ResearchGate

See discussions, stats, and author profiles for this publication at: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/335014389

Ethiopian Media Industry

Preprint · August 2019

DOI: 10.13140/RG.2.2.33768.42247

CITATIONS
0

READS
8,814

1 author:



Nutman A. Dodolla
Addis Ababa University
4 PUBLICATIONS **7** CITATIONS

SEE PROFILE

Some of the authors of this publication are also working on these related projects:

Pathways and Barriers of Health Communication in Ethiopia: Reproductive Health Experiences from Ethiopia View project

Political Economy of the Ethiopian Media View project

All content following this page was uploaded by Nutman A. Dodolla on 07 August 2019.

The user has requested enhancement of the downloaded file.

Ethiopian Media Industry

Nutman Aliyi Dodolla, Addis Ababa University, **Ethiopia**, 2016

Abstract

The history of the Ethiopian media industry from the imperial period to the socialist military regime was characterized by the monopoly of government and the praises to respective regimes or leaders until 1991. The coming of the Ethiopian Peoples' Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) into power in 1991 has laid a historical legal framework for the Ethiopian press, with all its challenges on the ground. However, the Press Proclamations of 1992, 1999, and the Broadcast Proclamation of 2007 have not been able to guarantee journalists and media workers freedom in carrying out their duties with ease.

Ownership; the absence of credible national journalists' association; and financial problems has negatively contributed to the profession's predicament. Again, there is a lack of clear and shared conceptual understanding of the notion of development journalism among the practitioners of the profession, making coherence difficult among them. Thus, the paper calls for a sustained deliberation on the issue of journalistic professionalism among the various stakeholders so that the Ethiopian media industry could be transformed. It also calls on media scholars to look into the Ethiopian media predicament seriously and come up with a relevant media model for the Ethiopian context.

Key Words: Ethiopia, media, ownership, Regulations

1. Introduction

1.1. Background of the Study

Ethiopia was one of the countries in Africa where feudal structure had been deeply entrenched for long. Though the early 1970s popular revolution was able to topple the regime of the Emperor, it soon gave way to Marxist dictatorship. In 1991, the now ruling party, EPRDF, came to power promising democracy after seventeen years of insurgency against a brutal Marxist regime (Tsega and Abebe, 2000, p. 1). This political trajectory has had its toll on the Ethiopian mass media, as the political structure of a society often has a bearing on the media system of that particular country.

A cursory review of the history of the mass media on the African continent indicates that mass media institutions, a necessary component of democracy, developed in Europe and was transplanted in Africa during the colonial era. Although whether such transplanted media had served the interest of the continent is debatable, at least today, the media are seen at the forefront of the struggle for democracy in Africa, along with students, civic organizations and political parties Eribo and Jon-Ebot (1997) – and Ethiopia exhibits the same habit.

What is more, normative theories and concepts that have guided the media are largely the outputs of researches carried out in the western contexts. For example, the normative media theories developed by Siebert, Peterson and Schramm make reference almost exclusively to three countries: USA to which they trace the libertarian and social responsibility theories, Britain to which they trace both the authoritarian and along with USA the libertarian theories, and the Soviet Union (Hallin and Mancini, 2004, p. 10). Similarly, the propaganda model which is concerned with exploring the relationships between ideology, communicative power and social class interests is not tested in Africa (Mullen and Klaehn, 2010, p. 217). Even the recently developed three models of media systems – liberal, democratic corporatist, and polarized pluralist models, have not taken into account the unique contexts of Africa and other developing countries.

In order to arrive at a comprehensive and applicable knowledge of media performance in Africa, one should understand Africa's socio-politics and its contextual underpinnings. Arguing along this line, Hallin and Mancini (2004) note that one cannot understand the news media without understanding the nature of the state, pattern of relations between system of political interests, and the development of civil society, among other elements of social structure. In a similar vein, Herman-Chomsky's propaganda model fundamentally argues that structural and political-economic elements influence overall patterns of media performance (Mullen and Klaehn, 2010, p. 217).

All these are theoretical insights from outside the continent. According to Eribo and Jon-Ebot (1997, p. xi), there have been four main problems with contemporary studies of the African media. The assumption that the western media are free and should be the guiding light for all others is considered as the first problem; whereas neglecting other forms of communication in Africa like words of mouth, dance, art, traditional literature is another

problem. The third problem is concerned with the failure to recognize that the media, in African countries formerly ruled by Europeans, all emerged from colonialism with different communication models and today operate in ways somewhat different from each other. The fourth and last problem is concerned with the absence of a thorough examination of the external factors, along with the internal factors, that affect media performance in Africa.

In light of this, it could be difficult to decide that African media should run according to this or that theory or other specific media system model. Thus, Hallin and Mancini (2004), preferred to judge the function of the media by looking at historical and socio-political conditions when studying a given media environment and argued:

> We may judge party newspapers to be of little relevance to the democratic process in Western Europe at the beginning of the twenty-first century, but this does not mean we can dismiss their significance in the different political context in which they flourished some decades ago – or, perhaps, deny that in some other political system they might play an important role today. Any judgment we make about a media system has to be based on a clear understanding of its social context – of such elements as the divisions existing within society, the political process by which they were (or were not) resolved, and the prevailing patterns of political belief (p. 15).

In order to decide where African media is placed and should be placed for better, the four major dimensions discussed by Hallin and Mancini (2004) seem helpful. These dimensions are: the development of media markets, political parallelism (partisanship), the development of journalistic profession and the degree and nature of state intervention. Through these dimensions, it seems helpful to uncover the political economy of a given country – its media ownership and control.

1.2. Statement of the Problem

Media institutions with professional practitioners and competent information market are imperative for deepening democratic and responsible governance. The failure in doing so will result in unaccountable, irresponsible and corrupt governance. Thus, establishing strong media institutions that are filled with critical professionals is something that needs urgent attention.

Looking back at the history of the Continent, one would observe that the socio-political culture Africa experienced has had its own impact on the Continent's media systems. After

the physical departure of European colonial powers, African media became ideological tools of the new African leaders, and were brought under the state control and made to sing the praises of dictators in the name of national unity and development (Eribo and Jong-Ebot, 1997, p. x, and Gregory Pitts, 2000, p. 276). The Ethiopian situation is not an exception in this regard as it exhibits some of the common features other African journalists and African states share.

There are different challenges in the African media especially, in the broadcast stream. One is broadcast governance or assignments. Bourgault (1995) argued that assignments to senior management have come largely through two roots – direct appointment through political patronage and advancement through civil service. Politically sensitive management positions, especially the managing director, the general manager, and the manager of news and public information are very often appointed directly by the head of the state or his deputy, an information minister. The more technical specialties in finance, engineering, and broadcast production are more likely to come through the ranks of civil service (Bourgault, 1995, p. 44).

Secondly, the chances for successful watchdog journalism are even more restricted in new democracies where the functional interdependence between politicians and journalists is still overshadowed by the legacy of suppression and censorship during the old regime. Political leaders—even those who are committed to democratic values—find it hard to accept an adversarial press that demands public justification of policy decisions and political conduct. In fact, the relationship between governments and the media in most new democracies is characterized by frequent clashes—quite tellingly dubbed "media wars"— over the boundaries of government interference into the operation and structure of the media and even the content of news reporting (Voltmer in Norris edition, 2010, p. 141).

However, the independence of public media is important for various reasons, such as those stated by the World Bank – "where public broadcasters are independent and have a clear mandate, they can make a significant contribution to good governance and accountability, broadcasting diversity, and the ability of the broadcasting sector as a whole to play a positive role in society and development" (World Bank, 2008, p. 39).

In Ethiopia, except few FM Radio stations, the broadcast stream is controlled by the government. According to Solomon (2005), there is a very tight form of political control in the activities of journalists working in state broadcasting. Government officials, predominantly from the Ministry of Information, directly and indirectly interfere in the editorial independence of journalists working in the Ethiopian Radio.

Another point that should be raised is partisanship which Voltmer (in Norris edition, 2010) argued as bias. Since biased media present political issues from a particular point of view, while ignoring, or even dismissing opposite views, partisanship is seen as an impediment for the media to fulfill their responsibilities to provide reliable information. The audience of a biased newspaper or television channel learns only half of the truth and hence might be less equipped to make informed and effective choices. However, supporting a particular cause is not only an accepted part of press freedom, but also one of several legitimate ways of representing the plurality of viewpoints in the public sphere (Voltmer in Norris edition 2010, p. 143).

Moreover, according to Hallin and Mancini (2004, p.38), where political parallelism is very high, with media organizations strongly tied to political organizations, and journalists deeply involved in party politics, professionalization is indeed likely to be low: journalists are likely to lack autonomy, except to the extent that they enjoy it due to high political positions, and journalism is likely to lack a distinct common culture and distinct sense of social purpose, apart from the purposes of the political actors with which media are affiliated.

On the other hand, Bereket (2012) observed that lack of logistics, inadequate training, organizational pressure, external interference, absence of incentives, absence of protection for journalists and people's reluctance to be source of information are highly challenging the practice of investigative journalism in government media in Ethiopia. These and related problems can be comprehensively explained if factors like ownership, information market and ideological environment under which the media operate are studied in light of historical contexts. Hence, it is important to examine the state of the Ethiopian media taking into account its socio-political context with particular attention to the state of media ownership and regulatory frameworks.

1.3. Objective of the Study

The major purpose of this study is to examine the Ethiopian media industry with a particular focus on media ownership and control under the three consecutive regimes – imperial, Dergue and EPRDF led government. Specifically, the paper deals with the following three points:

- It examines the history of the Ethiopian media ownership, control and the degree of state intervention
- It examines the development of the Ethiopian media market
- It examines the development of journalistic professionalism

1.4. Research Questions

1. How is the Ethiopian media linked historically and structurally to the political system?
2. What does the historical development of the Ethiopian media Market look like?
3. What does the development of journalistic professionalism look like in Ethiopia?

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1.1. Political Economy of the Media

This study employed political economy of media as an overarching theoretical framework to guide the study as media are often taken to be the product of the socio-political environment it inhabits.

According to Holt and Perren (2009), political economy does not pertain solely to economics, but to the relations between the economic, political, technological, and cultural dimensions of the social context in which media industries function. Political economy should also discern and analyze the role of technology in the production and distribution of products in the media industry. Media industry studies should engage both old and new media, see the convergences and divergences, and track the changes. There is obviously a dramatic transformation going on in media industries with the explosion of new digital technologies that is affecting business and political economy, production and distribution,

the forms of texts, and audience reception (ibid:101). Above all, political economy analyses can help determine the limits and range of political and ideological discourses and effects (Holt and Perren, 2009, p. 102). However, under the rubric of political economy theory, particular attention is paid to the interaction of politics and media in Hallin and Mancini's (2004) Polarized Pluralist Media Model**.**

The Polarized Pluralist Media Model is characterized by integration of the media into party politics, weaker historical development of commercial media, and a strong role of the state (Hallin and Mancini, 2004, p. 11). It is also characterized by an elite-oriented press with relatively small circulation and a corresponding centrality of electronic media. Political parallelism tends to be high; the press is marked by a strong focus on political life, external pluralism, and a tradition of commentary-oriented or advocacy journalism. Instrumentalization of the media by the government, by political parties, and by industrialists with political ties is common. Public broadcasting tends to follow the government or parliamentary models. Professionalization of journalism is not as strongly developed as in the other models: journalism is not as strongly differentiated from political activism and the autonomy of journalism is often limited (ibid, p. 73).

The state plays a large role, according to Hallin and Mancini (2004), as an owner, regulator, and funder of media, though its capacity to regulate effectively is often limited. Many Mediterranean countries are characterized by a particularly rapid and uncontrolled transition from state controlled to commercial broadcasting.

Since the media developed in Southern Europe as an institution of the political and literary worlds more than of the market, it has slight similarity with that of Ethiopia though it also substantially differs in many ways.

3. Research Method

This study aims at analyzing the history of the Ethiopian media ownership and regulatory system along with the media market and the level of professionalization. To this end, the study has employed historical research method where analysis of documents and, to some extent, in-depth interview constituted as data collection tools.

3.1.1. Data Gathering Tools

Data were collected in two major ways – by gathering documents on the Ethiopian media industry and in-depth interview and group discussions both with media practitioners and regulatory bodies of media industry. Accordingly, the media laws enacted since 1992 were gathered and incorporated in this research. The proclamations No. 34/1992, 178/1999, 533/2007 and 158/2008 are dealt with likewise. Though the proclamation No. 158/2008 is not directly connected to the media industry, it is incorporated into this research because of some effects it holds on the accountability of Ethiopian Broadcast Authority (EBA).

In the second phase of the investigation, some authorities from EBA were contacted for in-depth interview and group discussions were conducted with their experts in order to explore the topic deeply. Besides this, media practitioners and journalists from both government and private media houses were interviewed.

Document Analysis

Document analysis, according to O'Leary (2004), is a research method in which one collects, reviews, interrogates, and analyses various forms of text as a primary source of research data. In further argument, in document analysis, we are talking about documents as a source of data, similar to data gathered in surveys, interviews, and observations. This can take the form of previously gathered census data, newspaper articles, historical archives, or company minutes – the list goes on and on. The main point of distinction, however, is that the 'documents' are pre-produced texts that have not been generated by the researcher. Rather, the researcher's role is limited to gathering, reviewing, and interrogating relevant documents (O'Leary, 2004, pp. 177 and Singh, 2006, pp. 115 – 117).

So, documents on the history of the Ethiopian media written and documented in different forms were part of this research paper. Moreover, media laws enacted since 1992 and their ties with civil law before and nowadays (after the revision of the civil law in 2004) were all incorporated. The proclamation No. 158/2008, by which the Ministry of Communication Affairs was established, was also referred to because of its connection with media regulation.

Interviews

Interviews provide a way of generating data by asking people to talk about their everyday lives. Their main function is to provide a framework in which respondents can express their own thoughts in their own words. They generally take the form of a conversation between two people (although they can involve larger groups - focus groups). Since everyone has the experience of talking to people, there is a tendency to assume that conducting interviews is easy to do and requires little skill. However, interviews are not just conversations. They are conversations with a purpose - to collect information about a certain topic or research question. These `conversations' do not just happen by chance; rather they are deliberately set up and follow certain rules and procedures (Miller and Brewer, 2003, p. 166). Accordingly, two forms of interviews were conducted in this study: in-depth interview and focus group discussion.

In-depth Interview

In-depth interviewing is the most commonly used data collection approach in qualitative research. This is hardly surprising, given the common concern of qualitative researchers to understand the meaning people make of their lives from their own perspective. The in-depth interview takes seriously the notion that people are experts on their own experience and so best able to report how they experienced a particular event or phenomenon. If we interview different people about the same event or phenomenon, we will inevitably get a range of perspectives. Where the research question requires it, the perspectives of members of a range of groups, such as clients and workers, or teachers, students and parents, should be obtained (Darlington and Scott 2002, pp. 48).

Depending on the benefits of in-depth interviews, some important officials and media managers were interviewed for an hour each, at least on average. Thus, some officers from the Ethiopian Broadcast Authority, ERTA Management, FBC directorate, *Reporter* newspaper management and the management of *Ethio-mehedar* newspaper were purposely selected for the interview. These interviewees were selected because the researcher believes that their insights were important for the purpose of the study. Since EBA is the higher regulatory body of media industry, it was important to include its management. ERTA, especially, ETV is the only TV that serves at the national level. Hence, it was also important

to incorporate their views. Both FBC and *Reporter* newspaper were chosen because of their influence and longevity in the market compared to others. *Ethio-mehedar* was selected because journalists who had worked in different media houses (both government and private) were working there at the time of the investigation.

Focus Group Discussions

Focus group interviews have been in use for a long time in the social sciences; apparently they were used by Malinowski (1922) in his anthropological research. This technique was also used by Merton et al. (1956) to study the impact of political propaganda, and now finds broad application in market research, in which 'focus groups' are used to assess consumer reactions to new products, advertising campaigns, etc. Focus groups may take many forms, but essentially the technique involves engaging a small number of people (usually 4–8) in an informal group discussion 'focused' around a particular topic or set of issues (Corbetta, 2003, pp. 276 and Drew ital, 2006, pp. 50).

Accordingly, group discussions were conducted with experts of EBA – those who were concerned with PR, inspection and control, law and administrative issues. Similarly, journalists and media practitioners were involved in the focus discussion.

3.1.2. Sampling

Literatures on the Ethiopian media

Scholarly works of different individuals on the area of the Ethiopian media history; ownership and regulations; professionalization and technology; historical partisanship; obstacles of free press; the role of private and government (public) media; the information market; and pressures from political parties, were all paid attention to as much as possible.

Laws and Proclamations

Media law is a recent phenomenon in the history of Ethiopian media industry. The possible laws that can be subject to discussion start from 1992 and go forward. Accordingly, this study has incorporated all press proclamations put forth since 1992. Press proclamation No. 34/1992, Broadcasting Proclamation No. 178/1999, Broadcasting Service Proclamation No.

533/2007, and Government Communication Affairs Office Establishment No. 158/2008 has been incorporated in the analysis.

The Regulatory Bodies of the Ethiopian Media Institutions and Practitioners

The current Broadcasting Service Proclamation No. 533/2007, in its different articles, gives the power of press monitoring and control to the Ethiopian Broadcast Authority (EBA). Depending on what they are provided with, two officials from EBA have been interviewed. Moreover, three of the staff members, who were working in legal, public and monitoring and control department, were also incorporated in group discussion.

In addition to that, some media houses were part of this research. Accordingly, FBC (one participant), ERTA Management (one participant), MCC - *Reporter* Newspaper (one participant) and *Ethio-Mehedar* Newspaper (three participants - who were in different media houses before) took part in the interview. Some individual media practitioners were also contacted and most of them requested for anonymous participation. In general, 14, and of them, three media practitioners requested for anonymity.

4. Ethiopian Media Industry

4.1. Historical Background

The press has a short history in Ethiopia, going back to only the beginning of the 20th century. Among its pioneers was the Eritrean intellectual Blatta Gebre-Egziabher Gila-Maryam, who started circulating his views on national and international issues after escaping from an Italian prison near Aseb, where he had been detained on charges of spying for Menelik. Two weeklies, *Aemiro* and *Berhanena Selam*, began to appear soon after. The latter, patronized by the then progressive prince Ras Tefferi, the future Emperor Haile Sellassie, had its heyday in the second half of the 1920s when it served as a forum for the progressive intelligentsia, whom Tefferi had drawn over to his side in his struggle against the conservative Empress Zawditu and the nobility allied to her. This was one of the brightest moments of the Ethiopian press, when vital national issues were freely discussed and debated. Unfortunately, it was short-lived (CHEDS, 1994, p. 19).

Shimeles (2000) referring to different sources, argued that the earliest issue of the publication appeared around 1901, written by hand and with a circulation first of 24 copies

and, then, 200 following the importation of a copying machine. *A'emro* passed through periods of temporary suspension and revival, owing to financial difficulties, shortage of newsprint and the Italian aggression.

Berhanena Selam survived the next five years, as a typical government paper for Fascist Italy. That became the norm for the press from 1941 to 1974, when it engaged in unabashed adulation of the emperor and blind defense of the status quo. Then came another spell of liberty with the popular upsurge of February 1974. The tide of repressed feeling was so high that not even the seizure of state power by the "Dergue" could check it. Free expressions of views on various aspects of the revolutionary process continued well into 1975. In a way any element of self- restraint was discarded as most writers were writing under pseudonyms (CHEDS, 1994, P. 19).

According to MOI (1966, p. 9, 11, cited in Shemelis, 2000), in the post-liberation period, the publication 'industry' witnessed a comparatively significant expansion in terms of the number of periodicals produced and the size of their circulation. Such influential and long-lasting weekly papers as *Addis Zemen* and *The Ethiopian Herald* came onto the scene in 1941 and 1943, respectively. Both became dailies after December 1958. In 1952 *Yezareyitu Etyopia* was added to the list of newspapers (Shimeles, 2000, pp. 6-7).

Deneke (1991) and MOI (1966) as cited in Shemelis (2000) argued that the expansion of the capacity of the Berhanena Selam Printing Press in 1965 and the increase in the number of new printers installed were but important additions to the development of the print medium. However, the real turn for the newspaper enterprise came in the late 1950s and early 1960s with the establishment of the Economic Commission for Africa (1958) and the Organization of African Unity (1963).

There was, in this period, according to Shemelis, a larger number of both daily and weekly newspapers and other press products, all, with the exception of a few, being government-owned and catering to a limited circle of an elite readership - mostly top bureaucrats and members of the urban-based intelligentsia (Shemelis, 2000, p. 9).

Radio broadcasting was introduced to Ethiopia with the coming of fascist Italy and it was handed over to the government after the victory. Afterwards, there were 4 major radio institutions. The station in Addis Ababa, Asmara and Harari were regulated under the

Ministry of Information. Besrate- Gebriel was the other one (Mammo Wudeneh, 2007 P. 49). Television broadcast was started to celebrate the foundation of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) in 1963; it was limited to Addis Ababa and the surrounding areas. However, the media have faithfully served the government who owned it while neglecting the wider public. The profession of journalism suffered from intrusive censorship as well as from a lack any rudimentary training. Moreover, the alternation of regimes contributed to the dismissal of experienced journalists and replacement of them by government trusted individuals, which in turn, weakened the profession for worse [Nebeyu, 2011, p. 286]. Regarding the beginning of Television Broadcast in Ethiopia, Emrakeb Assefa (2007) chronicled 50 Years of African Journalism in the following words:

> Ethiopians were introduced to television when the late Emperor Haile Selassie, one of the forefathers of the African Renaissance, proudly televised the historic opening of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) in 1963. African leaders met in Addis Ababa as a testimony to breaking free from the yoke of colonialism, and that historic congregation was one of the first programs aired … at the Haile Selassie I Theatre (now National Theatre) (p. 114).

At the moment, according to the information from the Ethiopian Broadcast Authority, there are 23 federal and regional government print papers. Furthermore, 19 newspapers and 22 magazines are privately owned and are on duty from 2008 – 2012/13. According to the Ethiopian Broadcast Authority, the privately owned media accounts for 64.1% and the remaining 35.9% is owned by the government (Ethiopian Broadcast Authority News Magazine, Vol. 1 No. 13 Dec. 2012 and In-depth Interview with Authorities).

However, Nabeyu Eyasu (2011, p. 286), who has been working as journalist from the Emperor to the EPRDF rule, argued that even if some private newspapers and magazines appeared during the Emperor, they were forced to disappear soon. Between 1974- 1976 [during Derg Regime] the private magazines appeared but were eliminated sooner. When the EPRDF came to power, many private newspapers and magazines appeared. But, the euphoria was short-lived as the EPRDF soon began to punish, intimidate, accuse and imprison journalists.

Here, one can understand that the private newspapers and magazines did not surface with the coming of the EPRDF; they were there both in the time of the Emperor and the Derg regime.

The difference is that unlike in the current EPRDF government, private newspapers and magazines did not last long during the two previous regimes. Irrespective of allowing the existence of the private press, journalists in the private press have not been immune from intimidation, accusation and imprisonment under the EPRDF government.

4.2. The History of Press Laws in Ethiopia

Since the democratic dispensation came to Ethiopia late, one cannot find any press laws or proclamations as such during the two previous regimes (the time of the Emperor and Mengistu's dictatorship) except the fact that there were mentions of press regulations in other civil laws. However, the 1992 press proclamation under the EPRDF led government was the first that provides for press freedom. Because it was the first press proclamation in the history of the country, not only for its being first in its provisions, but also for its legacies in begetting consecutive proclamations afterwards, some of its provisions are discussed here.

Press Proclamation No. 34/1992

Art.3 sub-articles 1 and 2 of this proclamation provide that Freedom of the press is recognised and respected in Ethiopia and declares that censorship and any restriction of a similar nature are prohibited. Art. 8 sub-articles 1 of the proclamation declares the right of the press to have access and disseminate information. Sub-article 4 (a) notes that the publisher or the editor of any press may not be compelled to disclose the source of any news or information which has been used in the preparation of his/her press.

On the other hand, Art.10 sub-article 1 declares that every press has the duty to ensure that any press product it circulates is free from any content that can give rise to criminal and civil liability. Moreover, sub-article 2 declares:

> Any press shall have the duty to ensure that any press product it issues or circulates is free from: a) any criminal offence against the safety of the State or of the administration established in accordance with the Charter or of the national defence force; b) any defamation or false accusation against any individual nation/nationality, peoples or organization; c) any criminal instigation of one nationality against another or incitement of conflict between peoples; and d) any agitation for war.

Arti.19 of this proclamation also declares that the government officials shall have the duty to cooperate with the press in furtherance of the principle that the people have the right to know about the operations of government and the accountability of government officials.

However, Article 20 of this proclamation had generated intense acrimony between media practitioners and scholars on one hand and the government on the other. Sub-article 1 of this article declares:

> … where any press is found to have failed to carry out its duties under sub-articles 1 and 2 of Article 10 of this Proclamation, the person liable pursuant to sub-article 3 of Article 10 shall, without prejudice to the liabilities and penalties under the Penal Code, be punishable with imprisonment for not less than one (1) year and not more than three (3) years or with a fine of not less than Birr ten thousand (Birr 10,000) and not more than fifty thousand (Birr 50,000) or with both such imprisonment and fine.

In addition, sub-article 2 notes that where any press is found to have contravened the provisions of Articles 6 and 7 of this Proclamation, the proprietor, the publisher or the editor-in-chief of the press shall be punishable with imprisonment not exceeding two (2) years or with fine not exceeding birr ten thousand (Birr 10,000).

Sub-article 3 and 4 respectively discussed: where any press is found to have failed to carry out its duties under sub-article 2 of Article 11 and Part Four of this Proclamation, the proprietor, publisher or editor -in-chief of the press shall be punishable with imprisonment not exceeding one (1) year or with a fine not exceeding birr five thousand (Birr 5,000) or with both such imprisonment and fine; whosoever violates or obstructs the implementation of this Proclamation, otherwise than is provided for under sub-articles 1, 2 and 3 of this Article, shall be punishable in accordance with the Penal Code.

Here, the point that should be noted is the creation of linkage between press activity and related wrongs with the penal code. According to Tsega Maria & Abebe Genamow (2 000), Art. 256, 269 and 480 of the Penal Code can be cited as an illustration of provisions designed to have such effect. The press proclamation in Art.10 and 20 has reincarnated the penal code provisions and made them regulate the present conditions of the press in Ethiopia. Thus, as long as the conditions laid down in Art. 10 and 20 of the press proclamation cannot be given an interpretation which is outside the framework of the 1957 penal code, a press product with a content of ill-will or disaffection against the government

or its officials is prosecuted in a court of law - will be convicted guilty of violating the penal code (Tsega Maria & Abebe Genamow, 2000, p. 4).

Broadcasting Proclamation No.178/1999

This proclamation gave the EBA power to regulate the country's media institutions. Art. 4/1 of the law states that the Ethiopian Broadcasting Authority is established as an autonomous Federal Administrative Agency having its own legal personality. However, the Agency is accountable to the Prime Minister according to the provision given under Arti. 4/2. Thus, this proclamation was different from that of the 1992 only for the inclusion of the phrase "Broadcast Authority." This is because the duties and responsibilities of the press and the related penalty remained the same as provided in the Press Proclamation No. 34/1992.

Broadcasting Service Proclamation No. 533/2007

This proclamation does not differ from its predecessors that far; the only difference appears to be in terms of its accountability to the Ministry of Information as provided under Arti. 2/19. For the surprise of the media practitioners and scholars working on it, this was repealed after a year when Government Communication Affairs Office was established in 2008. Accordingly, the Ethiopian Broadcast Authority became accountable to the Office of the Prime Minister as it did under the proclamation No. 34/1992 and proclamation No. 178/1999.

Government Communication Affairs Proclamation No. 158/2008

As discussed above, when the Government Communication Affairs Office was established, the Transitory Provisions are declared under Arti.11/1. It states: "… regulatory powers given to the Ministry of Information with respect to press are hereby vested in the Ethiopia Broadcasting Authority." But its sub-article 2 declares that the Ethiopia Broadcasting Authority shall be accountable to the Prime Minister.

Moreover, Article 49 sub-article 1 declares that the relevant provisions of the Press Proclamation No. 34/1992 shall be applicable to broadcasting services. One must notice here that the provisions under Article 10 and 20 of the Press Proclamation No. 34/1992 are still in place which have been criticized by Tsega Maria & Abebe Genamow (2000) as discussed earlier.

4.3. The Media and State Relationship

One of the private newspapers argued that the profession of journalism has been used as an instrument to praise the Emperor and governors in the past; and did the same thing even for dictatorship. According to this newspaper, the media were also used as tools to disseminate Fascist propaganda during the occupation of Fascist Italy. The newspaper also condemned the current government journalists that they are tools of the government wearing the title 'developmental journalist'. They are the contemporary parrots (Ethio-Mehedar, Vol. 1, No. 15, April 2013). On the other hand, one of the former journalists, and prominent author wrote their relation with the government in the following words:

> Though we did not have the chance to work for newspapers with public or private stand from Emperor Menelik to now, we [who had worked for government newspapers] have been able to hear many and various issues from public, government officials and foreign individuals. We have seen secret records, comments and writings. No doubt that we had accomplished our responsibility had we shared to the mass what we heard, saw and read, not the whole, but at least some of them (Mamo, 2007, P. 384).

On the other hand, Tadewos Tantu, a columnist of Ethio-Mehedar newspaper listed individuals said to be 'Parrots' in different regimes. He listed the early journalists who were working on Addis Zemen – the government daily newspaper. Of course, some of them are also listed in the works of Price ital (2009). According to Tadewos, the individual journalists worked hard in the service of the imperial rule and have continued to praise the dictators afterwards. Moreover, most of these individuals tried even to have acceptance by the EPRDF when it came to power. They used to praise EPRDF leaders as they did for their ancestors (In-depth Interview with Tadewos, May 30, 2013; and Ethio-Mehedar, Vol. 1, No. 15, April 2013).

What is more, the Ethiopian Broadcast Authority (EBA) PR Department notes that there are problems regarding professional reporting, institutional equipment, and awareness in media regulation. One of the participants in group discussion added: "Depending on the experiences of other countries, we have been trying to facilitate occasions of awareness– on private, public and community media;" though he was not willing to mention the so called 'role model countries' for their improvements (Group discussion with EBA, February 5, 2013). But, British and South African media have been reported to have been the best

models for ETV on different occasions. In addition to that, ETV reported few years ago that they had shared experiences with the Iranian media.

Another problem is related to the autonomy of EBA – which is the higher regulatory body of the Ethiopian media industry. EBA claims that it is an autonomous organ free of pressure:

> Regarding our autonomy, we have been accountable to the Prime Minister at the beginning. Afterwards, we came under the Ministry of Information. But now, we are accountable to the Prime Minister according to the Proclamation No. 158/2008 article 11/2 by which Government Communication Affairs Office was Established. Though we are accountable to the ruling party, we have not faced any pressure against our autonomy and we have smooth relations with the Prime Minister (Group discussion with EBA, February 5, 2013).

In general, the relation of media and state can be likened to the relation of son and father, or daughter and mother. The Ethiopian press accomplishes what the state orders like the son does follow orders under the pressure of the father. Similarly, the media do not dare to touch whatever the state prohibits just like a daughter loses her confidence as a result of her mother's stern warning. Furthermore, the private media institutions are also handicapped by the restrictions of media laws. Before the Derg regime, the press was directly tied to the Emperor though it was said to be accountable to the MOI. And the socialist ideology dominated the press when the military government replaced the Emperor. The president would order the press whenever he liked to do so.

But, the press started a new era with the coming of the EPRDF to power although it remained accountable to the ministry of information. Gradually, the Ethiopia Broadcast Authority came to exist being accountable to the Office of the Prime Minister. Thus, the Prime Minister has an opportunity to control the press through the EBA while MOI can also exert another pressure at the same time. The following diagram simplifies the relation of media and the state in the history Ethiopia.

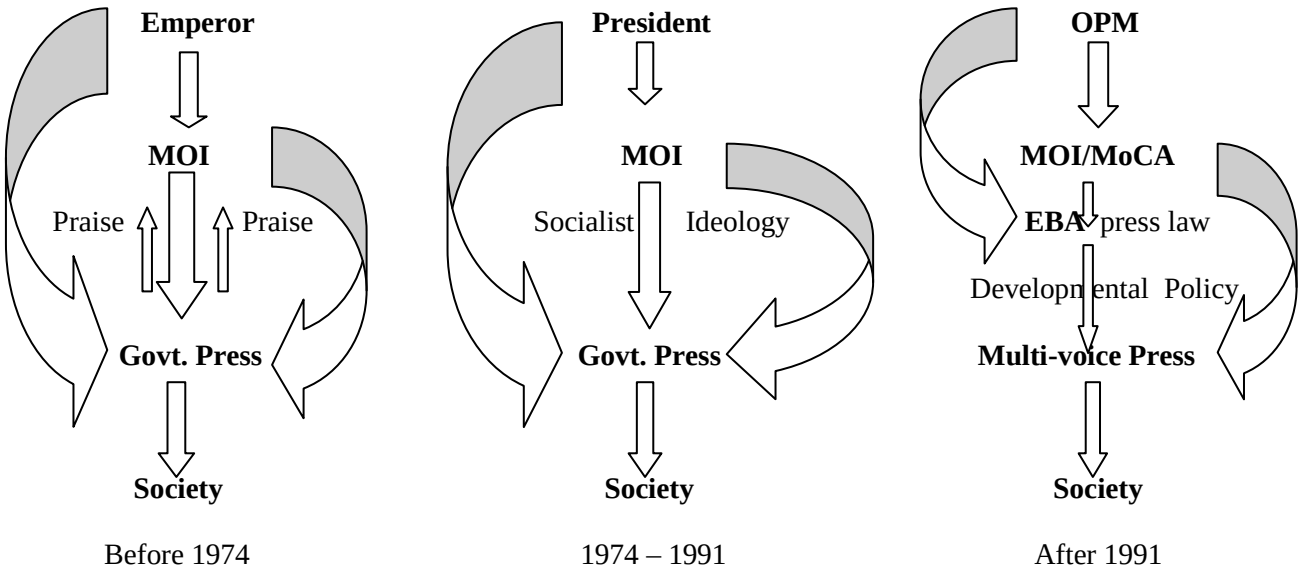


Diagram 1: The history of Ethiopian media industry

4.4. Ownership and Professionalization

Ownership

The private media is of recent phenomenon in Ethiopia. According to Berhane G. Mariam (2002),

> After many decades of total government control over the mass media, the EPRDF government appeared to promise a new era of freedom of expression by abolishing formal censorship bodies that existed for many decades during the previous regimes. It seemed that the EPRDF government has chosen stability and freedom of expression. … Ethiopia's first independent tabloid newspaper began to appear and foreign magazines and newspapers were available. The 1992 press law has allowed an independent and privately-financed press alongside the governmentally-funded official media, which included the semi-autonomous channels of Ethiopian television service, radio, Ethiopian News Agency (ENA) and a number of private newspapers (in *THEMEN* 2002, p. 642).

However, there are serious questions raised by the public concerning the ownership of media companies. Many private newspapers are allegedly supported, if not created, by opposition political parties operating locally and abroad. Most readers do know for certain who owns the papers they read. In the case of the Fana radio station and the Walta Information Center, both are affiliated with the ruling party (Interview session with Ethio-Mehdar Manager May 30, 2013; MSI 2008, p.129). But, Program Management of Radio Fana - now FBC, does not accept such characterization.

> Radio Fana is historically related to the EPRDF who is the ruling party now. It was founded by the four major institutions that represent each four parties who made coalition to create EPRDF – "TERET" from Amhara Libration Movement, "EFFORT" from TPLF, "BIFTU" from OPDO and the other from SNN Movement. It was given to these organizations as endowment for their contribution to EPRDF. For your surprise, these institutions do not share our profit and they also do not support us with money. They just founded it and left us in order to help sustain ourselves with the revenue we generate (In-depth Interview with FBC Program Directorate Director, April 30, 2013).

In spite of the fact that FBC is historically related to the ruling party, according to the Program Director, it is working in a professional manner. It was legally established, gives trainings to its reporters, and at the same time, it has its own editorial policy. However, the Program Director admitted that they support the government policy because they believe that the policy is right and would help the development of the country. He said: "The government is working to eliminate poverty and we support it" (April 30, 2013).

According to Media Sustainability Index (2008), there is no foreign investment in the media in Ethiopia, as the law only allows Ethiopian citizens to invest in media. The current Broadcast Proclamation Article 23 sub-article 2's sub-articles (a) and (b) prove this survey. But, according to Media Sustainability Index (2008), the ban of foreign investment deprives the Ethiopian media of finance, modern management, and experience they badly need, but allowing considerable foreign ownership could mean putting vital national security interests in foreign hands.

According to Berhane G. Mariam (2002), the Ethiopian mass media infrastructure is less developed and the media is independent and non-government only in name. The authorities have continued not to tolerate press freedom and are used to circumscribe their critics. A number of journalists continue to suffer imprisonment and tremendous hardships in their attempts to maintain freedom of the press under the country's strict press law. They face a continuous cycle of arrests, trial, imprisonment, and are placed under intolerable pressure due to their failure to escape the punishment treadmills (Berhane in *THEMEN* 2002, p. 644).

Professionalization

Few Ethiopian journalists have professional education in the field. According to Press Reference, only a couple of people in all of Ethiopia hold advanced degrees in journalism. Many reporters operate as spokespeople for particular political views, rather than as

journalists. But, according to the participants of interview sessions, this is not that much significant problem at this moment. They added that the industry is almost full of professionals except compromising of the profession because of financial and ideological benefits. Self-censorship is also a big problem, because some journalists would rather maintain peace between themselves and the state and thus avoid reporting any facts that may force ugly confrontations. Among the independent papers, which are under less pressure to show deference to government accounts of events, an equally unprofessional skepticism about the government pervades political reporting (http://www.pressreference.com/Co-Fa/Ethiopia.html; Skjerdal, 2010; and Group discussion with practitioners, May 30, 2013).

On the other hand, reporters are usually recruited straight from university language and journalism departments, and editors often complain that they are not prepared to work on investigative reports. Editors are relatively better equipped in terms of education and experience to engage in specialized reporting, but staffing limitations do not allow them to go out to report stories themselves; they must rely on novice reporters to gather information (MSI 2012, p. 141). In addition to that, ERTA Management observed that universities are training their students about liberal journalism not developmental one. He added: "the liberal model of journalism cannot help our context since the middle class is few and the lower class is numerous" (Interview with ERTA manager, June 28, 2013).

According to Tadewos - a private newspaper columnist, there are at least three major causes for the weakness of the Ethiopian journalism: 1) lack of journalism knowledge on the part of the practitioners and/or not making use of it while having one; 2) the borderless and pervasive propaganda of the system; 3) lack of awareness on the part of the society and the deafening silence of intellectuals (In-depth Interview with Tadewos, May 30, 2013, Ethio-Mehedar, Vol. 1, No. 15, April 2013).

Apart from being constrained by the unclear media laws that have been discussed above, the absence of strong and independent organ to help journalists practice the profession confidently has compounded the problem. As a result, the profession of journalism remains weak in Ethiopia.

Media Sustainability Index (2008) noted a similar thing regarding the Ethiopian media. It stresses the absence of representative media trade associations. There are six legally

registered professional associations, but these do not represent either the majority of journalists or their interests. Rather, they are organized along political lines. They are not willing to work together, and they often accuse each other of not being independent. Three of the six organizations claim to broadly represent journalists' interests, and the other three cater to specialists or particular beats: a photo journalists association, women journalists association, and journalists working on HIV/AIDS and the environment. All are registered with the Ministry of Justice (In-depth Interview with EBA February 5, 2013; and MSI 2008, p.131,). EBA authorities argue more:

> Regarding the freedom of media practitioners, it is clearly stated in Article 19 of the FDRE constitution. The right for association is also provided in the other article as well. So, the government tried to organize them as an association but they were not willing. However, there are dispersed associations of media practitioners in this country – about 5 or 6 in number. There is also broadcast association. Since they do not agree to work together, they are not as strong association as they should be. Whenever international institutions like the World Bank and UNESCO show willingness to fund them, the fund returns without being used because of their disagreement to work together. In short, we have awareness regarding the issue of the press council though such disagreements have continued to create obstacles. The government appreciates the merit of having the press council and that is why we observe a press day in our country (Group Discussion with EBA, February 5, 2013).

The Ethiopian National Journalists Union (ENJU), which claims to have more than 300 members, is the only functioning association with members from both private and public media in the capital and regional states. The ENJU charter states that only journalists can be members; it classifies publishers as business entities and do not qualify for membership. By doing so, the ENJU hopes to fend off any conflict between business and professional interests within the association (MSI 2008, p.131).

Both the group discussion made with the Ethiopian Broadcast Authority and the survey of Media Sustainability Index (2008) show us that despite calls by local journalists and international media organizations for these associations to come under an umbrella union, the groups continue to work separately, each seeking the demise of the other. Relations between the leaders of the larger associations have grown particularly hostile over the years. Consequently, many prominent journalists in the private media have refused to join any association (Group Discussion with EBA February 5, 2013; and MSI 2008, p. 131).

The following points put clearly the problem of the Ethiopian journalistic profession:

> The Ethiopian Free Journalists Association and the Ethiopian Journalists Association have lost members to the ENJU. Both are essentially defunct and are believed to maintain ties with the political opposition. … None of the associations is engaged in or capable of providing legal and professional support for journalists, though the Environment Journalists Association does a better job of facilitating career development opportunities for its members (MSI 2008, p.131).

However, the government and some private media practitioners, along with scholars working on communication area, are reportedly trying to initiate the formation of comprehensive press council that would work responsibly and impartially at the national level. But some private media houses and individual journalists are skeptical about the neutrality of the emerging 'press council'. They argue that government interest is reflecting from the beginning. They are also doubtful that those who are currently leading the steering committee are committed to protecting the autonomy of the council. One of the private newspaper journalists argues that he is really happy with the formation of the Ethiopian Press Council. But he doubts its autonomy because he does not believe that one of the two members leading the steering committee would be impartial and professionally capable to lead the council. Even though the researcher was not able to talk to the person just mentioned by the interviewee, he was able to talk to the Vice-chairperson of the steering committee who said the following:

> The press council being initiated now is the outcome of voluntary media houses. We cannot force anyone who does not want to be its member. I am happy if all media houses are included because it will safeguard them from different pressures. By any means, we cannot oblige media houses to be included; you can take sport journalists for instance, they may give us their back because they have no pressure from political entities. Moreover, the press council being initiated has an organizing committee – Mimi Sebhat is a chairperson and I am Deputy Chairperson (In-depth Interview with Amare, Deputy Chairperson, June 14, 2013).

He also commented on the issues related to the disagreements with Mimi Sebhat and rival media houses in the following words:

> I am working with Mimi, but, it is not because I like her ideology. We are struggling to make our press council standardized in accordance with world experience, especially, that of Europe. One may not like Mimi but she has her own media house which may be bad or good. We are working to include all

> media houses and excluding Mimi's media house cannot make us complete and comprehensive. Look, whenever you choose a friend to accomplish a task which needs also the participation of the one you hate, I am sure the task would be incomplete. In addition, the press council would have its own code of conduct. When all members agree on the provisions of the code of conduct, it would decide how member media houses and journalists should work and benefit from the press council. Anyone who disagrees with the provisions can withdraw. But, in my opinion, it is highly beneficial if all concerned bodies could participate. You see, you don't become neighbor often by choice- and you have to learn to live with your neighbor in order to continue life, otherwise you cannot share their tent at the time of emergency.

Most of the journalists who took part in the interview would still like to see the press council established despite their misgivings its potential independence and they concur that the press council is important in order to address issues related to the profession.

7.5. Development of Information Market

Ten years ago, Berhane G. Mariam argued that even if government pressure is frequently applied on national media, the print press is active and often publishes articles, which are extremely critical of the government. But there are also some complaints that important news does not get reported while the Ethiopian media is often controlled and inadequate. Because of this, educated Ethiopians have long relied on overseas media for news about their country. For example, News Week, the Economist and others are widely read in Ethiopia. Furthermore, international short-wave broadcasts such as the BBC, Voice of America, Deutsche Welle, CNN and other foreign channels have large audiences in the country, particularly during the time of crisis when local media are either shut down or fail to report local news. Although hardly neutral, state media take advantage over private ones:

> While editors and publishers have often been detained, the survival of any credible print media remains uncertain. By contrast, Ethiopia's state-controlled mass media continue to function and enjoy advantages not available to the independent press. However, government sponsored news is less expensive and more accessible to the population, but its context is hardly neutral in its coverage. The pro-government media does not publish news about the opposition and is often hostile to the independent press (in *THEMEN* 2002, p. 645).

On the other hand, Media Sustainability Index (2008, p. 127) noted that lack of technological instruments hurt the information market in Ethiopia. Though Media Sustainability Index further noted that there is a serious lack of recording equipment and

computer databases among private newspapers five years ago, most of the participants of this research argued that the problem is insignificant at the moment. They added that they do not go off the record during interviews which may leave them defenseless in libel cases and it is possible to make retrieval of background information (Group Discussion with private journalists, May 30, 2013).

Regarding broadcast media, currently ETV – now EBC is reporting that it is transforming itself from Analog to 'Digital system'. Fana Radio – now FBC, also boasts that it is investing in handling technology infrastructure and plans to be top in East Africa. Therefore, the outdated Broadcast production equipment noted by Media Sustainability Index (2008) in ETV, Walta News Agency and Radio Fana are being reversed by the 'digitalization' of information production (In-depth interview with FBC Program Director, April 30, 2013 and ERTA Manager, June 28, 2013). ERTA Manager notes:

> For your surprise, we have visited Aljazeera TV station recently. We observed that the technology and media equipment they have are all with us in ERTA. Our TV Station is well equipped with technology now. I mean by this that we do not have problems regarding media technology. Our fear is that many of our customers may not afford to buy the latest receivers the technology needs. On the other hand, the problem, however, is how to present the reality. BBC reports seem neutral because they know how to present. Our problem is that our reporters lack knowledge as to present the reality. Moreover, everything ETV presents is true though the way we present may still be poor.

ETV Manager, before it becomes EBC, argued that though they have experienced poor professionalism until recently, now their newsroom is almost full of professional journalists. He added that a few gaps related to the profession have been overcome through different trainings. However, the newsroom is limited to the feedbacks from parliament, regional media and different associations who are considered to be stakeholders. Though the ERTA Management admitted the problems regarding taking feedback from the mass audience, the attempt to get rid of interest groups is hardly seen in their newsroom. The major principle ETV usually focuses on is the editorial conference in which editors take part not reporters. Since they do not have adequate feedback from the mass except occasional phone-ins and emails, the newsroom is not able to embrace the heart of the mass.

Another problem that prevails in the Ethiopian media industry is related to conducting research which is noted by Media Sustainability Index six years ago, and in fact the problem

has still continued. Print and broadcast media outlets do not conduct research to tailor their production to audience needs. Most papers do not have strategic plans; the few papers that have prepared plans typically do not incorporate market research into the process. Call-ins are the common research tools employed by FM stations because it saves time and money (MSI 2008, p. 130 and In-depth Interview with FBC Program Directorate Director, April 30, 2013).

On the other hand, Private Newspapers argue that they face problem in publishing their newspaper. According to some private newspaper managers interviewed, Berhanena Selam is partial towards newspapers – it publishes selectively. Some argued that they are prohibited from publishing their newspapers with Berhanena Selam Printing Press. In fact, one of the private newspaper managers notes the following:

> … Companies fear to advertise their products through our newspaper because they think that their organization will be closed if they do so. Thus, we are not able to be strong enough financially. Similarly, there is another problem related to readers though it is also connected to the newspapers practices. Newspapers used to lead the readers towards sensational issues - which are only bold on the front page but either absent or diverted in the body of the newspapers. Due to such problems, the newspaper that strives to work properly and professionally suffers hardship (Million, May 30, 2013).

In addition to that, getting license is problematic. It takes years in order to have a private newspaper. Regarding this, one of the prominent newspaper managers notes:

> The information market is also in a serious problem in our country. In other countries, you can publish your own newspaper after having license. You can just prepare it on your laptop and give it to the publishers. In our country, contrary to others, you will be obliged to have the latest printers and desktops, photocopy, standardized office with standardized structure. To tell you the truth, it took us three years to open our newspaper (Amare, June 14, 2013).

4.5. Challenges of the Private Media

There are many problems with the Ethiopian media industry. The truth is repeatedly distorted and the society is continuously ill-served. A journalist who has worked for three consecutive regimes wrote:

> As a matter of chance, since I have been working in media institutions from imperial rule to the current EPRDF led government, I know that unwittingly journalists used to distort the truth beyond the ethics of journalistic profession.

> Since we didn't have any choice, we used to distort the truth which contributed to the weakness of the profession; no doubt we used to hurt the society for the sake of earning our living. It was like a dream come true when the revolution broke out between 1973– 1976 because we were able to express our feelings freely. In the early years of the EPRDF rule, we were able to serve the people we used to unwittingly hurt in the past. We used to pay a little bit of sacrifice. However, the blocking of free press, accusation from the government, monetary punishment, intimidation and distortion increased from time to time, which in turn, eroded the free press (Nebeyu, 2011, pp. 286 -87).

Editorial policies at all private and government media, including the state-run Ethiopian TV, often claim editorial independence. In practice, however, government media experience frequent interference from editors who dictate what news and feature stories should be produced, and how. Powerful businesses also are increasingly interfering with content and editorial independence, and some newspapers have fallen under the influence of businesses with which they have signed advertisement agreements (In-depth interview with anonymous private journalists, May 30, 2013).

Challenges abound in the private press in different forms. Inadequate fact–checking and self censorship are some of them:

> After the proclamation of the Press Freedom Bill, new, independent newspapers and magazines developed, especially in Addis Ababa. These offer the minority point of view often left out of government-owned publications, but suffer from inadequate fact-checking and occasional censorship, as well as the government's refusal to allow representatives from non-official papers at its press conferences (http://www.pressreference.com/Co-Fa/Ethiopia.html).

In addition to that, one of the private newspaper managers notes:

> … The government categorized us as opposition media after we opened our private newspaper. And we are starving from the shortage of information from government offices because they would not allow us penetrate into the source. But, we used to write some issues we get at least from few sources. On the contrary, since the opposition parties are close and willing to give us information, we can write more things related to them. As a result, the government condemns us as pro-opposition parties (Million, Ethio-Mehedar Newspaper Manager, May 30, 2013).

On the other hand, as the Ethiopian society at large has little or no respect for journalists, no social protection of free speech exists. The society is not conscious enough to safeguard media practitioners and the profession as well. In some circumstances, the journalists themselves are not committed to practicing the profession responsibly. Some private media

are subject to the opposition parties' interest. And the media house in which the government loses interest is subject to closure. Besides, legal infringements on the right to free expression, which is protected by the constitution, reflect the low status of the media in the country (In-depth Interview with Tadewos, May 30, 2013; Amare [Managing Editor, MCC] June 14, 2013).

Overall, it could be argued that the private media is challenged in many ways. Even though media laws declare freedom of expression, in practice it is eroded by intimidation and punishments, and the government is not willing to allow private journalists who are thought to be against the state access to information – which in turn hinders private journalists from producing complete and balanced information. It pushes the private media houses to chronicle one-sided stories coming from the opposition since these are the people the journalists have steady access to. In the end, such a practice would lead to the erosion of public confidence in the profession.

4.6. Challenges of Government Media

Nebeyu Eyasu (2011), a former government and private journalist, describes working as a journalist in a government media as being in prison. As far as he is concerned, the most painful thing has been not being prohibited from reporting the truth, but reporting it with distortion. He wrote, "We were told what to report and what not to report. In Ethiopia … you have to be a propagandist whether you like it or not. But we have to notice that unlike many journalists who feel headache of such unethical practice, there were some cadres who are pleased to practice it" (p. 287).

On the other hand, the political opposition is generally not covered by the government media. When they do on rare occasions, the tone and content is mostly negative. The state media does not conduct in-depth reporting, but cultural programs are well prepared and produced and are popular among the urban audience. Private media have national coverage but mainly concentrate on issues involving the capital (In-depth Interview with Ethio-Mehdar Newspaper Manager, May 30, 2013; MSI 2008, p. 128).

Million Dagenew, one of the private media Managers shared his experience:

> I have worked in both government and private media houses. I am a professional journalist because I graduated from the School of Journalism and

> Communication. When I was working in a government media house, I was not able to serve the society using the real profession of journalism. And that is why I decided to work in private newspaper today. Of course, here, I have got the opportunity of practicing free information which I was not allowed in the government media house (May 30, 2013).

Although many private newspapers are operating in Ethiopia today, most of them are starving from lack of information from government officials. The government dailies like Addis Zemen and the Ethiopian Herald take advantage over the private ones in accessing and receiving information from government officials. ENA on the other hand criticizes the private press that they do not subscribe to them. According to ENAS' news production Directorate, without subscription, it is difficult to get their releases (Interview with Tadesse (ENA) May 30, 2013). Unlike Million's argument noted above, the private information practice is not that much satisfactory because he himself was arrested by the police on November 02, 2013 in case of Laga Tafo Laga Dadhi officials' misbehavior that he disclosed. The challenges are not limited to the government media but also extended to that of the private media; 'do this and do not do that' is the harsh pressure exerted by officials not only in the public media but also in the private media.

Moreover, the government media practitioners used to escape dangers from officials in two ways: one is self-censorship and the other is total praise of the government activities wittingly or unwittingly. An anonymous journalist, who was working in government media pointed out that self-censorship is just to escape hazards that could come because of exposing officials' misbehavior. Those who praise the activities of the government also know well of their doing. But they enjoy privileges in exchange for doing so. Thus, public media seems out of the professional domain in the Ethiopian context.

4.7. Partisanship and Information Polarization

According to Price et al (2009), the background of the private journalists and the role of government have contributed to the polarization of the Ethiopian media since the coming of the EPRDF into power. The late Prime Minister Meles would seldom speak with or even acknowledge private journalists. By failing to engage with the private press, or the arguments they make, the government has done little to create a political mainstream or facilitate a dialogue. The following point illustrates how private media began in 1992:

> Many of the journalists, who lost their jobs, went on to start private publications that were deeply critical of the government. *Tobiya,* one of the first newspapers that appeared after the EPRDF seized power, became one of the most dynamic, experienced and influential publications in the immediate post-conflict period. The paper began in 1992 with 15 former journalists who had previously worked for the Ministry of Information during the Derg as well as some who were outside the Ministry. The founders includes Mulugeta Lule, former editor of the Derg party's magazine, and Goshu Mogus, who ran the censorship office for the Derg (Price ital 2009, p. 6).

Holding onto one side, according to Ethio-Mehedar Newspaper Manager, is common in the Ethiopian media. He notes that the government media raises only the good sides of the ruling class whereas the private ones speak widely about the opposition parties – their claim being that the opposition party is 'voiceless'. Moreover, he raised his experience:

> … Let me raise an example; I have experienced difficulty while attending government press briefing once upon a time. The gatekeepers asked me from where I was just when I arrived at the entrance. They sent me back when I told them that I was from the private newspaper. Similarly, one day I went to the opposition party's briefing. Here, the situation became very different. They asked me from where I was. When I told them that I was from the private press, they welcomed me as their own son. I think this can show you something regarding our media environment (Million, *Ethio-Mehdar* Newspaper Manager, May 30, 2013).

In addition, the state media are as biased toward the government as the private media are toward the opposition - reflecting the stance of the ruling party and are not open to alternative political thought. The state broadcast media devote much of their airtime to government activities and inflated success stories. Most journalists in the state media see themselves civil servants but often ignore the public interest (In-depth Interview with Tadewos, Anonymous Private Journalist, Million, May 30, 2013; MSI 2008, p. 128).

However, EBA observed that broadcast is more impartial than press media. The participants added that especially, the private press or newspapers are highly partial. One of the participants noted that the impartiality is related to the problem of awareness. PR Department facilitator exclusively told the researcher:

> Depending on our research findings, the former media laws were repealed and replaced by the progressive ones. On the other hand, the findings showed us the need of the public – which enables us to call for private broadcasters that are on practice at this moment. Moreover, we follow and support these institutions. We support them on how to progress themselves, how to solve

> structural problems, and we facilitate equal occasions of debate for all of them (In-depth Interview February 5, 2013).

But in a 14- years of EBA's history – from 1999 – 2013, one cannot find research findings regarding media institutions' services and whether the society is benefiting or not at national level. Even though similar assessment was attempted in 2012 in Addis Ababa, this could not describe the overall situation of the country. And EBA expressed its plan to make similar assessments at national level in the near future.

On the other hand, though EBA declared its autonomy from the government, most of the private journalists who took part in the discussion do not accept the argument. They complained that EBA is not an independent organ; rather, it is the facilitator of government policy – which disregards the free press. EBA on its part argues that they try to handle complaints as patiently as possible. But when media institutions violate the laws, it would be resolved at the court level since it is beyond the power of the EBA to punish violators.

The Ethiopian media industry is under two major pressures: government and opposition parties. Sometimes they are also subject to the influence of advertisers and they take pains in order not to offend the advertisers. Amare Aregawi argues more:

> There are three media types in Ethiopia today. These are: 1) opposition media; 2) independent media; and 3) government media. Opposition media do not advise opposition parties to act responsibly; rather it supports them blindly. The same is true of government media. Thus, both of them – the opposition media and government media have not been able to play their role responsibly. On the other hand, you can see the independent presses which fall between both but are in difficult situation. These media houses try to balance between government and opposition parties. In our country, such media houses are in serious difficulties. Whenever they criticize the opposition parties, they would be accused of being pro-government and when they are critical of the government, they are labeled as opposition sympathizers. Thus, it is very difficult for professional media houses committed to ethical standards and fair balance to serve the society without pressure (In-depth Interview, June 14, 2013).

4.8. Ethiopian Media in Light of the Polarized Pluralist Model

The Ethiopian media industry can be divided into two major categories: pro-government and pro-opposition party. Most of the private newspapers and magazines appear to appreciate the ideas of opposition parties and vise versa when we look at the government owned media houses – they appreciate all activities of the government. An independent and free media is

hardly observed in today's Ethiopia. The newspapers are on different polls and broadcasters are either government appreciators or uncritical information purveyors. Furthermore, the government owned Ethio-Telecom is also often accused of facilitating control on media outlets.

In the Mediterranean region, media institutions are dominated either by political parties or industrialists who want to make pressure on politicians. For instance, in Italy, Silvio Berlusconi won the prime ministership dominating private television. On the other hand, "give me a ministry or I will start a newspaper" is a traditional political threat in Greece. What is more, in the context of Greece, shipping, travel, construction, telecommunication and oil industries also dominate media and influence the politicians (Hallin and Mancini 2004, pp. 114-115).

This being the case, however, the situation in Ethiopia has its unique features as well as has been discussed earlier. First and foremost, the Ethiopian press law prohibits political parties and religious institutions from owning broadcast media. The media institutions are not professionally equipped and the environment is very challenging for journalists to operate. In Ethiopia, journalists, especially those from the government media, do not seem to worry much when it comes to saving the profession; rather, they tend to be preoccupied with personal survival. The private press is bent on being too critical of the government and pays the price in terms of being the victims of regular arrest and intimidation. Unlike the Italian context, it is also difficult to come to power through media ownership because of government's strict control of information industry. Similarly, one cannot influence the government by owning the press as in Greece.

Even though the legal environment has changed since the collapse of the socialist dictatorship in 1991, the quarrel between government and media practitioners has continued. The problem is multi-dimensional. Most of the private media practitioners tend to be intentionally against the ruling party. Their writings are not fully informational but opinionated. The government media is unapologetically pro-government. Both the private and government journalists do not seem to care for the profession except advancing the interests of their owners. Thus, the private and government journalists are operating on opposite polls.

To sum up, in some cases, the Ethiopian media industry resembles that of the Mediterranean Region. The politicians and parties use the press as an instrument to advance their interests in both cases. However, the difference is still wide since the private media are not able to influence the system as in the case of the Mediterranean countries.

5. Conclusion

On the basis of the analysis, two major findings are identified. The first of these is the one which has often been suggested by various researchers. Under this finding fall the professional, equipment and unclear legal problems—which the researcher would like to call "Practical Findings". On the other hand, there is a realization of the fact that there is no theoretical model that comprehensively explains the Ethiopian media context—which the researcher calls "theoretical findings."

Practical Findings

It is clearly discussed that Ethiopia is new to Democratic System and free press; the practice is as old as a mere 20 years. However, the legacies of the past two regimes (the imperial rule and the Marxist dictatorship) have in some way continued to this date. It is true that a far significant change could have been brought in those years. Unfortunately, however, we are not where we should have been, especially with regards to information regulation. The press proclamation of 1992 raised hope for the free press in the country. But it has not yet been able to guarantee media practitioners access to information source in practice; what is more, regular accusations, forced disclosure of sources, and imprisonments still abound. On top of that some legal conditions stipulated in the press proclamation are not favorable for journalists to practice their profession freely. Since certain legal provisions are still openly related to the Penal Code of the country, a disconnect with the legacies of the past regimes is yet to be established.

The press proclamation was revised twice because of international pressures. But many practitioners still find it annoying. The establishment of EBA was the outcome of the Press Proclamation of 1999, which has not been able to guarantee the practice of free press. It is understandable that unethical journalistic practices should not be condoned. Media practitioners should exercise their freedom with responsibility. The question is how this is regulated on the ground.

Broadcast Proclamation No. 533/2007 gave EBA the accountability for a year to MOI and soon diverted it to the Late Prime Minister when the Government communication Affairs Office was established in 2008. The EBA establishment proclamation still tells us that it is accountable to the MOI. One can observe two major problems here: first, there is no MOI in the country at the moment; second, according to their pillar law - Broadcast Proclamation No. 533/2007, EBA is accountable to a body that does not exist. Of course, they would argue that they returned to the Office of the Prime Minister by the provision of Article 11/2 that established the Government Communications Affairs Office. In reality, the rules and regulations should have been clearly amended. One should not refer to every proclamations in order to understand about a given government office.

When we come to active media industries of the country, there are problems like unethical writings, compromised professionalism, and in some cases, ownership pressure. It is difficult to see public media in Ethiopia since the public media is solely pro-government. In addition to that, government and private media journalists are operating on opposite polls. Because some of the private media practitioners were formerly government journalists and dismissed by the Transitional Government in 1991, their narratives often tend to be against the government. In some cases, the opposition parties also take the advantage of using the private press as an instrument in order to advance their interests.

On the other hand, the research findings that came out before five years noted that there were outdated media equipments in different media houses. However, the finding of this study indicates that it is not a significant problem at this moment. What is the challenge still is the clarity of laws, instrumentalization of the profession and partisanship of media institutions.

Another important point is that it is challenging to be a free and independent media in the current polarized media context of Ethiopia. The reason is that a neutral, ethical and balanced media house is unlikely to live long because of financial and ideological problems. Second, they would be sidelined both by the government and opposition parties. The tradition is that one has to either heap praise on or condemn one party in order to have an acceptance. The pressures come from different angles; the government controls the

publishing industries and investors are careful to advertise their products on free media. This in turn, hurts the economic sustainability of the media, setting of a vicious circle.

Finally, development journalism is translated differently among the practitioners. Some of the private journalists understood it as government propaganda whereas some understood it as development catalyst. For those who think that development journalism is important, it is important to see to the fact that the practice adheres to the principles of development journalism. One the other hand, those who see it as mere propaganda of the government dismisses it off hand and calls for the practice of 'watchdog' journalism.

Theoretical Findings

Scholars have been working in the area of communication, since the mid 19th century. Normative theories used to dominate the world media model. They have been taken for granted as applicable to any media situation. However, the 21st century scholars appear to pose serious challenge to the legacies of the four normative theories of the media. Hallin and Mancini, for instance, have come up with new media models in 2004. Although their models are a good start, we are still far way from having media models that would help us comprehensively explain the function of the media in various continents of the earth.

To start with, the liberal model is unthinkable in the current Ethiopian context owing to legal, ethical and professional constraints. Democratic corporatism is also far from the Ethiopian context; and the big corporate companies are not involved in information market in Ethiopia. The only corporate media in Ethiopia is FBC, which is not born out of capitalist competition but through political means. The Ethiopian media system is also different from that of the Mediterranean countries. In most cases, the Mediterranean media system sees the media as a battlefield for ideology and politics where it can make pressure on the government. Ownership of the media has played an important role for coming to power, at least, in the case of Italy and Greece. In Ethiopia, media has never been seen playing such a role. Of course, government uses public media as its mouthpiece whereas the private media function as pro-opposition party in most cases. In conclusion, it can be said that the Ethiopian media, and perhaps that of Africa, is yet to find a suitable model that could explain their respective media environment.

6. Recommendations

The basic problems of the Ethiopian media industry are numerous, as has been discussed earlier. The first problem is related to professionalism. The government and academic institutions are duty bound to see to the fact that the problem is addressed. Media practitioners should also commit themselves to professionalism through exposure to training opportunities.

The Government has the responsibility for facilitating clear legal environments better than what is currently on the ground. Although proclamations are revised from time to time, the basic problems within the first proclamation are passed onto the others. Even though the Penal Code is revised in 2004, the current press proclamation still traces back to the Penal Code of 1957 where it is deemed applicable to regulating the information market. Thus, the legal frameworks of the press should be made clear. The regulatory structure of EBA should be revisited in such a way as to ensure the autonomy of the institution.

On the other hand, media owners and practitioners, as a whole, should agree on having an overarching press council which embraces all the journalists so that they could regulate the profession themselves. To do that, they should first trust each other and are willing to narrow down their differences for the sake of reducing the polarization. The media institutions should be able to equip themselves with modern technology and its know-how.

Both the ruling party and opposition groups must differentiate between the free media and their interests, and strive for supporting the professional growth of journalism as it is vital to deepening democracy in the country.

There should also be a line that separates development journalism and propaganda. The conceptual deficit with respect to development journalism should be rectified through trainings, seminars or workshops made available to both government and private media practitioners.

The licensing requirements for newspapers and broadcast should also be eased. To sum up, the Ethiopian media industry needs professional trainings, clear legal frameworks, well trained manpower and an active citizenry.

References

Alan Siaroff (1999). ***Corporatism in 24 industrial democracies: Meaning and measurement.*** European Journal of Political Research 36: 175–205, Kluwer Academic Publishers.

Anton C. Hemerijck & Mark I. Vail (2004). ***The Forgotten Center: The State as Dynamic Actor in Corporatist Political Economies.*** The Netherlands Scientific Council for Government Policy Department of Political Science University of California at Berkeley

Barratt and Berger (__). **50 Years of Journalism: African media since Ghana's independence.**

Berhane G. Mariam (2002).**The Ethiopian freedom of mass media has been disregarded and still remains in an uncertain future** in ***THE MEN*** **Vol. 16, 4, 2002**

Claus Offe (2011). ***Crisis and Innovation of Liberal Democracy: Can Deliberation Be Institutionalised?*** ESSAYS IN SOCIAL THEORY © Sociologick! ústav AV "R, v.v.i., Praha, Hertie School of Governance, Berlin

Colin Sparks (2010). ***China's Media in Comparative Perspective.*** International Journal of Communication 4 (2010), Feature 552–566, University of Westminster, Available at http://ijoc.org.

Corbetta, P. (2003). SOCIAL RESEARCH: Theory, Methods and Techniques. SAGE Publications

Country of Origin Information Report Ethiopia April 2006 RDS

Daniela Stockmann (---). ***Media Commercialization and Authoritarian Rule in China*** . A book manuscript, Leiden University Communication, Society and Politics Series, Cambridge University Press

Darlington and Scott, (2002).**Qualitative research in practice:** Stories from the field**.** Allen & Unwin

Democracy index 2011, ***Democracy under stress***. The Economist Intelligence Unit Limited

E. Price and ital **(**2009). **Media in the peace-building process: Ethiopia and Iraq.** Departmental Papers (ASC); Annenberg School for Communication**,** University of Pennsylvania

Drew, Raymond and Weinberg (2006). Talk and Interaction in Social Research Methods. SAGE Publications

Eribo and Jong-Ebot (1997). **Press Freedom and Communications in Africa**. Africa World Press, Inc.

Ethiopia Media Mapping 2011, Ward, D. Electoral Reform International Services.

Fatima el-Issawi, (2012). ***Tunisian Media in Transition*.** Carnegie Endowment for International Peace

Haifeng Huang (2009) ***Essays on News Media, Governance, and Political Control in Authoritarian States.*** Department of Political Science Duke University

Hallin and Mancini (2004).**Comparing Media Systems: Three models of Media and Politics.** Cambridge University Press

Harrie, Eva (2009). **Nordic Media Trends: The Nordic Media Market, Media companies and Business Activities; (2nd ed).**. nordicom, university of Gothenburg.

Heikki Heikkilä, Risto Kunelius (2005). ***The Case of Finland*. University of Tampere, Department of Journalism and Mass Communication.** AIM project

Herman, Edward S. and Chomsky, Noam (1988). **MANUFACTURING CONSENT: The Political Economy of the Mass Media** Pantheon Books, New York

_____ (2002). **MANUFACTURING CONSENT: The Political Economy of the Mass Media** Pantheon Books, New York

Katherine Ognyanova (2010). ***Careful What You Say: Media Control In Putin's Russia – Implications for Online Content*.** Annenberg School for Communication, University of Southern California. katherine@ognyanova.net

Leonardo Morlino (2008). ***Hybrid Regimes or Regimes in Transition?*** Fundación para las Relaciones Internacionales yel Diálogo Exterior (FRIDE) 2007.

Louw, Eric (2001). **Mass Media and Cultural Production**.Sage publications Ltd.

Media Sustainability Index 2008, Ethiopia

Media Sustainability Index 2012, Ethiopia

Michael Lavarch (2012). ***Free Speech, Responsible Media, Law and Liberal Democracy.*** MORE OR LESS: DEMOCRACY AND NEW MEDIA, available at futureleaders.com.au

Miller, Robert L. and Brewer, John D. (2003).**The A - Z of Social Research: A Dictionary of Key Social Science Research Concepts.** SAGE Publications London · Thousand Oaks · New Delhi

Mullen and Kolaehn (2010). The **Herman-Chomsky Propaganda Model:** A Critical Approach to Analyzing Mass Media Behavior. Journal Compilation, Blackwell Publishing Ltd.

Murad Tangiev (2007). ***Political Leadership and Transitional Democracy in the Russian Federation: Challenges and Prospects.*** Journal of Peace, Conflict & Development Issue 11 Available from www.peacestudiesjournal.org.uk

Neil Netanel (2001). ***Is the Commercial Mass Media Necessary, or Even Desirable, for Liberal Democracy?*** Working Paper, TPRC Conference on Information, Communications, and Internet Policy

NORRIS, PIPPA **(2010). Public Sentinel News Media & Governance Reform.** The International Bank for Reconstruction and Development / The World Bank 1818 H Street, N.W. Washington, D.C. 20433, U.S.A.

O'Leary, Z. (2004).**The Essential Guide to Doing Research.** Sage Publications

Paul Froese (2004). ***Forced Secularization in Soviet Russia:*** *Why an Atheistic Monopoly Failed?* Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion 43:1, 35–50

Pitts, G (2000). ***Democracy and Press Freedom in Zambia:*** *Attitudes of Members of Parliament toward Media and Media Regulation.* Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc. [Extract of Pitts; 5 COMM L AND POL'Y 269 – 294]

Rebecca J. Wetherbee (2010). ***Censorship and Evolving Media Policy in China.*** The Elon Journal of Undergraduate Research in Communications, Vol. 1, No. 1. Journalism Major Elon University

Ross, Tray J. (2007). **A Test of Democracy: Ethiopia's Mass Media and Freedom of Information Proclamation.** Penn State Law Review

Siebert, ital. (1963). **Four Theories of the Press**. Illini Books Edition, University of Illinois: USA

Singh, Y.K. (2006). **Fundamentals of research methodology and statistics**. New Age International (P) Ltd., Publishers

Taras Kuzio (2005). ***Regime type and politics in Ukraine under Kuchma.*** communist and Post-Communist Studies 38, 167- 190, www.elsevier.com/locate/postcomstud

The World's Most Repressive Regimes (2002).**A Special Report to the 58th Session of the United Nations Commission on Human Rights**. FREEDOM HOUSE New York, Washington **DC.**

Trajectories of Political Transition in Ethiopia. Part III **Issues in the transition** Centre for Human Environment and Development Studies; January 1994 Addis Ababa

Tsega Maria and Abebe Genamow (2000). Mass Media Status on Ethiopia: Summary document written for the African Media Partners, Network

Ukraine Media Assessment and Program Recommendations. Volume I Final Report June 2001, Management Systems International, programme in Comparative Media Law & Policy, Oxford University.

Westminster Papers in Communication and Culture (2010), Vol. 7(2). University of Westminster, London.

Wimmer and Dominik (2006). **Mass Media Research:** Processes, Approaches and Applications. Wadsworth, Cengage Learnig India Private Limited.

Amharic Sources

የኢትዮጵያ ብሮድካስት ባለሥልጣን ዜና መጸሔት፣ቅጸ 1 ቁጥር 13፣ታህሳስ 2005

ነቢዩ ኢያሱ (2011). ስደት በጋዜጠኛው ዓይን። ዋሺንግተን ዲሲ

ሥዩም ወልዴ (1985). ኩርፊያ የሸፈነዉ ፈገግታ። በ2002 በኢትዮጵያ ደራሲያን ማህበር የታተመዉ

ማሞ ዉድነህ (2000). የደረስኩበት፣ እኔና ትዝታዎቼ (ክፍል ሁለት)። ንግድ ማተሚያ ድርጅት፣ አዲስ አበባ

ኢትዮ- ምህዳር፣ ቅጸ 01 ቁጥር 15፣ ሚያዝያ 15 2005 ዓ.ም

---------- ቅጸ 01 ቁጥር 17፣ ሚያዝያ 29 2005 ዓ.ም

Laws and Proclamations

Broadcasting proclamation No.178/1999

Broadcasting Service Proclamation' No. 533/2007

Government Communication Affairs Office Establishment Council of Ministers Regulation No. 158/2008

Press Proclamation No. 34/1992

Websites

- http://www.pressreference.com/Co-Fa/Ethiopia.html
- www.peacestudiesjournal.org.uk
- www.elsevier.com/locate/postcomstud
- http://ijoc.org.

Appendix I

Table of Participants in group and individual intensive interview

No.	Name of Participants	Position	Institution	Date
1	Adane Tesema	Print Supervision	EBA	Feb 5, 2013
2	Amare Aregawi	Manager	MCC /Reporter/	Jun 14,2013
3	Dheressa Terefa	Directorate Director	EBA	Feb 5, 2013
4	Gizaw Tesfaye	Law department	EBA	″ ″
5	Leulseged Woldehana	PR	EBA	″ ″
6	Million Dagenew	Manager	Ethio-Mehedar	May30,2013
7	Mulat Gezahagne	Manager	ERTA	June28,2013
8	Tadesse Zinaye	News Directorate Director	ENA	May30,2103
9	Tadewos Tantu	Journalist	Ethio-Mehedar	May30,2013
10	Tibabu Tadesse	Program Director	FBC	April30,2013
11	Warkineh Tafa	PR Supervision	EBA	Feb 5, 2013

Note: Three private journalists requested for anonymity.

View publication stats