa has deserted the functioning of political parties either on personal or clientelistic bases. Thus, primordial ties in many African countries kidnap their capacity.

However, Abbink and Hesselting (2000) posed *mélange* of the place of multi-party elections in democracy: as the competitive elections are necessary though not sufficient condition for democracy; the convergence of human rights agenda with fundamental civil and political rights along with competitive preferences with meaningful choice to citizens, and mechanisms which guarantees the rights of minorities and ensure fair representation.

To look up these perspectives is relevant because increased pressures for multi party elections and even democratization process coming from both domestic and especially international actors, explicitly or implicitly, rely on the ideas on these schools of thought. Nevertheless, no two democratic systems are exactly alike since a democratic system is a reflection of the society within which it exists. There are also numerous definitions of the concept of election owing to the existence of various systems of elections as they have evolved historically and applied in different polities and social systems.

More often than not, the west is the driving force in spreading "democracy"- often promoted as inseparable from a free market economy. So much so that experiences demonstrate in Africa: development and consolidation of a democratic political culture and institutions have never been easy tasks. Here among prominent African political scientists, Claude Ake (2000:30) did not hesitate to confirm that "the external support for democracy has tended to be focused on multi-party elections, by easy tolerance of non-competitive electoral contests and the presumptions that voting amounts to choosing."

Given democratic transition is a process, Michael Bratton on "Governance and Politics in Africa (1992), identified key variables in his study focused on democratic transformations in Africa, as a more demanding process which involves the deliberate construction of new political institutions and a supportive political culture that must embody enhanced opportunities for political participation and competition. He further argues that the most minimal condition for democratic transition is the implementation of 'free and fair' elections. Yet, essentials for democracy: the legislative institutions to check executive powers, the establishment of genuine independence for the judicial branch, the institutionalization of civilian control over the military and, in fact, the presence of vibrant media should be consolidated.

Definitions of elections entail theoretical frameworks that can be workable universally and indicates logical sources of political authority. A vital element of the first approach implies what Dennis Cohen (1983:80-3) has called the theoretical perspective of *voter choice*: emphasis put on the electoral processes implies an understanding that democratic practice is governed by an inherent uncertainty of outcomes. While the second approach refers to the *legitimizing of state authority* (Hermet et al. eds.1978) concentrating the function of the

elections for the state and its rules, and is guided by some indent that outcomes should be predictable. The distinction between voter choice and legitimating is analytical only, made for the purpose of distinguishing between two logical sources of political authority.

On "Democracy and Decision," Brennan and Lomasky (1993:12) argue "electoral outcomes are *detached* from electoral 'choice' for each voter in a crucial way." This is what the history of elections and the behavior of electorates' witness.

Although it seems a pedestrian askance, authors of a provocative book, "Do Elections Matter?" Ginsberg and Stone (1986) challenged the conventional thinking of elections. True, elections may institutionalize mass political influence, or legitimize state power/authority, but the question, "do elections matter?" is not simple and straightforward; it is so deeply rooted in reality (Robert A. Dahl, 2000). But posing it in this way allows us to consider many topics of great concern of democratic practices.

Elections are not for the mere reason of casting vote. In practice all national elections in the world are organized in order to gain legitimacy for state authority or gain 'popular sovereignty', as the ultimate source of state power. Yet, democratization involves much more than the regular ritual of multiparty elections. This leads to the broadly shared consensus that democracy is more than voting on Election Day, even if, many still think or perhaps believe election is the very reason of democracy.

Elections also have educational virtues since the voting public learns about the issues during the campaign debates. Political Participation is the means that a democracy functions through the adequate participation of citizens. It can broaden political understandings and also essential to promote order, stability and effectiveness of democratic system or the government. The existence of conducive environment for participation, political competence,

understanding of civic as well as political rights, including access to information and/or freedom of expression have positive correlation to democratization.

In fact, according to Pausewang (2002), who is expert on Ethiopian socio-political issues, "democracy is a state of mind, [and] ...democratization is a process to embark on rather than talking about democracy as if it could be established all at once by a constitution." The concept of democratization can also "easily lead to complacency of the justifications of shortcomings" in many newly democratic countries; and still, to qualify as a democratic system, a country has to satisfy certain basic values of democracy: free, fair and competent elections and the presence of vibrant media, at least. These constitute, at least, benchmarks of democratization process, even if, the demarcation between democracy and democratization leads to the bone of contention between ruling elites and opposition parties in many transitional democracies (2002:2).

So far, it seems the most genuine observation is what David I. Kertzer (1996) in the book "The Process of Democratization in Ethiopia: An Expression of Popular Participation or Political Resistance?" said: "Perhaps the most important ritual of legislature found in modern nations is the election. Indeed, it is a ritual that has been taken up by countries around the world, nations with very different official ideologies and diverse institutional structures."

Multiparty elections cannot be thought without free press, and Abbink (2000:65) aptly asserts "Media do not only follow the process thorough, they are also an intrinsic part of it; the watchdog doubles as an actor." Therefore, the role of media, and its active role in opening up the democratization process in which the place of multi-party elections in democracy is practically meaningless without the watchdog, that is, mass media.

Thus, media whatever their shortcomings are indispensable to democratization process in any country; and should play the role of watchdog, and must become agents of democratization. Indeed, a consensus in election monitoring and observation is that electoral process cannot be evaluated and understood without a long-term presence in the country, exploring the wider political climate in which prospective voters, political parties and vibrant media operate. Thus regular observation of political events should be part and parcel of democratization process at this stage (Pausewang 2002; Abbink 2000).

The present and the formally pluralistic political environment, although only nascent, are bound to impact on subsequent state of affairs that may lead to the emergence of a pluralistic and genuinely competitive political system in Ethiopia. These reflections envision the triumph of democracy and democratization will finally reach its historical mission of what a prominent African political scientist, Claude Ake, hopes for Africa (2000). Therefore, the relationship between media in general and the press in particular with general elections like that of the May 2005 Ethiopian election has left an impressive contemplation in the relationship between media and election in Ethiopia.

Media provide a convenient, subtle, yet highly effective means of promoting worldviews. Media, which are products of a particular era, do not occur in a social or political vacuum. Historical, economic and political factors have remained to influence media, making it difficult to develop inclusive theories of media. Yet, the structure and content of media systems both reflect and create overall social structure and culture: whosoever has the greatest influences over a culture's definition of symbols and signs also control any society.

Thus, defining the scope and problems of media has triggered the crucial question: "who says what to whom with what effect," and has created major strains of media effects that

many theorists and anthropologists (See Conrad Kottack's *Primetime in Amazon*) are quite concerned about forms of culture that are most easily and widely affected by mass media.

Mostly media tend to preserve the status quo. At other times, they are critical of the existing social order and work to reform or transform the society. To understand, explain, and predict the effects of media on individuals and society at large- continues to ferment major strains in media theory's development, as every social theory, including any media theory, is an active effort by communities of scholars to make sense of the social world. Some of these theories are “grand,”- they try to explain the entire media systems and their effects on society while others are very small and provide narrower insight of the media. However, some of theorists view media industries as primarily commercial enterprises with little commitment to public service. Meanwhile, as an academic endeavor we must go beyond simple economics into the era of ethics, where decisions involve choosing one social value over others.

Since Walter Lipmann’s “*Liberty and the News*” (1920) called on an awesome power of media's ability to change the society, the number and variety of media theories have steadily increased. By 1960s media theories have emerged as a more or less independent body of thought with different objectives; and try to answer some of the questions, such as: what forms of media bureaucracies or roles should control or regulate the press and how media can serve democratic and culturally pluralistic societies so that their potential is realized and their threats minimized?

Thus, most media theories, synonymous with media effects, have focused on the effects of media. Wimmer and Domnick (1987) on “*Mass Media Research: An Introduction*” put the range of media effects goes as follows: (1) The *direct effects* the media can have, in which they exert powerful, direct effects on an essentially passive audience; (2) The *limited*

*effects*, in which media usually reinforce the audience's existing beliefs and behavior; and (3) The *indirect effects*, powerful but long term; for example, the media are believed to set the agenda for public debate ( Baran, 2000).

George Grabber (1980) reasons for the gap in perceptions, include some researchers do not gauge the range of possible media effects, missing some of the evidence of media influence, and difficulty on clear measuring media effects. The scientific approach relies on objectivity (eliminating bias and judgments on the part of researchers); reliability (getting the same answer or outcomes from a study or measure during repeated testing); and validity (demonstrating that a study actually measures what it claims to measure).

In addition to individual and social values, professional codes of practice can also influence the role of media. So does government intrusion. More often than not, mass media do have certain inherent biases- it amplifies and encourages some ways of understanding the world and forms action it follows. In every era, proponents of the free press would argue that media have the potential to interconnect people to alter our personal lives in useful and meaningful ways. They foresee the rise of a responsible citizenry that uses free press to construct increasingly democratic forms of government. On the other hand, the mesmerizing power of the press and the rise of demagogues whose power is based on the cynical manipulation of mass media have created fear. That is, the tendency to focus on the raw power of media leads us down the well-blazed but analytically improvised path to some kind of determinism, for instance, Nazi's propaganda machine or media instigated genocide in Rwanda.

Yet, can we say that media cause that phenomenon? Or do they simply reinforce the existing condition? Perhaps, rather than simply provoking fear or inspiring optimism, media

theory should serve as a tool that guides our understanding; and media theory should enable media industries that serve the needs and minimize unplanned disruption of the public and the society around politics.

This thesis reflects on four press theories that are considered relevant for role of press in different forms of governments in the world. The classic book, “Four Theories of the Press” by Fred S. Siebert, Theodore Peterson, and Wilbur Schramm first published in 1956. These four essays were developed and prepared in connection with a study of the social responsibilities of mass communicators, which they categorized the role of press, and “differences between press systems in full perspective, then, one must look at the social systems in which the press functions,” (1963, pp. 2-3).

The Authoritarian theory, the oldest of all and still persists that the press being the servant of the state responsible for much of its content to the power figures in charge of government at any given moment is universally accepted in the sixteenth and seventeenth century and this concept set the original pattern for most of for the national press systems of the world. As stated in the Authoritarian theory of the press, the major controlling method of the press is licensing, censorship, and prosecution against establishment rules prevails as the means of control. The press, therefore, functioned from the top-down where truth was thought to be centered near the center of power (pp. 3-37).

On the same book (pp.37- 103), the growth of political democracy and religious freedom, the expansion of free trade and travel, the acceptance of laissez-faire economics, and the general philosophical climate of the enlightenment, undermined authoritarianism and called for a new concept of the press flourished in the nineteenth century was the Libertarian theory. This theory reverses the relative position of man and the state as we saw it in the

Authoritarian theory. Here truth no longer conceived of as the property of power. Rather the right to search for truth is one of the inalienable natural rights of man. Then the press fit in to the scheme of as a partner in the search for truth. In this theory, the press is not an instrument of government, but rather a device for presenting evidence and arguments on the bases of which the people can check on government and make up their minds at to policy. Thus, it is imperative that the press be free from government control and influence.

For two hundred years the United States and Great Britain have maintained this kind of press, almost wholly free from government intervention and encouraged to serve as a “Fourth Estate” along with the executive, legislative and judiciary branch of a democratic government. Yet, the lip service for Libertarian theory has brought currents of change, and a trend toward a new libertarianism in the non-communist countries as “the social responsibility theory” see press to serve both individual and the society at large and trying to see press with some moral rights based on individual duties and responsibilities. On one hand, a new form of authoritarianism in the soviet communist countries- narrows down individuals and expected them to be loyal to the party state. But the very fact that the control of the press is so limited that the press no longer acts as a free market place of ideas, as defined by Mill and Jefferson.

To see that all sides are fairly presented and that the public has enough information to decide; and that if the media do not take on themselves such responsibility it may be necessary for some agency of the public to enforce it. Several other theoretical frameworks have been emerging out of the debates on these classical theories and new trends in the globalized mediated world. Significant developments in information and communication technology have also been growing the media theories.

## **Chapter 4: Press and Election in Ethiopia**

### **4.1 Development of the Press**

#### **4.1.1 Historical Background**

Although, Ethiopia has a long history of recording religious chronicles and events of historical importance, this practice have not contributed for the establishment of press in the country. It only existed for a century. At the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, it was, however, European protestant missionaries who geared to religious teachings in particular introduced printing facilities in Ethiopia. Their activities were neither impressed the local population nor the then rulers.

Emperor Menilik, a visionary modernizer, played a significant role in establishing modern education and communications, including the press in Ethiopia. During his reign, in 1895, the first newspaper, “*Aimero*” (an Amharic word which means ‘Intelligence’), hand-written and a circulation of 24 copies and later reached 200 copies were printed. *Aimero* reflected patriotic and nationalistic aspiration – reflected the issues related with the country, mainly serving the interests of the emperor (MoI 1966, Shimeles 2002). Even if it was suspended many times due to financial constraints, the emperor was very much pleased and interested in the venture that was initiated and published by the Greek businessman Andrea. E. Kavadia.

During the First World War, with the help of the allied powers, the Haile Sellesse government disseminated an Amharic newspaper called “*Yetor Wore*” to counter the German propaganda through. In fact, a modern newspaper, *Berhanena Selam*, with a circulation of 5000 copies was founded in 1923- disclosing progressive ideas and views by and among the intellectuals (Amanuel 2003; Seniet 2000).

Since the press as a whole was growing steadily, the government was obliged to bring the first press law in 1927 that required the publishers to get permissions from the government bureau called *Hager Gizat* (Ministry of Interior). In 1935 two newspapers, a quarterly *Kasate Berhan* (The Light giver) and a political weekly *Atbiya Kokeb* (The Morning Star) were established but short lived due the Italian Occupation (1936-1941).

During this time, press played an extremely important role in rallying the Ethiopian forces in exile. Then just after the liberation, a number of newspapers were named to reflect the era, *Sendek Alamachin* and *Addis Zemen* were launched in 1941, and *The Ethiopian Herald* and “*Ye Zarietu Ethiopia*” in 1943 (Shimeles, 2000) by the indefatigable Belta Wolde Giorgis Wolde Yohannes.

In 1942, an official “Negarit Gazetha” was founded to preserve proclamations, recording of laws and other public matters: No.28/1942, a provision that controls of printing press and proclamation 37/1943, a provision that enacts censorship of theatrical and cinematographic performance were introduced. The government considers permission/ registration and updating license from the then Ministry of Pen as an obligatory precondition; however, the freedom of expression and press (Arts 41 and 45) was guaranteed by the revised Constitution of 1955, for the first time, to go hand in hand with the “civilized world”.

Then in 1974, *Derg*, the military regime, overthrew the Emperor. The early days of the revolution, even if it could not last long, the press was used as platform for relatively open discussion, as noted by some thesis on the subject (Endalkachew, 2001; Senait 2000).

However, in short period of time, the regime changed the landscape of the Ethiopian press for good, and started to use the media primarily for propaganda purposes

and for the spread of socialist ideology. It proclaimed “*Ethiopia Tekidem*,” the creed of a socialist military regime, and nationalized private ownership of large-scale printing presses. It is only in 1987, the PDRE Constitution (1987) with the provision of the press law, Art 47, and Art 67 (20), the state shall provide “the necessary materials and moral support of the exercise of freedoms,” for no avail in its existence.

More often than not, successive Ethiopian regimes run and supervised the press- as mainly propaganda machine. It was neither independent nor autonomous and could not serve the truth or the general public. Therefore, press in Ethiopia has been always characterized by a large degree of involvement of the state from its inception.

#### **4.1.2 Press since 1991**

In 1991 the incumbent Ethiopian People’s Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) threw out the military regime. Then the Provisional Government of Ethiopia had evinced basic human rights and civil rights, including freedom of expressions as seen as integral to freedom and inviolable rights that all individuals regardless of their background, race or religion are entitled to under the rule of law, as Ethiopia is a signatory to the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). The Convention states “Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers” (Article 19, UNDR, 1999).

This was confirmed through the Charter of TGE (Proclamation No. 1/1991 and No. 6/1991, article 4[6]), then reconfirmed with details by press proclamation No. 34/92, article 29 states that the media should “operate freely and responsibly without censorship” (preface) and recognizes the contribution of a free press to the development of a democratic

society. The Charter permitted the establishment of free press and subsequent proclamations related to the press. These measures were considered by many as marking the beginning of a new period of openness and democratization in Ethiopia.

Then the Constitution of Ethiopia establishes freedom of speech in Article 29 where it states that:

1. Everyone has the right to hold opinions without interference;
2. Everyone has the right to freedom of expression without interference. This right will include freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds, regardless of frontiers, either orally, in writing or in print, in the form of art, or through other media of his choice;
3. Freedom of the press and mass media as well as freedom of artistic creation is guaranteed. Press freedom shall, in particular, include the rights enumerated hereunder a) that censorship in any form is prohibited b) the opportunity to have access to information of interest to the public;
4. The press shall be granted institutional independence and legal protection to enable it to accommodate different opinions and ensure the free flow of information; ideas and opinions that are necessary in a democratic society;
5. Any media financed or controlled by the government shall be organized in a manner suitable for the accommodation of differences in opinion.

According to the press law, “*Press* means any establishment/ institution of the mass medium activity such as newspaper, magazines, periodicals, journals, pamphlets, news agencies, radio, television, motion pictures, films, cartoons books, electronic publishing and includes all media of mass communications,” Art (2); and article 3(1), freedom of the press

is recognized and respected, while Article 3(10) also states censorship of the press and restriction of a similar nature are hereby prohibited; yet, any press product and organization must register with the Ministry of Information.

It also says a license should be issued within 30 days. Right of access for journalists to state officials is supported in Article 8 (1), and Article 19 states “Government officials shall have the duty to cooperate with the press in the furtherance of the principle that the people have the right to know about the operations of government and the accountability of government officials.” Journalists from the private press suggested that access was used as an instrument by the authorities against them and supported subservient practices in the industry such as self censorship, though this has not been apparent in the election reporting and access appears to have been non discriminatory and open for all the main media outlets and reporting by the private media extremely critical of the EPRDF.

The media landscape is extremely polarized. The press in Ethiopia is obsessed with politics. There are penal provisions set out in the existing press law for certain offences; there is criticism, the law is draconian that certain provisions relating to “criminal offences of the media” have been transposed into the penal code. The new press law no longer includes penal sentences relating to the mass media and sets of fines have been introduced as punitive measures.

The government press is tightly controlled and mostly publishes what the government would like to hear or serve only as an instrument to promote the policies and ideals of the government. Similarly, the private press make little attempt at covering the government views fairly. As a result, government offices are often hostile to private press reporters. According to MoI, the private press has “...no economic and development and

democratization agenda. They are resorted to distort and exaggerate the existing situation and even create non-existing issues,” (MOI, 2004). Most of the private papers are accused of writing sensational reports and mixing up opinion with facts, biased and unbalanced due to lack of experience and professionalism. They also publish without counterchecking their sources. As a result, the cardinal principles of journalism, particularly fairness, impartiality, and accuracy are at stake. In fact, distorted and even dishonest reports and news coverage are not uncommon in the private press. Moreover, the case of *Tapela*, under-qualified persons employed in low quality newspapers, is witnessed a strange showcase of irresponsible journalism where the driving force are not standard or ethics but profit (Shimeles 2003).

On the other hand, the government is blamed for harassing journalists, not liberalizing the airwaves; and threat of the press law, the continuing imprisonment of journalists, and no press council to arbitrate issues of freedom of press and setting standards for the press professionalism (World Press Freedom Review 2004).

The newspaper market is extremely limited in terms of low circulation figures coupled with poor readership culture and high illiteracy rate and very limited advertising revenues, and sometimes, high production cost of papers. In fact, more often than not, the weakness of the press in Ethiopia both in the government and the private has been subscribed to poor condition of work and rates of payment for journalists.

Relations between certain proprietors in the private print media and public sector are deeply sectarian and the failure of previous initiatives to encourage the parties to work together collapsed after splits in the associations. Many stakeholders suggested one of the major problems with the media in Ethiopia was the deep division between private and

public media and sections of the private media and the Government and a continuous culture of criticism that bordered on diatribe at times and was seen to be counterproductive.

Concerning the printing press, most newspapers are printed in Addis Ababa by state printing facilities. There were no complaints from journalists and editors about printing apart from a general feeling that the printing houses were not very well equipped and delays stemmed from this rather than any intention to deliberately delay distribution of a title. The printers are required to submit receipts of print runs to the MoI in order that circulation is accurately monitored.

## **4.2 The Role of the Press in Election**

### **4.2.1 Background**

The first legislative election in Ethiopia took place in 1956/57 during the Imperial regime. *Derg* also held legislative elections, “*Shengo*”, irrespective of its repressive nature until its downfall in 1991. Despite elections’ rather long history in Ethiopian politics, elections appeared to play a dominant role only since 1991, Ethiopia has experienced three rounds of national elections, and the May 2005 general election is the third legislative election in the country.

Yet, whether these frequent elections are real indicators of an emerging democracy will be subject of enquiry.

For an election to be democratic, and to represent the true wishes of the people, it must meet certain conditions. Some of the most important features are:

1. There must be a real choice among the political parties and candidates.

2. The competing political parties must have freedom to campaign in the election, which means freedom to hold meetings and to communicate with voters (whether by meetings, pamphlets, or advertising) about their policies.
3. There must be rules in place that govern the election. These rules must be known to and respected by all participants and available to everyone. There should be a respected individual or organization to administer the rules. The courts to ensure complaints are handled fairly should supervise the rules and administration of the election. The rules should include strong legal procedures to protect against corruption or violence that may occur when people register to vote, go to a political meeting or cast their votes on Election Day.
4. Most important of all the people must know about their choices of who to vote for, how to vote and why it is important. The voters must have the opportunity to be become well – informed and interested in the election through the provision of non- partisan information, or they can be deceived by special interests that win the election and do what they want with the resource of the country.

It is very difficult to achieve these four requirements of a democratic election without a free press. Elections are said to be central institutions of democratic representative governments; however, it is not enough only to stage elections in a way to view a government is democratic- as all modern democracies hold elections but not all elections are democratic. In democracies, elections would not mark that if elections are not carried out unless the chooser chooses in some socially significance sense. Likewise a choice is not a vote in an election unless the actor conformed to the specific legal procedure, equally applicable to all. It includes formal procedure and social significance to

the extent that there are meaningful differences in the policy preferences expressed by the competing candidates through a vibrant media and today is seen as important as the branches of government:- along the executive, the legislature, and the judiciary- and “Fourth Estate”- the watchdog of free democratic societies.

Therefore, the universal use of the principles of elections has come hand in hand with the development and has an impact on development and peace in every community. In Ethiopia press freedom is a recent phenomenon, thus, freedom of expression in particular and democracy in general, is considered to be in its infant stage. Since Ethiopia is a fledgling democracy, the role of the press has yet to identify its role as a promoter of development and watchdog of social evils in the country.

Therefore, the result of ongoing thinking about the seminal role that media can play in emerging democracies is as critical as the election itself. The role of the media in Ethiopia need not be blind supporter or opposition to the government. The media should act as a catalyst agent to hasten the process of social and economic change that secures people’s participation and Involvement in the country’s development. The live debates hosted by the Inter Africa group on television on Sundays, which were perceived to be an important innovation in Ethiopian election campaigning have contributed immensely for election campaign in Ethiopia both in the print and electronic media in the country.

#### **4.2.2 Press and Election Law**

There are a number of legal instruments that regulate access to the media both in general constitutional, media specific and election specific laws and regulations. On the other hand, there are no election specific provisions in the Press Law. There were also no provisions to monitor and assess compliance of media outlets to these provisions by the

National Electoral Board of Ethiopia (NEBE). The MoI has individual responsibility for the press based on the laws that are applicable to the elections and broadcast and press sectors. Ultimately, it is the MoI that is responsible for assessing compliance to the provisions in the laws relevant to media access and coverage of the elections.

The Election Law contains provisions specific to media access for the candidates and political parties pursuant to Article 50. Parties and ‘sections of the community’ backing a candidate are entitled to equal access to public media (Article 50 (1)). All candidates that qualified were entitled to free access to the mass media (2). The EBA and the Ministry of Information were required to draw up an Agreement in order to allocate airtime on broadcast media and free space in the press to the candidates according to the Law. Campaigning activities of the parties should cease 48 hours (Article 48, paragraph 1) before the opening of the polls.

The NEBE has overall responsibility for ensuring that the elections are organized and conducted according to the Election Law. The Ministry of Information and the EBA published a signed directive in December 2004 establishing a detailed set of rules for access to the media for both independent candidates and political parties standing for the Federal Elections. The Directive states that broadcasters defined as both public and commercial services (though with the absence of commercial broadcasters this refers to the state owned media) are obliged to supply free airtime to the candidates according to a set formula (Article 10). Addis Zemen, the most important state-owned newspapers, was obliged to provide free access to the candidates. The remaining newspapers were not required to provide free access. A party has the right not to use the free space allocated to

them, and in cases where a party has consecutively not taken up the space the newspaper is allowed to allocate the space to another party.

They also have the option to carry political advertising on a non-discriminatory basis. Paid for advertising is allowed by the Law, but no political parties expressed a marked interest in taking out paid advertising in the press or broadcast media and the paid advertisements that were taken out were a small percentage of coverage. Access for the candidates should be non discriminatory and advertising rates should not exceed or be under the price for commercial advertising (Article 17). The Directive also reiterates the principles of balance and fairness in news coverage and Article 14 (d) states that all news should give equal weight to opposing views and opinions.

The Ministry of Information and the EBA did put in place some measures in order to assess whether these provisions are achieved by the media with obligations to provide access for the parties and candidates. As is the case in other countries enforcement of these provisions was therefore retained by the regulatory bodies that are responsible for regulating the print and broadcast media.

## **Chapter 5: Press Investigated**

### **Introduction: Monitoring the Press**

A newspaper is not seen in isolation, and aspects of these were not considered individually only, but comparisons of time, number and space were employed throughout in order to ensure the validity of the study. Each newspaper for each day was examined and all categories were considered. It also complies with international standards in terms of providing for independence, impartiality and professional standards in the media's coverage of the elections and the candidates.

The press covered election-related topics comprehensively in its reviews. Although the election review was remarkable for its political equitableness, news was extremely biased in favor of either EPRDF or the Opposition party in general or CUD in particular. The private press particularly when compared with the public, the CUD was favored in proportional size, in the order of appearance and news making. Therefore, EPRDF was considered more newsworthy than any other parties whether a newspaper backed it or not. In contrast (except by Addis Admas and Reporter) little attention was paid to UEDF. OFDN was ignored in most editorials and reviews.

The private press editorials and political commentary were very emotional and the most derogatory, it must be stressed that the bias of the coverage of the press of the May 2005 Ethiopian Election were uncovered in aspects journalism and aspect of ethics. Its technique was to attack throughout. Style is the prerogative of any newspaper and the contrast between public and private groups is apparent, as it is between private newspapers.

In direct contrast, by concentrating more on the CUD/UEDF party than on the government, some newspapers that were opposed to EPRDF drew attention to this very party

at the expense of the others. Significant negative coverage is possibly more beneficial to a party than minimal attention.

The only public newspaper that has free access to the contending parties for the May 2005 election was Addis Zemen. It was striking in its free access but its discrepancy was as impressive as its bias. Further more, in photographic coverage, it was the most one-sided of the private newspapers. As an institution, the EPA appears to have been both fair and impartial, although it was equipped and able to give wide and unprejudiced coverage; it did not do so in all times.

In all, Reporter appears to have been the most politically conscious newspaper and the most thorough of all seven newspapers examined. The Reporter focused more intently on the election only in editorials. It devoted the most space to the election and covered most meetings among the private press. Also it gave slightly more attention to the ruling party in headlines; it also paid proportionately the most coverage of all parties. It reserved its bias to commentary, with a moderate and well-balanced coverage overall. It accorded an equitable distribution in headlines and evidenced a proportionately good national coverage. However, it appeared to be promoting the interests of the public both in its coverage of meetings (compared with other newspapers) and in the absence of headlines that might have been unfavorable to every competing politician. In contrast, the Reporter's national coverage was impressive. Like Addis Zemen, its development consciousness was apparent in editorials. Moreover, its castigation of EPRDF was stressed in cartoons, which, like editorials, constitute acceptable commentary and bias in newspapers.

Addis Admas, was the least extreme of the private newspapers and less politically conscious as the others in editorials. Although it paid relatively little attention to the election,

it was fair in its coverage and displayed relatively high proportional of meeting and photographs it gave to UEDF in reportage, photographs and positive headlines, was also striking. It emerged as the least controversial of all the newspapers in its coverage of the election. In its op-eds, it tended to side-step fundamental issues in party politics, and was the least derogatory.

In many respects, the other four newspapers: Addis Zena, Ethiop, Menilik and Ethiop are similar on their press coverage and position on the election. They attacked other parties and defended the party which they favored. The newspapers opposed to the ruling party, however, concentrated on showing what they considered to be its failings. While all are politically motivated, Addis Zena was the most politically agitated, and Ethiop newspaper was although politically vituperative and extremely emotional in editorials. Of all the pro-opposition newspapers, Addis Zena had the highest number of headlines related to the CUD. It had also the highest number of election photographs and covered the third most election meetings. Rather, parochial, it proved emotional in editorials and supported the opposition strongly, but paid more attention to the CUD than to the UEDF. It displayed the highest proportional interest with regard to election reports. Of the private press, it was the most one-sided proportionately; it endorsed and concentrated the most space-wise on CUD election meetings and was the most biased in editorials favoring the CUD.

Menilik's and Tobia's political consciousness were evident in its coverage, and editorials; and their agendas came to the fore in biased election reporting and coverage. While their reports are the most parochial of all the newspapers, it showed its disapproval of the ruling party.

Although private and pro-opposition press might have a greater circulation than those newspapers supporting EPRDF, advantage is possibly nullified by its approach. As a result, the press adopted a negative approach to politics, in general, and the election, in particular. If the press has an influence on the electorate, this possibly accounts for the opposition party's position in the next general election in Ethiopia should be examined thoroughly.

## 5.1 Presentation of Data and Interpretation of Findings

**Table 3:** Coverage of Election

Type of Newspapers/ Coverage	Overall total column cms	% of total Sum	Page Category								Number of Appearance
			Editorials	News	Election Special	Free Access	Cartoons	Photo	Front Page	Paid Ad.	
Addis Admas	3474	2.5%		5	6			4	5	1	21
Addis Zemen	79756	57.4%	4	92	160	24		59	80	3	422
Addis Zena	9144	6.6%	2	22	12			13	13		62
Ethiop	10614	7.6%	4	18	13		2	12	4		53
Menilik	10954	7.9%	3	13	17			16	12		61
Reporter	16546	11.9%	3	38	37		3	29	12		122
Tobia	8452	6.1%	3	16	12			8	16		55
Total	138940	100.0%	19	204	257		5	141	142	4	796

### 5.1.1 Space, reports and graphic material

The total of number and space during the election campaign period: 12 April and 12 May 2005 appear in Table 1 and the page categories of newspapers on election on Table 2. The much greater attention was given as a whole on page categories than in column centimeters and similarly, although there was a higher number of space on public newspaper, much attention is given to the qualitative assessment of election report as there was a marked difference in it proportionately.

**Table 4:** Page Categories of Election related coverage

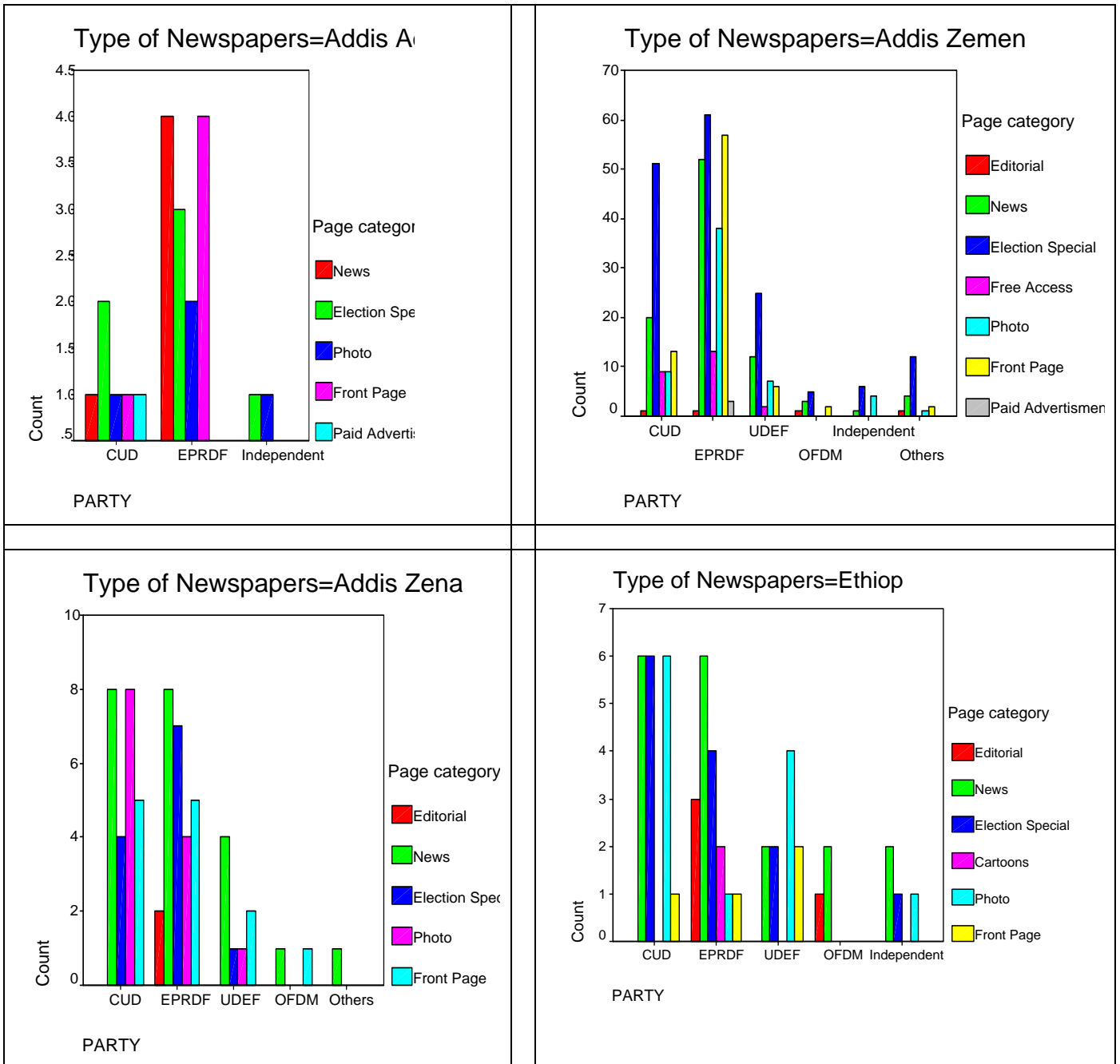
			Type of Newspapers							Total	
			Addis Admas	Addis Zemen	Addis Zena	Ethiop	Menilik	Reporter	Tobia		
Page category	Editorial	Count		4	2	4	3	3	3	19	
		%		.9%	3.2%	7.5%	4.9%	2.5%	5.5%	2.4%	
	News	Count	5	92	22	18	13	38	16	204	
		%	23.8%	21.8%	35.5%	34.0%	21.3%	31.1%	29.1%	25.6%	
	Election Special	Count	6	160	12	13	17	37	12	257	
		%	28.6%	37.9%	19.4%	24.5%	27.9%	30.3%	21.8%	32.3%	
	Free Access	Count		24						24	
		%		5.7%						3.0%	
	Cartoon	Count				2		3		5	
		%				3.8%		2.5%		.6%	
	Photo	Count	4	59	13	12	16	29	8	141	
		%	19.0%	14.0%	21.0%	22.6%	26.2%	23.8%	14.5%	17.7%	
	Front Page	Count	5	80	13	4	12	12	16	142	
		%	23.8%	19.0%	21.0%	7.5%	19.7%	9.8%	29.1%	17.8%	
	Paid Ad.	Count	1	3						4	
		%	4.8%	.7%						.5%	
	Total		Count	21	422	62	53	61	122	55	796

It is evident from Table 3 and 4 that only the Addis Zemen devoted a greater proportion of space to the election as a percentage of all the material measured on the total space and in the newspaper as a whole. Addis Zemen was more attentive to the election (as regards front page prominence). Furthermore, it seems to have considered the election more newsworthy, with regard to front-page appearance, than the other newspapers did. Thus gives the impression that it is more evidently motivated or active than the others. At the other extreme is Addis Admas with the least attention on front-page proportionately, and also it accorded the least coverage.

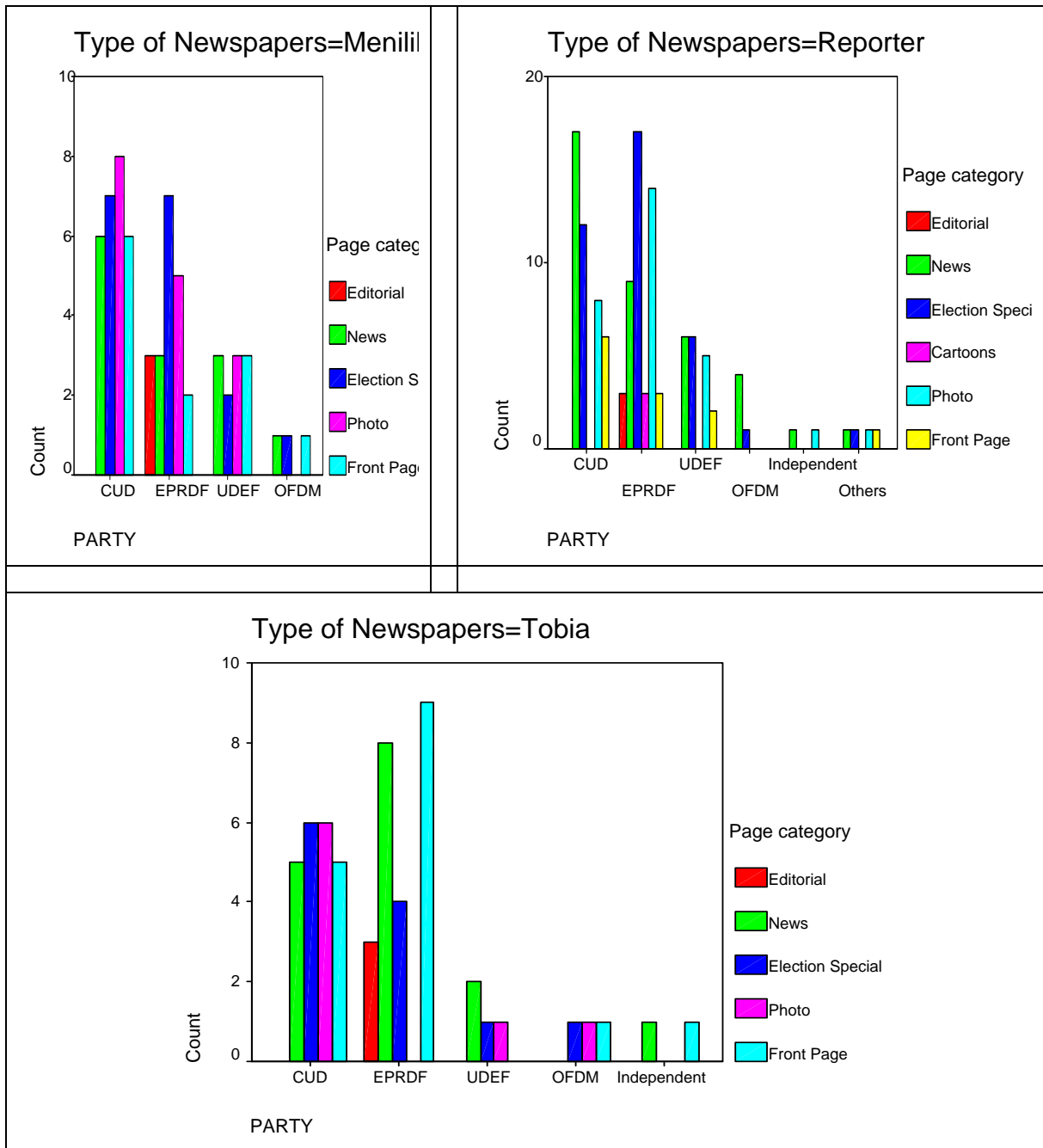
A further breakdown reveals that the order of the relative proportion of interest shown to the election per column centimeters on the whole is: Addis Zemen, Reporter, Menilik, Ethiop, Addis Zena, Tobia and Addis Admas. Except Addis Admas, all the private press evidently forms a group of politically interested newspapers. At this stage of the analysis it seems that Addis Admas was not vitally concerned with the election. The relative low percentage of election coverage in Addis Admas can be ascribed to its readers' interest as well as its editorial policy.

However, in total election space, the public press gave more attention to the election (both space and percentage-wise) than the private press. An analysis of the percentage of election reports as a percentage of all reports on page 1 (CF. Table 3) shows that there is, understandably, a remarkable similarity to the percentage of space. Here, Addis Zemen had the most election reports on the front page during the entire period, followed by Tobia, Addis Zena, Menilik, Reporter, Addis Admas and Ethiop. However, proportionately the private press newspapers revealed the greatest proportional political interest.

**Figures 1-4:** Share and number of times each party appeared on a newspaper



**Figures 4-7:** Share and number of times each party appeared on a newspaper



Share and number of times each party appeared on a newspaper

A discrepancy arises in the percentage of election reports (see Table 3), when compared to coverage of election. Here, Reporter evinced the greatest proportional political interest; even though Addis Zemen had most reports. The rival newspapers Addis Zena, Menilik, Tobia and Ethiop are of interest as all had a similar total number of reports. Therefore, all private newspapers revealed most political interest, and Addis Admas, the least proportionately.

The first evidence of party political bias can be found in an examination of election photographs related to the different parties (Where more than two parties were apparent in a photograph, each was accorded half the amount of space). Yet, graphic messages or devices in all newspapers less appeared and are not their style; and, on the whole, the relatively limited use of photographic material by all is significant.

With regard to predominance in the area of page 1 election photographs, drawings and graphs (Cartoons are excluded here) with both number and space, Addis Zemen evinced most political interest in its photographs followed by Reporter, Menilik, Addis Zena, and Ethiop. Addis Admas again seemed to have been less interested.

On the other hand, once more extreme bias and/or one-sided in almost both the public and private newspapers is evident, with the space coverage of the parties support varying from EPRDF to CUD. In its photographs, Addis Zemen newspaper almost ignored all parties, and devoted more photographs and more photographic space to the EPRDF than to any other party. However, Addis Zemen was an exception as it featured almost as many photographs depicting the prime minister, as the head of government, and devoted almost twice as much photographic space to him, thus creating the impression that it regarded the EPRDF and the

premier as more newsworthy. Photographically, CUD was afforded more appreciable number and space only in private newspapers; and UEDF was afforded any appreciable number and space only to an extent. The figures for photographic and other graphic attention were similar, indicating that bias was consistent throughout. This indicates the press lacked photographically interesting messages.

However, Reporter revealed the most balanced coverage here of all the newspapers (in both number and space of photographs for different parties) concentrated more on the party leaders than on the prime minister, in both number and space, as did the Addis Zemen. The fact that Addis Zemen devoted more photographic space to the prime minister, more than twice than to the rest of major opposition candidates and even his own officials proportionately is an anomaly. Also peculiar is that Addis Zemen featured a smaller percentage of photographs of the opposition leaders, is a bias.

Finally, from an examination of the election photographs, it appears that Addis Zemen newspaper is the first (depending on whether number or space is taken into account). All that can be ascertained is that Addis Zemen devoted the greatest proportion to such visual material; whereas the private press concentrated on this aspect the least. The former obviously, therefore, has the facility of photographic lab, rather than preferred the pictorial message to the other newspapers. No pattern is evident in an examination of the total election visual material including cartoons and photographic space as a percentage of total election space.

### **5.1.2 Election Reviews and Statements**

Party political preference is evident in varying degrees in the coverage of election news, 'election specials' or reviews and statements with regard to political parties. Discrepancies in the press totals occur as political statements or manifestos are included in the number and

space/columns, too. This also applies to reviews, where, in addition, an apparent inconsistency is evident.

It is evident that Addis Zemen newspaper reported on more coverage of election news, 'election specials' or reviews and statements than those private newspapers, and also it devoted the most space to election news. Reporter devoted the second most attention. Furthermore, it is evident that the rest four politically interested newspapers generally devoted are (in ascending order): Tobia, Menilik, Ethiop and Addis Zena. Addis Admas could not be compared sensibly here, as it reported on only few appearances. Yet, of interest, Addis Admas concentrated on the voters' education and disregarded both the campaign and meetings.

If the private press is compared to the public press, significant difference is found in the total of election meetings covered. Before attention is drawn to bias in the media's reporting on party meetings, it must be borne in mind that the parties are not equally powerful or, as a result, news worthy. Furthermore, the smaller parties held fewer meetings or election news. Nevertheless, a comparison does reveal certain one-sidedness.

The private press newspapers devote less space than the public one did to meetings. As Addis Zemen newspaper having been the most extreme devoted more than half of election-related news and reviews were covered to the EPRDF and when the space was taken into account again EPRDF had got similar proportion. The least is again Addis Admas. The percentage of space devoted to the CUD is less than that devoted to the EPRDF's. This reveals that reports on these tended to be shorter than those on the EPRDF. Addis Zemen's reports on the election tended to be longer than those on the pro-opposition, however. Another feature is the greater space devoted to the incumbent party, then to CUD than UEDF and lesser parties as a whole. Therefore, the point is underlined once more as bias.

**Table 5:** Political parties covered in the newspapers

			PARTY						Total	
			CUD	EPRDF	UDEF	OFDM	Independent	Others		
Type of Newspapers	Addis Admas	Count	6	13			2		21	
		%	2.4%	3.5%			9.5%		2.6%	
	Addis Zemen	Count	103	225	52	11	11	20	422	
		%	42.0%	60.2%	50.0%	40.7%	52.4%	80.0%	53.0%	
	Addis Zena	Count	25	26	8	2		1	62	
		%	10.2%	7.0%	7.7%	7.4%		4.0%	7.8%	
	Ethiop	Count	19	17	10	3	4		53	
		%	7.8%	4.5%	9.6%	11.1%	19.0%		6.7%	
	Menilik	Count	27	20	11	3			61	
		%	11.0%	5.3%	10.6%	11.1%			7.7%	
	Reporter	Count	43	49	19	5	2	4	122	
		%	17.6%	13.1%	18.3%	18.5%	9.5%	16.0%	15.3%	
	Tobia	Count	22	24	4	3	2		55	
		%	9.0%	6.4%	3.8%	11.1%	9.5%		6.9%	
	Total		Count	245	374	104	27	21	25	796
			%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

The only further anomaly in the Press is the concentration on CUD; and they disregarded the other opposition parties. In comparison with all parties, all private newspapers paid more attention to the CUD (as many as on the EPRDF). They devoted almost twice as much as coverage to that party's activities than any other parties, or even the other opposition, UEDF. A possible explanation could be, therefore, CUD regarded statements in the newspapers was as more important on the whole.

It must not be forgotten that the leaders of the ruling party might have made their most cogent statements in the Addis Zemen. This raises the question as to why that EPRDF was

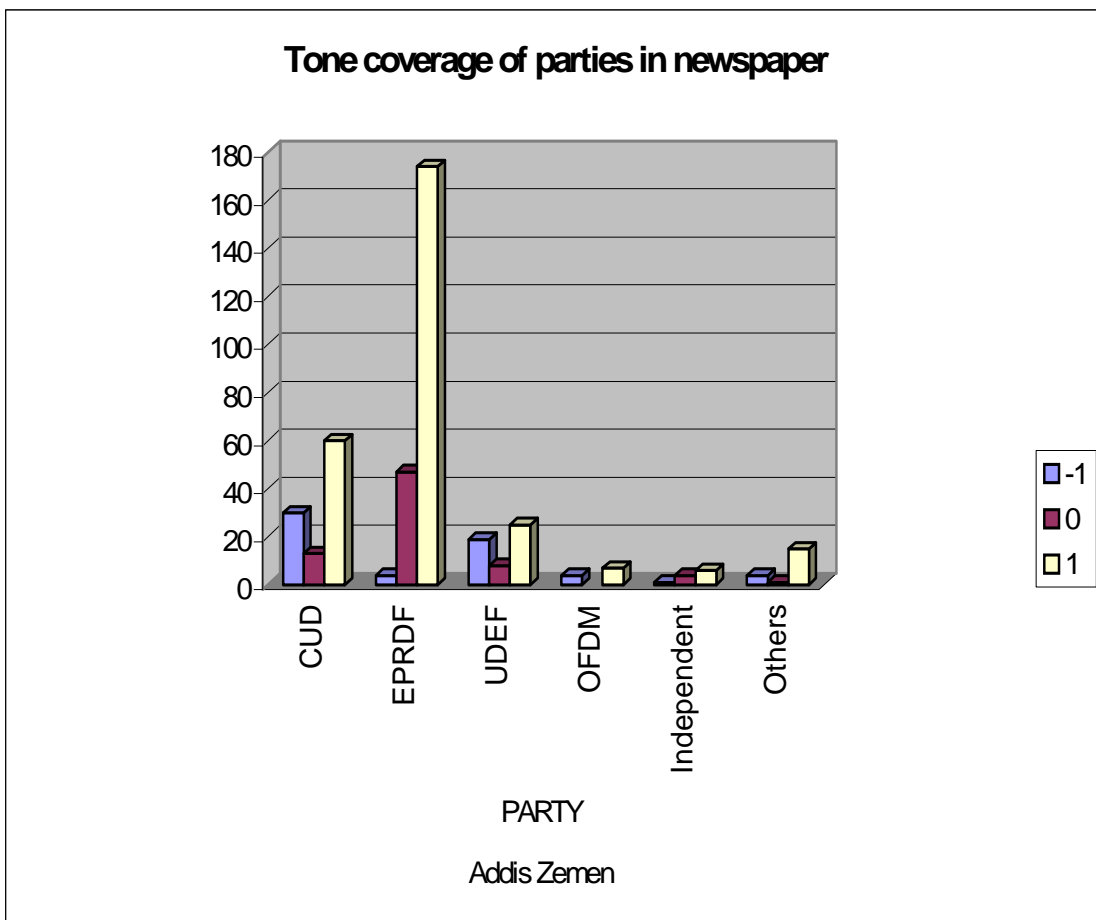
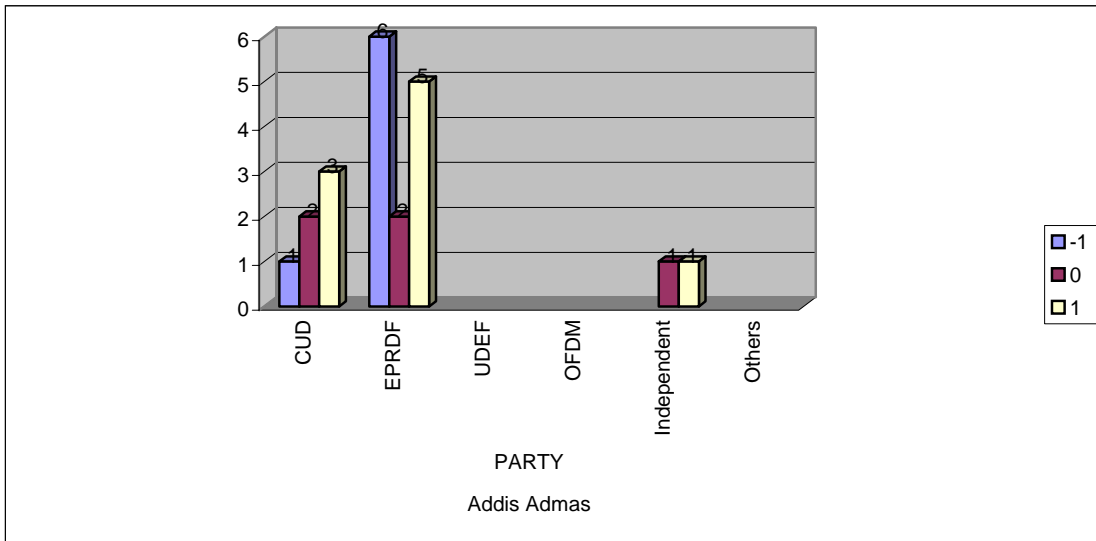
concentrated on this newspaper, and the opposite is apparent with CUD, especially on the Addis Zena, Ethiop and Menilik. On the whole, the UEDF was covered equitably in the news, whereas the election review focused on the EPRDF and CUD.

All newspapers, to a certain extent, virtually ignored other small parties including independent candidates, except on Addis Zemen and Reporter. The only independent contender, Negasso Gidada, former president of FDRE, had got attention in almost all newspaper.

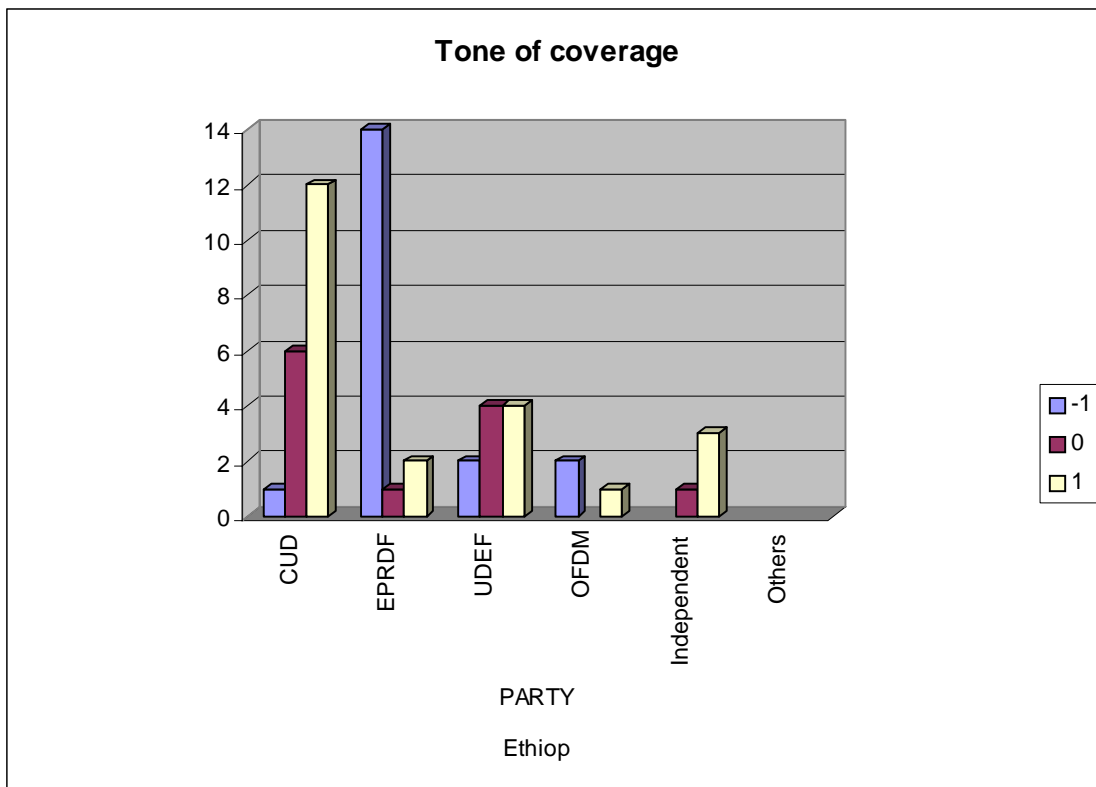
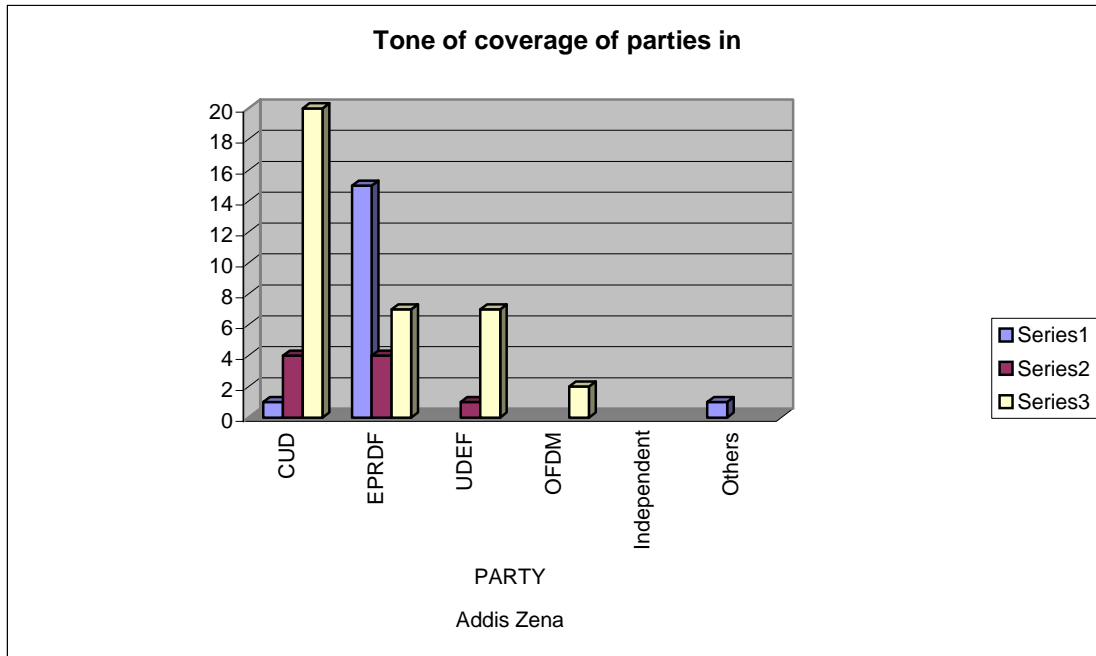
The extreme discrepancy between newspapers regarding the number of election meetings covered and the space allocated to them, indicates again the press as a whole far more politically oriented than it should be. Addis Zemen was the only newspaper, which stressed the newsworthiness of development above that of both the election news and reports. The cause of this is most likely the strong position of the ruling party in the development policies. An anomaly in the Addis Zemen's election review is the proportionately greater attention paid to EPRDF's meetings on the election reviews.

But, the election review on Reporter and Addis Admas, more particularly, evinced fair and comprehensive coverage. The meetings of the ruling party were referred to just as equal as those of the major oppositions. Furthermore, all parties were covered adequately and fairly, regarding space, when compared with the newspapers. The biggest proportions of comments in Reporter were neutral and general. This aided to the impression of this newspaper's relatively fair coverage. *Reporter* appears to have followed a moderate course in the election; this is evident in the percentage of reports and space devoted to each party as far more comprehensive than the rest. Moreover, this newspaper appears to be less biased in the reviews and election reports.

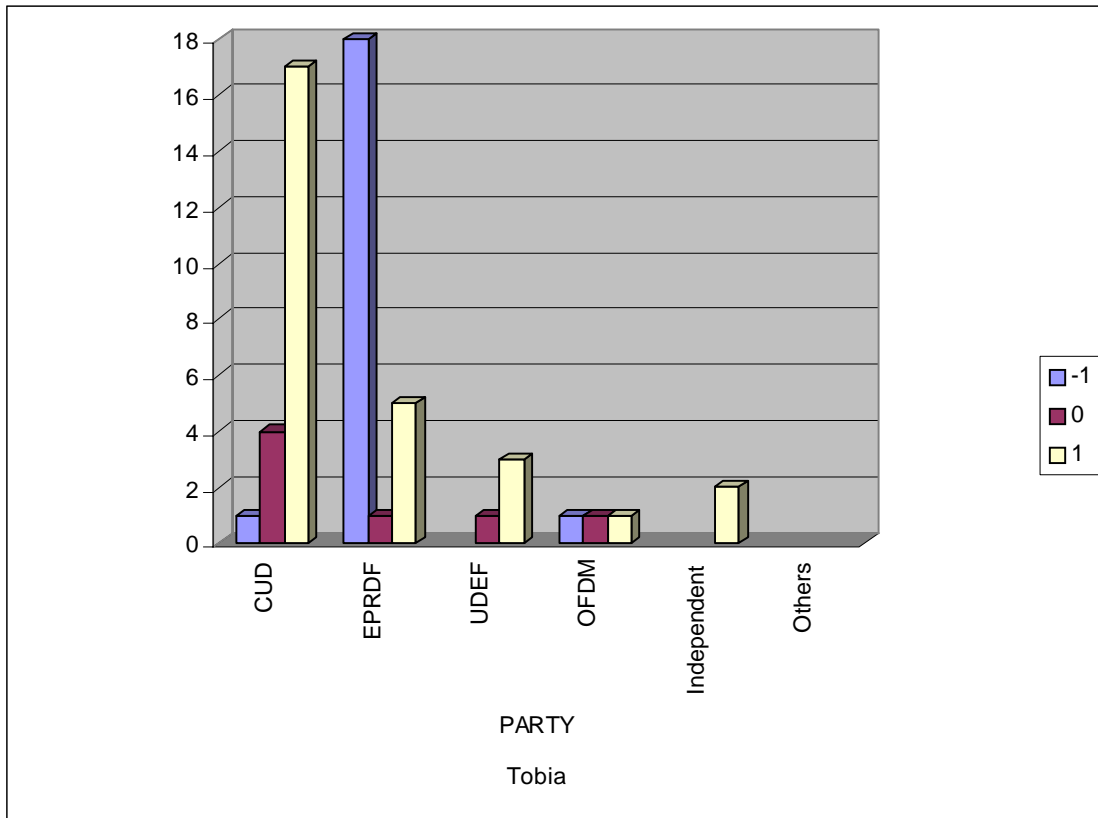
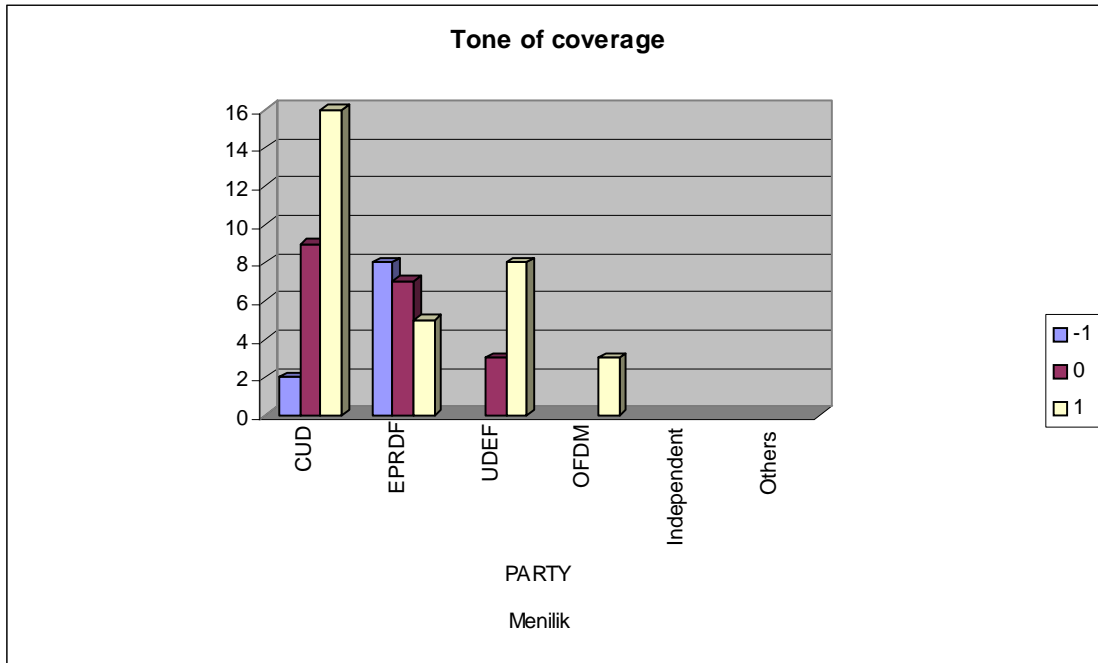
**Figures 8 and 9: Tone of coverage of election in different newspapers**

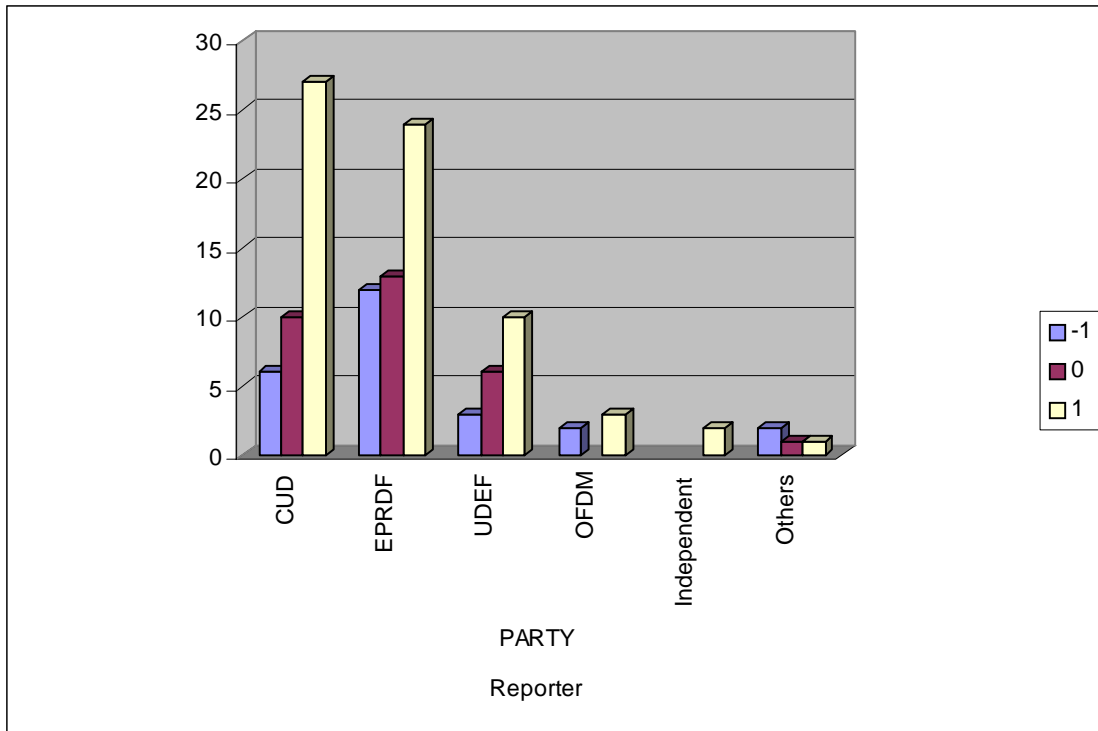


**Figures 11 and 12: Tone of coverage of election in different newspapers**



**Figures 12 and 13: Tone of coverage of election in different newspapers**





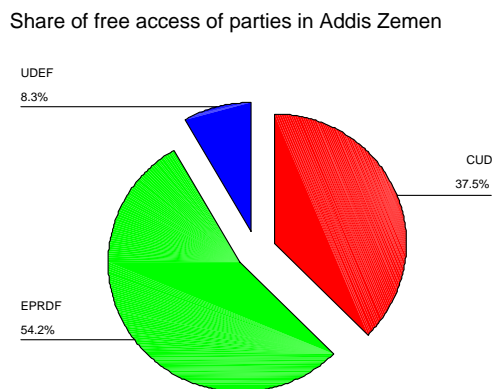
**Figure 14:** Tone of coverage of election in Reporter newspaper

Although Addis Admas did not ignore the opposition, it was the only newspaper in which other issues, such as, socio-economic and literature comprised three-quarters of the coverage, and election issues was given just under a quarter in numbers and slightly less than that in space. Addis Admas reported on only few meetings, thus indicating its impression that the election had little to do with it or its readers.

As far as the regions are concerned, it is to be expected that newspapers would have concentrated on election meetings in their circulation area. Addis Zemen, the only state-owned newspaper, would have aimed at a more equitable national coverage, but the most covered regions were: Addis Ababa, Oromia, Amhara, Tigray, and SNNP. All except Addis Zemen, disregarded the four developing regions: Afar, Benshangul, Gambela, and Somale regional states, on the whole. In contrast, the private press paid very little attention to these

regions; and this suggests that the major opposition based itself and its meetings in the capital, which is borne out by coverage in the newspaper's review.

**Figure 15:** Share of Free Access by public press



### 5.1.3 Editorials

A way in which to determine the party political consciousness of a newspaper is to examine its editorials, as portrayed in number, space and, especially in a quantitative assessment, or, perhaps, to an extent in the discourse analysis.

Although Reporter appeared to be the most politically aware in total election coverage and Addis Zemen outstripped the rest in attention to meetings, Ethiop came to the fore in editorials, its having devoted more editorials to the election than any other single newspaper. However, Addis Zemen devoted more editorial space to the election than any other individual newspaper (proportionately, 50 percent more). Here, for the first time, Addis Zemen appeared to be a political newspaper. It had evidently decided to limit demonstrations of party affiliations to comment and to attack the opposition, to a smaller degree, while giving support to the ruling party policies.

Reporter used its editorials columns proportionately least as a means of political propagation which is consistent with its balanced coverage of meetings. Its private rivals once more showed a greater political involvement. When Reporter did attack it focused on principles on both the government and the opposition, giving rise to the impression of independence from both the ruling party and opposition.

On the other hand, the private pro-CUD group was the most censorious in its editorials. As far as Addis Zena, Ethiop, Menilik, Tobia are concerned, they used the editorials most for endorsement of the opposition and their policies than political commentary. They were, therefore, more hostile to the ruling party than Reporter and Addis Admas. It is apparent that CUD was the most frequently defended party; while, the ruling party was most frequently attacked. The pro-opposition newspapers also displayed antagonism toward EPRDF. Nevertheless, they also deemed UEDF, especially its two leaders, Merara Gudina and Beyene Petros. While, other lesser parties barely were mentioned at all through out the period.

The only newspaper, which had more neutral than negative op-eds, was Addis Admas, which concentrated on promoting the interest and defending principles of democracy rather than berating others –as opposed to its relative dearth of election editorials. If there is any bias, Addis Admas, which evidently backed no party as such, but paid more attention to the failings of the ruling party on its op-ed than on reviews.

#### **5.1.4 Techniques employed in editorials**

The emotional techniques in editorial style were examined in order to determine the methods employed to communicate the different point of view in election editorial. These were considered part of the newspapers' propagandistic arsenal and used as important qualitative

assessments in this study. There is no significant pattern evident in the emotional techniques employed; yet, their uses are intentional, even if, it is irregular.

The techniques investigated were:

1. Name-calling or pejoratives: This is the negative labeling of an idea by using a word or phrase, which promotes the reader to reject and condemn it. In all private newspapers, except Reporter and Addis Admas, name-calling was the most frequently employed techniques in editorials and reports, such as, “Wayane”. While “Nefetegna” and “Temketegna” in the Addis Zemen reports are regarded as negative connotation.
2. Glittering generality or ameliorative: Here, in contrast with name-calling, readers are encouraged to approve of something by a sweeping statement, which suggests the virtuous. Like name-calling, glittering generalities depend on context, meaning different things to different people. A term may be eulogistic or dyslogistic, honorific or pejorative, depending on the circumstances. In addition, this method of persuasion was applied most by all private press as a whole except Addis Admas and Reporter. Similarly, these newspapers used the emotional technique of the glittering less than any other group, whereas, once again, Addis Zena, Ethiop and Menilik and Tobia were the most prone to this; and only Addis Zemen used it in favor of the government policy. This can, in part, be explained as an aspect of their promotion of the ruling party and positive comment on it in editorials.
3. Intimate- first person plural and second person: With this technique, an attempt is made (through the use of “we”, “our”, “us”, and, in Amharic, “Kenjetachen”) to stress the similarity between writer and reader, to attain a degree of similarity in order to influence. By the employment of (“you”, “yours”, and the Amharic equivalents

“Kenjetu”, an attempt is made to impress a point up on the reader-to make him/her relate to a particular position. Almost all the private newspapers made use of intimate-first person plural more frequently than Reporter, Addis Zemen and Addis Admas – and used the intimate second person to a great extent, thus underlining its direct appeal to the emotion of its readers.

4. Patriotic: The reader is led to believe that (in the context of this study) if he or she votes in a certain way (either for or against a party), he or she is being patriotic. Words, such as “country”, “Nation”, and “land”, are used here, often in conjunction with the “intimate” technique.
5. Public kinship: This is related to, but is broader than the patriotic technique. It includes (in this context) “the public”, “people”, “voters”, “the electorate”, “Ethiopians”, “everyone” and even “Hizebachin” and “taxi drivers”
6. Band Wagon: This technique of “the band wagon” which implies that “everybody is doing it –so should you!” it is used to persuade people to take a certain stand and not be “odd men out”, no matter what the merits of the situation are. In other words, they are induced to “climb on the band wagon”. In this study, this technique was judged as such only when the editorial stated blatantly “more and more people are joining such - and – such a party”.
7. Rhetorical questions: This technique is adapted to stress the writer’s opinion and appears in the form of an enquiry not for information but for effect. In asking the question, “are you going to let them take over?” and “who cares?” the writer is really saying: “you cannot let them take over” and “we care”. Of course, the opposite might

be implied but the able technician will reveal by examining the context of the question, the attitude that is sought.

8. The Direct quotations: Political figures (Bereket Simon or Hailu Shawel) and influential personalities, (such as, Sheik Mohammed Al Amoudin or Professor Mesfin Wolde Mariam) in the newspapers are quoted in order to enhance, or detract from, a certain attitude. Such a technique is used either for emphasis, or maliciously, and even twisted in order to make a point. Overall, the order in which use was made of these emotional techniques (from highest) are: Addis Zena, Ethiop, Menilik, Tobia, Reporter, Addis Admas and Addis Zemen. Therefore, the approach in the latter three was most straightforward and evinced the calmest presentation. Addis Zena employed these techniques most, closely followed by Ethiop, Menilik and Tobia mainly; Addis Zemen used emotional techniques less frequently with the exception of an awkward “Democrasyachin,” therefore, private newspapers applied the emotional techniques more often in order to impress stand points upon their readers.

### **5.1.5 Cartoons**

Even in its attempt to raise a laugh, the political cartoon has an earnest purpose: to make its readers think about the situation and, possibly, react effectively to it. The satirical editorial cartoon is designed, predominantly, to attack by means of graphic criticism. As it is evident the newspapers in question made less significant use of such cartoons. In many occasions all or some of both groups of newspapers didn't publish a carton of any kind during this period.

As with editorials, Reporter, more than any other newspaper, tended to use political cartoon to depict the political situation of the country. However, election-related cartons are

very few as a whole in Ethiopian press. Once again, Reporter devoted the greatest percentage of its cartoons to the election followed by Ethiop.

Of the newspapers, Ethiop's and Reporter's cartoons are satirical cartoons designed, predominantly, to attack by means of graphic criticism of the government. This was to be expected, as cartoons are essentially weapons of attack; and all newspapers concentrated its graphic venom on the EPRDF, showed similar hostility focused on the leaders; and almost all cartoons did not slate the ruling party. As evident throughout this analysis, the UEDF was ignored on the whole. It was never favored and was attacked less than any other party. However, only Addis Zemen had any significant number of graphic representations all in favor of the government in power. The Ethiopian press once again revealed its relative bias toward the graphic message of elections, except on few occasions it disregarded it.

### **5.1.6 Headlines**

Tendentious interpretation occurs not only in the introduction and body of a report or article but in headlines and tone as well. During the course of a day, a reader may have enough time only to glance at the headlines that, alone, can influence an attitude toward a contentious subject. Because of this, headlines both attract attention and influence attitudes. Discrepancies between totals here and those in the column portraying total election reports can be ascribed to certain reports not having had headlines. In private newspapers, reports, which were continued, on the other pages were, at times, given different headlines to the original reports. The newspapers failed to display a definite pattern.

Every private newspaper paid most attention to the opposition: CUD and UEDF. No great different was evident in the total proportional concentration here between four of the private newspapers. The private ones were in the high extreme, and public one was in the low.

Reporter focused most intensely of all on the CUD and UEDF proportionately. Addis Zemen paid the least on the headlines. As with its coverage of election meetings, the rest private newspapers paid proportionately more attention to the CUD than UEDF.

In contrast with its coverage of election meetings, however, Addis Admas concentrated more on the UEDF than on the CUD in its headlines; Addis Admas gave these parties approximately equal coverage; all the rest private newspapers devoted a relatively significant amount of attention to the CUD-more than to the UEDF and as much as that to the EPRDF.

All the private newspapers gave most positive attention to the CUD. The other parties fared less well here combined than even UEDF. The EPRDF received most negative headlines coverage in these newspapers: Addis Zena, Menilik, Ethiop and Tobia. Nevertheless, from this it is apparent that the private newspapers were biased in their headlines; and CUD/UEDF also appeared in the very favorable light at times in the headlines by way of font and size of the script or number and space of a newspaper.

In contrast, although Reporter evinced a more equitable distribution, all together, the opposition parties were accorded more positive headlines than the EPRDF. Furthermore, fairness is evident in the distribution of headlines for the two main parties on Reporter and Addis Admas. Among the private newspapers, particularly Addis Zena favored the CUD in positive headlines. Its overall anti-EPRDF stance can, however, be seen in the preponderance of negative headlines devoted to it.

From this analysis of headlines, it is evident that only Addis Zemen supporting the ruling party portrayed a positive bias in the headlines, whereas those opposed to the ruling party revealed a negative one-sidedness. Of import is the fact that no paper did not publish a

single anti-CUD headlines (evidently in keeping with endorsing the opposition leaders tacitly), and that they allotted to the EPRDF more negative headlines than positive or neutral.

### 5.1.7: The agenda

A comparison of the amount of attention focused on the fundamental policies of the parties represented in the general election is interesting. Themes accorded interest in newspaper editorials were counted throughout the period. They were conceded to have appeared either once in an editorial or on report of a statement of meeting or not at all. Agenda, such as, for instance, the questions of national unity, territory (Badame) and access to the sea and, politics as a whole formed the dominant theme of the election.

**Table 6:** Agenda

Agenda for campaign	Type of Newspapers							Total
	Addis Admas	Addis Zemen	Addis Zena	Ethiop	Menilik	Reporter	Tobia	
Development	1	3	3		1	7	1	16
International Affairs			3		3	2		8
Human Rights		9	6	5	2	5	2	29
Public Sector		5	1		2	9	3	20
General	20	405	49	48	53	99	49	723
Total	21	422	62	53	61	122	55	796

Only Addis Zemen and Addis Admas gave another aspect more prominence. Of the newspapers, the pro-CUD newspapers, understandably, and Reporter devoted most coverage, proportionately, to the national unity and access to sea question. Addis Zemen showed least interest here. The preponderance of this subject in both election meetings, as well as manifesto, underlines the impression that it was the major topic of discussion and debate in the May 2005 general election.

The theme of change, reform or progress occurred most frequently in the private ones, although all the media paid at least a modicum of attention to it. Addis Zemen showed the least interest (it must be borne in mind that this was the reportage by the ENA-not explicit editorial comment.) Reporter devoted more coverage to the questions: “national interest,” “sovereignty” or a possible media access (usually as a consequence of Election Board policy), as it did to the port question as such. Reporter also stressed laws affecting human rights such as those related to press law, and corruption, and foreign affairs. This gives rise to the impression that it endeavored to cover as many aspects of the current situation as possible in its editorials.

The other pro-opposition newspapers covered these aspects too but to lesser extent. Meanwhile, it is evident that the private press was the most territory-conscious. The other newspaper, Addis Admas also focused on this aspect, but to a lesser extent (much less by Reporter, Addis Zena, Ethiop, Menilik, and Tobia. Addis Zemen, however, ignored it totally, while the rest private newspaper paid it merely perfunctory attention.

The public newspaper, in fact, focused more on developments and government duties than on anything else. The public newspaper paid more attention to the ‘language policy’ than the other newspapers. Economic problems, development, food and agricultural issues were also dealt with in great detail by Addis Zemen, while though not appreciable by others the economy (the plight of teachers, pensioner, unemployed youth) were raised on the whole as formed a major part of the agenda only in the private newspapers. It also considered the question of inflation to be of significance.

**Table 7:** Type of events coverage by newspapers

Type of Events	Type of Newspapers							Total
	Addis Admas	Addis Zemen	Addis Zena	Ethiop	Menilik	Reporter	Tobia	
Campaign	11	331	49	32	51	97	38	609
Government Duty	8	78	4	1	1	4	1	97
General	2	13	9	20	9	21	16	90
Total	21	422	62	53	61	122	55	796

Similarly, the most concentration on the government's policy is of regional states (also referred to as national states) or by opposition newspapers were evident in the hostility, even though this subject came up repeatedly at election meeting as is evident in the Addis Zemen's coverage. The EPRDF's consideration of federation of states was totally ignored by all the newspapers; except Reporter that mentioned it to an extent. This is keeping with the dearth of interest in the kind of federation, evident in, particularly in election meetings, paid less attention by others comparable to its coverage of the principle of a national convention or negotiation propounded by the CUD or UEDF. However, EPRDF failed to pay any attention whatsoever to this policy of the opposition whereas from the infamous mention of Article 39 of the Constitution to extension program of the ruling party got its agenda covered by the Addis Zemen newspapers.

In contrast, the private press paid considerable attention to "territorial unity," possibly a result of this analysis being the papers political propagation went hand in hand with the agenda and reports on meetings and statements of the opposition party. It is because of the number of CUD/UEDF reports that predominate here; this result is to be expected.

However, the question of unrest, defense of the country and civil war received selectively major coverage in Addis Zemen because of the stance of the ruling regime. The

concept of the Rwandan militia-led genocide, “Interahmoy,” was stressed only in Addis Zemen. It also emphasized the spectra of fundamentalism all this revealing the use of fear tactics in its editorials. It must be borne in mind that most of these were antagonistic.

The newspaper most concerned with national esteem was Tobia, Ethiop, Menilik and Addis Zena, to a lesser degree Reporter.

In contrast, of the press, Reporter, in one side and the rest private press were dealt with in much detail by Addis Zena, which had a field day attacking each other for alleged one-sidedness. The only other newspaper that showed least interest of any magnitude here was Addis Admas- to avoid the emotional and to follow more of a middle-road than the other newspapers

It is apparent that, with the exception of Reporter, none of the newspapers studied gave more attention to the policy it supported than to the one it condemned. This accentuates the negative criticism in editorials and their agenda-setting to an extent they disregard of such policies reveals once more its tendency to one-sidedness or bias of coverage of election campaigns.

The National Election Board received varying degrees of attention as it was seen as a burning agenda among contending parties in the electoral campaign but did not from a major theme in the run-up to the election. The NEBE virtually ignored (even those concerned most with aspects of the press), and reference to irregularities and the affair occurred only sporadically-mainly by opposition part leaders and ardent opposition papers agenda.

All in all, the territory and unity question and its various components contributed most to newspapers editorial commentary and election reportage while aspects of democracy were also concentrated on (especially by the private press) economic issues were considered to be

of less importance and social issues not connected with politics of little significance. The question of sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ethiopia formed an impressive section in the themes dealt with by the press. All showed more interest in the notion of territory as such being most concerned here.

### **5.1.8 Election reviews: defense and attack**

A novel analysis of the election reviews was undertaken. The speaker at a meeting reported on was considered as either defending his (occasionally, her) party with positive assertions and/or attacking others with negative statements. Such declarations were counted a maximum of once, or not at all, for each party in each report of a meeting or statement. From previous analyses, the concentration on the government is expected and it is evident that the majority of reported statements concerning EPRDF were not only made by this party itself but also by the opposition. This was the case with all parties. Nevertheless, the EPRDF was reportedly attacked more often than any other party; as much, in both reviews, as all the others combined. EPRDF are shown to have attacked others approximately as much as they expressed political views positively in their approach.

### **5.1.9 Order of appearance**

The order, and the headline in which political parties are reported on, can reveal as element of bias. With this in mind, unlike on radio and television news, the election review on newspapers' election review was difficult to analyze on a newspaper. In this study, headlines pertinent to the election were analyzed in terms of whether they reflected a political party positively, negatively or appeared neutral.

The most equitable distribution during the entire period is found on the free access formula on the Addis Zemen newspaper. However, on the front-page news and photographs

of Addis Zemen, each time the party in power, especially its leaders appeared, it appeared first and foremost. It was preceded by a general comment only and was the only party mentioned in the first news. Moreover, an election statement by EPRDF was first mentioned on every issues of Addis Zemen. It is apparent that Addis Zemen regarded political statements by parties other than EPRDF as second and sometimes insignificant on the whole, and not worthy of inclusion in the general order of hard news but neither inordinate favor was granted to the parties nor excessive disregard shown to the other parties.

The general order followed in Addis Zemen was the same as that on television and radio, relative to the strength of the parties in campaigns: CUD, UEDF and OFDM. Of the other private press, however, little bias is apparent in a consideration of order; admittedly, attention was paid to CUD parties and political actors to their strength in the election.

### **5.1.10 Party Political Figures**

In an effort to determine which political figures featured dominantly on the press the following politicians were noted: Meles Zenawi, Arkebe Equbay, Bereket Simon, Addisu Legesse, Abadula Gemedo, Junadin Saddo, (of EPRDF); Hailu Shawal, Berhanu Nega, Ledetu Ayalew, (of CUD); and Beyene Petros and Merara Gudina (UEDF) and, to a lesser extent, Negaso Gidada also featured strongly; though evidently, their pronouncements were not considered of sufficient importance in the public press as that of the private press.

Only the numbers of reports of statements or speeches, the combined total space/column insertion was taken into account. As far as newspapers were concerned, with both election news and election review the total number of reports related to any political speaker, regarding the election was, deemed the most news worthy or newsmaker, an examination of the focus on him was undertaken during the entire period under investigation.

In the analysis of the political figures Meles Zenawi the premier, and leader of ruling party (it is coalition of four fronts) in Addis Zemen and even in all private press, predictably received the most coverage in each of the section (except the number of reports in the election review, where the minister of information and other debaters, were mentioned more often).

Apart from Meles Zenawi (28 %), Berhanu Nega (16 %), the public officer of the CUD, Beyene Petros (15 %) and Ledetu Ayalew (10 %) and Arkebe Equbay (9 %), the mayor of Addis Ababa, received even more coverage in the review than most ministers did.

**Table 8:** How often politicians were mentioned in the context of the election

Actor / politician			Type of Newspapers						
			Addis Admas	Addis Zemen	Addis Zena	Ethiop	Menilik	Reporter	Tobia
Actor / politician	Meles Zenawi	Count	4	46	7	2	5	8	2
		%	66.7%	58.2%	20.6%	8.0%	15.2%	11.8%	14.3%
	Arkebe Equbay	Count		14	2	2		5	1
		%		17.7%	5.9%	8.0%		7.4%	7.1%
	Berket Simon	Count	1	6	1			8	
		%	16.7%	7.6%	2.9%			11.8%	
	Addisu Legesse	Count		3	1		2	2	
		%		3.8%	2.9%		6.1%	2.9%	
	Abadula Gemeda	Count		1				2	
		%		1.3%				2.9%	
	Junedi Sado	Count		2		1		5	
		%		2.5%		4.0%		7.4%	
	Berhanu Nega	Count		2	10	7	9	11	2
		%		2.5%	29.4%	28.0%	27.3%	16.2%	14.3%
	Ledetu Ayalew	Count	1	1	2		6	11	4
		%	16.7%	1.3%	5.9%		18.2%	16.2%	28.6%
	Hailu Shawel	Count			4	4	4	4	
		%			11.8%	16.0%	12.1%	5.9%	
	Beyene Petros	Count		3	5	5	4	11	2
		%		3.8%	14.7%	20.0%	12.1%	16.2%	14.3%
Merera Gudina	Count		1	2	2	3	1	1	
	%		1.3%	5.9%	8.0%	9.1%	1.5%	7.1%	
Negaso Gidada	Count				2			2	
	%				8.0%			14.3%	
Total	Count	6	79	34	25	33	68	14	
	%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	

There seems to be a discrepancy, therefore, it is of interest that some (leader of party and the ministers) received scant attention that were totally disregarded only mentioned perfunctorily. While in the public press, most attention was given to Bereket Simon as minister of information and public relation head of the ruling party, EPRDF. Of those representing the opposition parties Dr Berhanu Nega, received more attention than any other CUD leaders, closely followed by Ledetu Ayalew. Although speeches by the chairman of the party were reported on in the reviews, the chairman of CUD, Hailu Shawel, and Merara Gudina of UEDF were mentioned in public as well as the private press; whereas Dr. Negasso Gidada, former president of FDRE, now competing independent candidate for the House of Representatives, accorded among the least space (1.5 %) but better than Abadula Gameda of EPRDF (1.2 %) . Dr Negasso Gidada had only appeared on in the private press.

#### **5.1.11 Others**

Camera shots and angles and shots of the audience and environment in rallies, were analyzed during the period. But the most interesting pictures of the consecutive demonstrations of the contending parties were taken and featured in all newspapers on Saturday and Sunday of the last weekends of the election were so exemplary.

However, it appears that the CUD and UEDF were discriminated against because of the relatively few medium close-ups in comparison with medium camera shots, if compared to shots of the EPRDF. The reasoning is that the closer a shot of a speaker, the more the audience will feel involved with, and be able to, his views. The close-ups of EPRDF cancel the lack of medium close-ups.

On the other hand, it appears that EPRDF and to its leaders was favored in more intimate portrayal and in sets among a photograph of a big crowd. This would tie up with the preponderance of shots at eye level of this party, which would have the same effect. This possibly prompted more respect for them, rather than a feeling of closeness by the audience. The audience was included only at meetings. The

intention was either to indicate the number of people attending or to attempt to show support of the electorate for the ruling party.

In summary, though without certainty, the ruling party was pictured in such a way that the audience respected the speaker, whereas techniques employed in it may have instilled an impression of familiarity in the audience. This, however, to the opposition, was scant and contradicts the fact in many occasions in the Addis Zemen newspaper.

## **5.2. Summery**

All in all, the press in the May 2005 election devoted more coverage to the election than the preceding elections. The press paid more attention to it proportionately, contained more graphic material, reported on more meetings, allocated more space to such reports and were more emotional in editorials (both in praise and attack). The private press probably managed to arouse more interest than public newspaper by focusing much more intensely and emotionally to the public on the May 2005 Ethiopian election. The public press allotted free access formula for the major parties contesting for the national parliament. Therefore, there are areas for improvements and it showed the coverage of the election almost fulfilled the legal benchmarks in this field in terms of quantitative assessment.

There is, however, a myopic scope of coverage for the parties and issues in the country. The coverage of election is not an ordinary news gathering. It could serve as a source of conflict or an instrument of promoting the democratization process in the country.

The findings of this study of the coverage of election reveal the wide, and often partisan, coverage of the May 2005 general election.

## **Chapter 6: Conclusion and Recommendations**

### **6.1 Conclusion**

The press paid more attention to the coverage of the May 2005 Ethiopian election. It proportionately, contained more news, election reports, election specials and free access to the major parties contesting for the general election. The press, however, paid more attention to election news and reports (in the case of private press) and election specials and free access (in the case of the public press) proportionately.

The public press allotted free access formula for the major parties contesting for the national parliament. The free access for the parties provided by Addis Zemen was divided between the EPRDF, CUD and UEDF during the monitoring period. According to the EBA, none of the qualifying parties took up their quota of free access; only EPRDF and CUD took up a significant percentage of this allocation.

The free access coverage in the public press demonstrated a balance between criticism and support in election related matters that the parties balanced one another out. The access was however, at times used by some of the parties to launch highly personal and emotive attacks on certain members of the political community, which should be seen as a negative use of this scarce resource, that should be employed to inform the electoral about political manifestos rather than act as a stage for personal attacks on political rivals. There is also a myopic scope of coverage for the issues as well as for the regions in the country.

The private press probably managed to arouse more interest than public newspaper by focusing much more intensely and emotionally to the public on the May 2005 Ethiopian election. In this respect the private press evinced a degree of bias patterns clearly supporting certain parties in their coverage of

the election. The private press reported on more meetings that are totally partisan to the opposition and the public press to the incumbent government. It allocated more emotional in editorials (both in praise and attack), in headlines and tone. The graphic materials, in all newspapers, are less both in number and intensity.

Both the private and public newspapers granted more coverage of the EPRDF largely due to the coverage of administrative duties of the Government. EPRDF was granted a significant share of space both in the private and public print media monitored and the press's coverage is divided on partisan grounds. Therefore, EPRDF candidates in office did, however, receive extra coverage due to their administrative duties both in domestic and international spheres, there is, to some extent, a natural bias in space. This represents an advantage in the overall coverage in terms of space allocated to the EPRDF candidates holding office over the other parties' candidates standing for election. It should be stressed that the media did not attempt to separate election campaign coverage with administrative duties.

However, almost all of the private press monitored, were highly critical of the EPRDF and their reporting was almost completely negative in tone towards the incumbents. In terms of the tone the private and public media cancelled one another out to a degree. The references in the private press to accusations made towards both the main opposition parties by the EPRDF and accusations made by the CUD and UEDF towards the EPRDF played an important part in terms of negative coverage of all parties.

The criticisms were also highly emotive. Most coverage of election related content was allocated to the CUD who was unequivocally supported by the private press. On the other hand, the public press in election reports was highly favorable towards the EPRDF and critical to the opposition parties. The coverage of Addis Zemen was highly positive towards the EPRDF. In contradiction the

reporting of the CUD and UEDF was negative or neutral in tone. The public print media tended to report the CUD as the main opposition coalition above UEDF.

These newspapers demonstrated a variety of trends in terms of the allocation of space- the major factor characterizing bias. The space allocated in the press also focused on the CUD and EPRDF, though the tone of coverage was markedly different between the public and private newspapers. The CUD benefited from wide support from the private newspapers and they were almost universally endorsed by the titles monitored and received the majority of space allocated to campaign related news items. Some titles, however, did provide a balance in terms of space to the contestants.

Among the private press the Reporter gave more attention to the election proportionately and Addis Admas the least attention, while the other four private newspapers: Addis Zena, Ethiop, Menilik and Tobia were evinced politically motivated bias in all election related coverage the election.

In conclusion the coverage of the elections was a marked improvement on what was perceived to be poor media performance in previous elections. As the press in the May 2005 election devoted more coverage to the election, there were some extremely positive innovations introduced both leading up to, and during, the official campaign period that represent significant steps by the authorities in recognizing the importance of the press in supporting fair and free elections.

The press, however, did less well in terms of impartiality, but it should be noted that the public press made significant efforts in terms of free access to the contesting parties, election specials and election news throughout the election period. The public press, however should have been more rigorous in their coverage in space and tone for the opposition as the public media they have special obligations to the public.

All in all, the findings of this study of the coverage of election reveal the wide, and often partisan, coverage of the May 2005 general election.

## 6.2 Recommendations

Elections are a crucial decision about the future. They are great challenges for the media as well as a flash point for media issues. Media is one of the most powerful influences on how an election runs inside the country, and how it is perceived from outside. This is when relationships between reporters, governments and civil society actors come into sharper focus, potentially conflict. Experience clearly shows us that elections can be both a key point in conflict resolution and trigger for conflict escalation.

In this regard if elections are free and fair they strengthen democratic processes and negate the causes and consequences of conflict. If the election goes well, the country can continue towards democracy and peace. But if the election goes badly, it can undermine democracy and turn the country otherwise. Press has sought therefore to actively address the role of the media in contributing to free and fair election processes. The press is usually the most important way people find out about the election and the political choice.

The press must need to report fairly on the campaigns of all political parties and people can determine if there are differences between them. The press needs the freedom to ask and get answers about the transparency of the election, and to tell voters if there is something wrong so that it can be fixed. There must be free press to all citizens and all political party candidates can speak, and write without fear. The media must be free to tell everyone what was said without pressure to twist the truth – to fully inform citizens of the issues and choices so they can decide for themselves for whom to vote.

The media should be the voice of the voters. For citizens to make well informed decisions in an election there must be a free press, it must be more than free- reliable, trusted, it must have opportunity to form independent and diverse views.

The media need to hold both the government and political parties to account for how they have acted in the election. The people need to know how well the government has run the country since the

last election, and what alternatives the opposition parties presented during that time. Did the government build all the bridges and schools it promised? Did rural communities get the clean drinking water they needed? Did the government listen to good ideas from the opposition parties, from women, and minorities? And when we say government, we also mean the elected politicians and all hired or appointed officials: the police, the army, the people who run the cities and regions, public sector and the likes.

Moreover elections provide a focus for interest groups since election campaigns' gives priorities to the electorates; and policy orientation of party must be developed, as party's candidates are to act as coherent and credible groups. For all these reasons, it can be said that democracy and a free press have a special relationship. They need each other. A free press will help keep the election honest and democratic; and a democratically elected government will protect the media's freedoms. The coverage of election is, therefore, a vital importance for the country found at cross-roads of election politics.

Journalists need to know the elections rules. They must report fairly on all candidates, parties and issues. Journalists must adhere to professional standards of accuracy, impartiality and responsibility. –have to work amidst great excitement, under pressure from powerful interests, and with very little time. There must be rules to insure every citizen has a secret vote. All candidates equal rights and opportunities to campaign without interference. The rules must be enforced fairly and everyone must respect the results of the vote. It is stressed that reporting should provide adequate local coverage and reach the grass roots level of the community.

There is an underlying assumption present in the press/newsrooms in societies that if journalists have general reporting skills, then reporting elections is much like reporting anything else. This is simply not the case particularly to the reporting of elections. During the campaign period- preceding the voting day, the media has at least three important subjects to report on, including:

1. **The political parties and candidates-** there are a choice of parties in a democratic election;
2. **The issues-** each political party will have its own views about what is most important, what the party promises to do and why voters should elect that party. These views are called the party policies or party platform or party manifesto. There may also be issues that the people believe are important but that some politicians do not want to talk about. Or there could be statements some political candidates make that controversy. A professional media/press will report these issues and ask the political parties to respond;
3. **The voting process-** information about the election rules and process are necessary in reporting election. This information includes defining how voters can register the length of the campaign; who will count the votes; how much money parties can spend on their campaigns; rules on advertising and media coverage and who will impose penalties on participates or the media who violates the rules. The media must watch the process to see how well or if the rules are followed without corruption or favoritism to any party, or abuse of any group of people.

But before the journalists consider how to report about the election campaign, they have to confirm their skills. There are places where journalists have to work under standards that are imposed by governments or powerful interests that interfere with professionalism. Ethical professional journalists should have developed principles and standards to show how they will provide news- that people can trust. These include:

1. **Accuracy-** Getting the correct information is the most important part of good journalism. Everything that is reported must be described accurately – the spelling of the candidates’ names, the words they use and the precise numbers and descriptions of people, places and things. Candidates and voters can be reported carefully to accurately reveal their meaning and to explain the context without exaggerating partial meanings.

2. **Impartiality (fair balance)**-Almost every code of good journalism puts importance on impartiality, or on not taking sides. To impartiality, a good journalist will seek to produce a report that is balanced. Looking for more than the one opinion helps overcome the appearance of bias or favoring only one side. But the balance report must also be fair. It may give more emphasis or more attention to one candidate over another in a news story because of the significance of the candidate's words or actions at that event, or at that time. At some other time, in some other story the balance may change to fairly represent the significance of some other side.

It requires more work to achieve a fair balance in every story, but it is essential in responsible journalism. Even if they work for one media that supports one party, professional journalists try to be unbiased and include balance in their reporting. Even if they work for the state or government media, their stories should include news about the opposition parties. Private media owners and state media should keep political comments and opinions separate from the news. There is another meaning of impartiality. If a reporter is known as a leading activist, his or her reports will be considered biased and not credible even if they do have fair balance. He is not a leader in any political group or movement.

### 3. **Responsibilities-**

Journalists have obligations to the people they report about, and to the society to whom they report the news, and protect their resources when their resources cannot be named. They also use only honest methods to obtain the news, which means their work should be guided by internationally accepted professional standards.

Responsible journalism is not defamatory. It does not repeat inaccurate allegations and insults or twists the truth about a person. It is not also derivative – responsible journalism does not simply repeat what has been reported somewhere without checking the facts. Copying others' news may just repeat false information. Or malicious, news reports can ruin politicians' reputations, put party members in danger, or cause public protest. Professional journalists do not misuse their power by twisting the news and using it as a personal weapon to deliberately harm anyone.

These are the basic standards that produce journalism people can trust. This applies to everyone involved in producing the news assigning stories, editing copy or sound bites, writing headlines directing, producing, or managing newsrooms. Any election story that contains information that cannot be verified or it is not be reliable should not be published. Reliable reporting earns journalism a privileged place in every society as long as the election reports are: accurate, impartial and responsible.

The media must be more than reliable. It needs two other essential conditions for the election reporting to be free and fair: **diverse and independent**.

There should also be a diversity of media to report on the campaign and. competition between different media outlets ensures that the opinions of competing parties and different voters are fully brought to public attention.

Also the media must be independent – free from government or other powerful interests that block the news reporting of other parties' voices and the public's opinion. A number of press products, each one controlled by different interests and reporting only news that favors those interests, are a form of diversity. But this diversity does not represent independence. It is not reliable journalism. The state media should be a voice for all political parties and for the people, and not just the voice of the government party. The state media does not belong to one party. It is a service for the people.

An independent media must be supported by laws and courts and independent regulators who protect the media from interference. In an election campaign the election board should establish and enforce guidelines for free and fair reporting and to monitor the media reliability.

The need to overhaul the press law, having a dialogue to consider amendments to the new press law in order to provide constitutional and legal provisions to ensure that the press functions without fear in all times to come is a paramount importance for the democratization process the country needs.

Main private and public press outlets shall agree a code of conduct for their coverage of the elections that reaches standards established in the range of Ethiopian Laws that relate to media. Journalists shall come together freely to consider what they do, and how to guide themselves, they refer to their professional standards. It helps support the good health of democracy.

In concluding remark the media whatever their short comings are indispensable to democratization process in Ethiopia. More importantly, the coverage of election is a vital importance that the Ethiopian press shall fulfill the role of watchdog and agents of democratization. As the result, the Ethiopian press could generate the agenda-setting role and play a watchdog role for stable political system supported by a genuine popular consent. If not, their role as a watchdog is critically in question; and, the Ethiopian press will remain in the annals of political history of the country "as a seamanship rather than navigation in the sense that the attempt is aimed at staying afloat rather than operating, steering and controlling the system in the most appropriate manner."

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